



APPROVED MINUTES
Ridgefield Conservation Commission
Town Hall annex, 66 Prospect Street
Ridgefield, CT 06877
(203) 431-2713 • conservation@ridgefieldct.org

November 16, 2020 at 7 P.M.

Present: Carroll Brewster Jim Coyle Jack Kace Erik Keller
Jean Linville Matt Sharp Daniel C. Levine Allan Welby
Dave Cronin Kitsey Snow
Beth Peyser – Conservation Enforcement Officer

Absent: Eric Beckenstein

Guests: Mike Malwitz, Michael Rothman, Lisa van Gompel

Mr. Coyle chaired the meeting. Ms. Campbell-Gibson took the minutes.

1. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes of the November 2, 2020 meeting were approved.

UPON motion duly made (Cronin), seconded (Brewster), (Snow was not yet present in this meeting to vote) and carried, it was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of November 2, 2020 be approved and ordered filed in the Town Hall.

2. Plant Specimen Collection Project of NYBG – Michael Rothman

Michael Rothman is a Science Illustrator, a Ridgefield resident and has done art for the NYBG department of botany. He worked with Scott Mari and Dr. Robert Naczi on the Westchester Land Trust Project and New Manual of Vascular Plants of the North East and Canada. He presented the specimen collection he has done so far in Ridgefield open spaces during 2020, to the commission.

Mr. Coyle thanked Mr. Rothman for the work he has done and for his presentation and asked if his presentation could be shown to the Ridgefield public in a press release and on our web site. Mr. Rothman will get permission from Dr. Naczi to release this information. Ms. Linville asked if the list of plants found in the Ridgefield open spaces could be added to the commission's inventory of open space plants. Mr. Rothman suggested that the plant specimen collection project be continued by the scout troops in Ridgefield. Mr. Sharp will propose this idea to the four scout troop leaders who would be in touch with Mr. Rothman if interested.

3. OPEN SPACE

Pierrepont Biker Trail

FCNEMBA have put together a proposal to build a new bike trail in Seth-Low Pierrepont Preserve. The bike trail will mostly be on state land but will cross twice into Ridgefield Conservation open space in Limestone Preserve – area 15 and area 52. FCNEMBA representative Mike Malwitz attended the commission meeting to get permission for the sections of the trail proposed to be built on Ridgefield Conservation open space land and to get the support of the commission when FCNEMBA present this proposal to the state.

UPON motion duly made (Cronin), seconded (Sharp), and carried (Snow abstained), it was **RESOLVED** to allow construction by FCNEMBA of a multi-use trail through Ridgefield open space areas 15 and 52.

Eagle Scout Presentations

- Lisa van Gompel - Barrack Hill Bog Bridge completed project
Lisa van Gompel presented her completed Eagle Scout project which involved building five bog bridges in Barrack Hills Preserve, as well as performing trail cleanup to remove storm debris. She mentioned that there were many areas in Barrack Hills Preserve that still needed bog bridges that could be future scout projects. She also informed the commission of the presence of a bee hive near the trail. Mr. Coyle thanked Lisa on behalf of the commission for her project.

Open Space Violations

Ms. Peyser joined the meeting to report back on open space violations being investigated.

- Bike ramps at Lounsbury Lane
Ms. Peyser handed over to Mr. Brewster to report back on the progress of this issue. Mr. Brewster reported that the ramps were removed and the area restored by Saturday, November 14. This case is resolved.
- 25 Norrans Ridge dumping
Ms. Peyser and Mr. Coyle had a conference call with the owner who agreed to remove the debris by Friday November 20, 2020.
- 6 Settlers Lane play structure, dumping and neighbors ice rink
Mr. Schneider removed the play structure and built a split pole fence on his property boundary to prevent encroachment onto open space land. The placement of this fence also prevents his neighbor from building an annual ice rink partly on Mr. Schneider's property and partly in open space land. This case is resolved.
- Pine Mountain meditation structure
The removal of this structure will be completed over the next few weekends. Most of the structure has been dismantled and the branches disbursed over the area it was initially collected from during construction.

McKeon Farm

- Pollinator Garden
Ms. Snow reported on the expenses to date for this project: \$1,700 for trees and shrubs, \$400 for a Harrow Rake, \$800 for seed. There is an estimated \$600 to pay for de-sodding and there is mulch to buy. Known costs for this project come to \$3500. Ms. Snow will ask NRVA for funds to cover the cost of fencing to protect the plants. Future expenses expected are the cost of mowing each year and to fund Eagle Scout projects to build bee nesting strips at the garden site. The pollinator garden project, spearheaded by Ms. Snow, has been realized with the help of many volunteers who performed digging, planting new plants and clearing away an old fence; as well as an Eagle Scout project to clear 300 feet of invasive plants from the stone wall.

UPON motion duly made (Keller), seconded (Welby), and carried, it was RESOLVED to approve additional funds of \$500 to complete the pollinator garden project.

- Lauzen field burn plan and feedback
Mr. Coyle reported that this field was mowed to 10" at the end of October.
Mr. Welby asked DEEP about the cost of the seed. DEEP recommend a supplier who has a 75/25 seed mix at \$5,900 to cover the reseeding of the Lauzen field. Prairie Moon's seed cost \$17,000 to cover the same area. Mr. Welby estimates the total cost of converting Lauzen hayfield to a native meadow to be about \$8,900.

It is Mr. Keller's opinion that this project had no well thought out plan, no positive motivation to get the money for the project, no "what if" scenarios, and no discussion on maintenance. Both Mr. Cronin and Mr. Keller are not confident this project would get support from the town. Ms. Snow said the commission should speak to the board of Selectman to determine their support, then speak to residents to get their support. Ms. Snow also mentioned there is grant money for this kind of project, which means the entire cost would not have to come from the town or commission budget. Mr. Brewster suggested funding a

1-acre prairie conversion with budgeted money and applying for a grant for the other 9 acres. Mr. Brewster asked about the maintenance requirements of a natural prairie. Mr. Welby said this was minimal. Mr. Cronin disagreed, saying there were many invasives growing around the field.

Mr. Welby and Ms. Snow were tasked with finding grants applicable to prairie conversion projects. No burn plan was presented but Mr. Welby distributed a project write-up to the commissioners on November 15, which included the reason for the project, the scope of the project, the proposed schedule of work, the estimated cost, the extent of involvement by DEEP and USFWS.

4. PUBLIC OUTREACH

Mr. Coyle asked for the link to the NYBG project to go onto the conservation commission webpage. Mr. Levine reported he had posted on social media about the birds, the health benefits of walking and an article to thank residents for their donations to the annual appeal fund. He will post about the new Bear Mountain trail and other Scout projects this week. Ms. Snow said that at the end of November the Pollinator Garden would be finished and a post could be written about it. Mr. Keller suggested asking the public what they would like to see from the commission. Mr. Sharp suggested an article on snow shoeing and something to promote the great views on our trails, especially the sunset view from Pine Mountain.

5. Meeting Dates for 2021

A list of meeting dates for the 2021 calendar year was sent to the commissioners for their perusal prior to the meeting. Ms. Snow asked about the two Wednesday meeting in the schedule. Mr. Coyle responded that these were on the schedule because of two Monday public holidays.

UPON motion duly made (Cronin), seconded (Brewster), and carried, it was **RESOLVED** to accept the proposed Conservation Commission meeting dates for the 2021 calendar year.

6. MEETING ATTENDANCE

No issues were reported with any of the required meeting attendance.

7. CHAIRMAN'S REMARKS

Mr. Coyle said he had nothing to report.

Mr. Cronin mentioned that the trail kiosks at Pine Mountain, Hemlock Hills and Lake Windwing need maps. Mr. Sharp said he would fill the kiosk map box at Pine Mountain on Tuesday.

Ms. Snow asked for a meeting at McKeon farm to discuss the signage requested by Whitney Freeman. She also brought the parking situation at McKeon to the attention of the commissioners. The entrance off Old Stagecoach Road is dangerous, has minimal parking, and needs improvement. The deed allows for 10 cars to park in the area off Old Stagecoach Road but there is no formal space there now. Ms. Snow feels that a more formal parking layout needs to be devised. A meeting is set for Friday 12 P.M. at the Stagecoach Road entrance at McKeon Farm to discuss parking and signage.

The next RCC meeting will be held on Monday, November 30, 2020 at 7:00 P.M.

ADJOURNMENT

UPON motion duly made (Cronin), seconded (Brewster), and carried, it was **RESOLVED** that the meeting adjourn at 8:45 P.M.