



APPROVED MINUTES

MINUTES

Ridgefield Conservation Commission
Town Hall Annex, First Floor Conference Room
66 Prospect Street Ridgefield, CT 06877
(203) 431-2713 • conservation@ridgefieldct.gov

Meeting September 9, 2026 at 7PM

Present:	Roberta Barbieri	Allan Welby	Jana Hogan
	Pete Nichols	Anthony Markert	Erik Keller
	Matt Sharp	Tommy McCarthy	

Absent:	Jim Coyle	Jack Kace	Jim Liptack
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In attendance: Rick Lawrence and residents of Taylors Pond, representatives from NRWA, Susan Baker (Chair IWB), Christian St. Pierre and family

The meeting was convened at 7 PM by Chairman Keller.

1. Approval of Minutes

UPON motion duly made (Nichols), seconded (Sharp) and carried it was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of August 17, 2026 be approved and filed in Town Hall.

2. Taylors Pond update

Dr. Rick Lawrence, a resident adjacent to Taylors Pond, gave a presentation on the pond's current status and the history of the neighborhood's development. He attested to the health and diversity of the ecosystem in and around the pond at present. Dr. Lawrence does not dispute the CT Department of Energy and Environmental Protection's assessment that the dam is in a hazardous condition, but he asserts that the proper solution is to repair it, not remove it. He noted the presence of another dam, privately owned, approximately 150 yards downstream from Taylors Pond. Dr. Lawrence also discussed the wording of the property deed from 2018 that granted ownership of the pond to the RCC, and cited a relevant Connecticut Superior Court decision from 2020. He also shared anecdotal evidence of the potential loss of property value to homeowners.

Dr. Lawrence requested that the RCC give notice to the CT DEEP that it will not support any proposal that removes the dam and that it do so quickly. At present, no proposal has yet been submitted to the DEEP. Commissioners asked several clarifying questions. Commissioner Sharp suggested that the next step is for the RCC to consult Town Counsel regarding the wording of the deed; all commissioners agreed.

3. Spotted lanternfly project

Christian St. Pierre, a Ridgefield High School junior, gave a presentation on his efforts to observe and control invasive spotted lanternflies in Town. He discussed his observations, and his plan to arrange a workday for students to scrape lanternfly eggs off of trees. He also suggested printing T-shirts. Commissioners Sharp and Nichols suggested that the Ledges open space might be a good place to work, and shared their observations of large numbers of lanternflies there. Mr. Sharp will walk the property with Mr. St. Pierre to see if it is suitable for a workday and they will aim to set a date for mid-October.

Commissioner Markert noted that though egg-scraping has value for the purposes of raising awareness and education, it is not recognized as a viable means of population control. Commissioner McCarthy offered to support the program by promoting it through Woodcock Nature Center.

UPON motion duly made (Sharp), seconded (Nichols) and carried it was **RESOLVED** to allocate \$750 for the printing of T-shirts in support of the spotted lanternfly project.

4. Rodenticide ban policy update

Chairman Keller spoke with the Highway Department, which is considering a transition strategy to phase out the use of SGAR rodenticides. He also spoke with Parks and Recreation, which only uses them in an equipment storage facility. He received confirmation from Ridgefield Public Schools that no rodenticide poisons are used on their properties, nor are they in use at the Golf Course. Mr. Keller and Dr. Kace also met with the Health Department, which expressed support of a ban. Dr. Kace is working on a drafting a policy proposal to circulate among Town departments. With departmental approvals, the policy would then be the subject of a public meeting, and ultimately go before the Board of Selectpersons. Mr. Keller noted that there are some questions which remain, including which department will be responsible to enforce the policy, what the implementation timeline would be, and whether to include both first- and second-generation rodenticides in the ban.

5. McKeon wall maintenance

Mr. Nichols noted that the stone wall near the intersection of Ridgebury Road and Lauzun Lane was cleared recently, but plants are growing back already. He is especially concerned with about poison ivy, and wants to know what can be done to eradicate it. In the past, a contractor has torch-weeded the wall; Mr. Keller will obtain a quote for removal of weeds on the stone walls at McKeon Farm.

6. Open space maintenance/acquisition

Chairman Keller noted that the RCC office is receiving calls and emails more frequently concerning invasive plants and trees falling or threatening to fall on neighboring properties. He asked commissioners to consider how the RCC should evaluate potential future land acquisitions from a liability and accessibility standpoint. In next year's Town budget, he will be requesting an increase for management of invasive species. He noted that the RCC's two most experienced summer employees will be retiring at the end of this season, so he will also be requesting increased maintenance support from the Town next year.

Dr. Markert urged that the RCC must be more attentive to the wording of its property deeds in the future, as certain phrasings may limit the Commission's ability to do ecological restoration.

7. New business

Mr. Sharp shared that Commissioner Liptack got an email from the Ridgefield Running Club about down trees. He asked if the RCC still has a relationship with the Running Club, as they had previously done a series of runs featuring RCC trails.

Commissioner Barbieri is working with Planning and Zoning to create a new native plant mandate for developers or residents applying for a Special Permit. There will be a meeting on October 7 to discuss it, and she encouraged commissioners to attend.

Commissioner Hogan invited others to join her for a tour of Mianus River Gorge in Bedford, NY. The Director of Land Management there will host commissioners on September 16.

Commissioner Welby encouraged members to go visit Turtle Pond, where beavers are building a dam below the Beaver Deceiver installed there. The Town has already removed one large dam, but another one has been rebuilt incredibly quickly.

Mr. Nichols has been approached by the Ridgefield Historical Society to ask if members can bring metal detectors to Town open space to look for musket balls and other historical debris; this is not permissible. Mr. Nichols also shared that the newly-planted chestnut trees at McKeon Farm are not thriving due to the recent heavy rains. The apple trees, however, are thriving, and Mr. Keller has four Hunt Russet trees that he will plant there in the coming weeks.

Dr. Markert announced that the next forestry walk with Dave Beers has been scheduled for September 29 at 10 AM. The location is to be determined. Reports from the last forestry walk will be discussed at the RCC's next meeting.

8. Meetings for Attendance

P&Z

September 22—Markert
October 13—Kace

IWB

September 10—Coyle
September 24—Hogan

9. Chairman's Remarks

Whitney Freeman will host commissioners for a tour of the new Henny Penny Farm in Lagrangeville, NY, on September 18 at 10 AM.

Talks at the Ridgefield Library begin on September 10, with Mr. Keller giving the first one on eco-friendly landscaping practices. Since in-person attendance in January and February tends to be low, he asked commissioners to consider giving a presentation over Zoom.

The RCC will resume hosting its annual meeting next April. The RCC administrator will begin looking for a suitable venue.

The Golf Director has agreed to remove the invasive privet hedge by the maintenance entrance to the Golf Course near the 8th hole. However, there is a large privet hedge adjacent to the front entrance as well. Mr. Keller has suggested removing that also and has offered his assistance if needed.

There will be a symposium on invasive plants at UConn on October 28. He encourages interested commissioners to attend.

The newly-printed RCC merchandise (shirts, hats, and stickers) has arrived.

ADJOURNMENT UPON motion duly made (Welby), and seconded (Nichols), it was **RESOLVED** that the meeting adjourn at 8:46 PM.