



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 August 17, 2026 at 7PM

Present:	Roberta Barbieri	Allan Welby	Jack Kace
	Pete Nichols	Anthony Markert	Erik Keller
	Matt Sharp	Tommy McCarthy	Jim Coyle

Absent: Jana Hogan
Jim Liptack

In attendance: Ben Pearl and family, Dave Sigworth

The meeting was convened at 7 PM by Chairman Keller.

1. Approval of Minutes

UPON motion duly made (Sharp), seconded (Kace) and carried it was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of July 20, 2026 be approved and filed in Town Hall.

2. Scout project—Ben Pearl

Ben Pearl gave a presentation on his project to reconstruct a bridge at Hemlock Hills. Commissioners applauded him for his work.

3. Battery-powered trimmer demo

RCC commissioners and staff attended a presentation by a representative from a company that manufactures battery-powered field equipment. Dave Sigworth, a seasonal RCC employee doing work in the field, shared his impressions of the equipment that was shown. The general consensus among the seasonal workers is that the battery life of the weedwackers is not sufficient. Switching from gas-powered to electric weedwackers would require a large number of batteries, which would be very heavy to carry over long distances into wooded areas, and there is currently no place to charge them.

R.A.C.E. has offered to pay for a power line to be run to the shed at McKeon Farm. Commissioner Sharp suggested a gradual transition to battery-operated equipment, starting with using them exclusively at McKeon. Chairman Keller suggested installing the power line next Spring. Since no additional field equipment will be purchased this year, discussion will be resumed closer to that time.

4. Rodenticide ban update

Chairman Keller and Commissioner Kace met with the First Selectperson, who expressed enthusiasm at the prospect of restricting the use of SGAR rodenticides on Town property. Mr. Keller sent out emails to several Town officials, who have not yet responded; he will follow up with phone calls in the coming week. Dr. Kace commented that many of the problems with SGAR rodenticides have been downplayed or under-reported, since there is no agency in particular that is responsible for counting the totals of wildlife casualties. This harm is not restricted to raptors and birds of prey; it extends to other birds such as wild turkeys, to mammals, and also to domestic cats and dogs. Dr. Kace noted that there is not enough public

awareness of the symptoms of rodenticide poisoning. For pets, vitamin K has been used successfully as an antidote, but if pet owners aren't aware of the symptoms of poisoning, they won't get to a veterinarian in time. Information on poisoning symptoms will be added to the rodenticide page on the RCC's website, which Commissioner McCarthy has drafted.

5. Wittman wall

Commissioner Sharp walked the Wittman property with a stonemason who has done work for the New Canaan Historical Society. He gave an estimate to rework an 80-foot section of the wall: \$12,500 for labor, and \$2,000 to \$3,000 for materials. Commissioners encouraged Mr. Sharp to get an estimate for the entire length of the wall, as the work could be considered for a capital budget project in the future.

6. Jump Hill Reserve tour

Several commissioners took a walk at the Jump Hill Reserve in Easton, hosted by the Aspetuck Land Trust. They examined a 9-acre plot which had been overrun previously by invasive Japanese barberry. The Land Trust sprayed the barberry with glyphosate and let it die in place. The area regrew as a very healthy forest, with a large variety of native trees and great structural complexity. Chairman Keller noted that the regrowth was best where trees were cut down to open up the canopy; in the areas where the canopy was left thick, the barberry still died, but there was not much regrowth in the understory. Representatives from the Aspetuck Land Trust told commissioners that the 9 acres proved to be a large enough area such that the regrowth was able to outpace the deer's ability to eat it.

The Aspetuck Land Trust undertook this project with funding from a grant, and a forester also donated some of his time. Only the Land Trust board members were involved in the decision-making process, and there were no nearby neighbors. A forester from Aquarion (which manages over 40,000 acres of watershed property) has offered to take commissioners on a field trip in Redding.

7. Forest management grant

Commissioner Barbieri has been building the grant application, and the submission deadline is August 31st. She has met with several contractors and obtained 2 quotes, both of which were around \$60,000. All the contractors noted that the area of Florida Refuge under consideration is inaccessible to large equipment and vehicles with wheels. As such, the work will have to be done by crews with chainsaws, which will constitute a large labor cost. Ms. Barbieri noted that the final plan proposal will involve multiple subcontractors, as different crews will be responsible for different stages of the project. If the RCC is awarded the grant, the funding will be available for 18 months from the date of signing the contract with DEEP.

8. Invasive plants on Town land

The RCC received an email from a resident near the Ridgefield Golf Course regarding invasive privet hedge being maintained by the 8th hole. The resident noted that it is spreading into the open space across the street, and also onto private property. Chairman Keller spoke with the Golf Director, who gave his approval to remove them. Mr. Keller will visit the course, confirm that the plant is indeed privet hedge, and have the plants removed. Since the hedges are large, this will likely involve cutting them down to stumps, and painting the stumps with herbicide.

9. Website update

Major updates to the website have been completed. A page on rodenticides has been drafted, and commissioners will offer feedback before it goes live.

10. Volunteer/donor gifts

Commissioners were shown samples of shirts and hats. They agreed on colors and quantities of merchandise to be printed. They discussed how and when the merchandise might be distributed to volunteers and donors.

UPON motion duly made (Barbieri), seconded (Sharp) and carried it was **RESOLVED** to allocate \$3,500 for the printing of shirts, hats, and stickers.

11. Executive session—land acquisition

Mr. Sharp **MOTIONED** to enter into executive session at 8:25 PM in order to discuss potential land acquisition. This was **SECONDED** by Commissioner Nichols. The commissioners returned to public session at 8:37 PM.

12. New business

Mr. Nichols asked for an update on the Pound Street property. The Highway Department is in the process of repaving Pound Street, and installing drainage. Mr. Nichols also shared that he has been given a sundial, which he plans to install at McKeon Farm.

Commissioner Coyle noted that the Town is closing out the budget for the 2025/2026 fiscal year, and that the RCC has come in \$6,010 over budget. The difference will be paid to the Town from the RCC's discretionary fund.

Dr. Markert informed commissioners that the meeting with service forester Dave Beers has been postponed to August 26th. They plan to walk the open spaces at George Washington Highway, Shadow Lake, and Pound Street if time permits. Dr. Markert also contacted Eric Hansen, who has been working on a forestry survey at Hemlock Hills and Pine Mountain. The fieldwork is complete, the data entry is complete, and mapping is currently in progress. The report will be started in September.

A resident emailed the RCC requesting maintenance on a trail at Blacksmith Ridge. Mr. Sharp will walk the trail with the resident and give his assessment.

13. Meetings for Attendance

P&Z	IWB
September 8— Welby	August 27 – Sharp
September 22—Barbieri	September 10—Coyle

14. Chairman's Remarks

Chairman Keller asked what weekday would be best for a tour of the new Henny Penny Farm. Commissioners agreed that Fridays would be most workable. He will contact Whitney and arrange a date for a Friday tour this coming Fall.

He encouraged commissioners to start brainstorming for next year's Annual Meeting, and consider potential recipients of the Edith Meffley award.

Residents from Taylor's Pond wish to give a presentation at the RCC's next meeting, which is on September 9th. He will extend an invitation to representatives from the NRW and Biohabitats.

He requested that commissioners send him material for the Fall newsletter in the next 10 days.

He noted that there is potential litigation brewing on Lauzun Lane, across from McKeon Farm. A resident has rerouted a drain, and water is now running onto a neighbor's property.

Mr. Keller received an email from First Selectperson Marconi. The Department of Transportation is doing a project to protect wildlife on CT roads. He asked commissioners if there are any notable wildlife crossings in Town that they would like to see marked. Commissioners agreed that they lacked hard data on the most active areas, and suggested reaching out to the Highway Department and Police Department, which might have larger data sets on roadkill and wildlife accidents.

A homeowners' association has been using a company to treat the pond behind Kendra Court with herbicides. This pond is partially on private properties, but the majority is on Town property. They have been notified that they have to stop treatment, and they now plan to send representatives to the RCC's next meeting. This is the second time that this particular company has been found using herbicides on Town property without permission from the Town.

ADJOURNMENT UPON motion duly made (Sharp), and seconded (Nichols), it was **RESOLVED** that the meeting adjourn at 9:07 PM.