



APPROVED MINUTES
Ridgefield Conservation Commission
Town Hall annex, 66 Prospect Street
Ridgefield, CT 06877
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FEBRUARY 22, 2021 at 7 P.M.
Via ZOOM

Present:	Carroll Brewster	Jim Coyle	Allan Welby	Erik Keller
	Jean Linville	Matt Sharp	Jim Liptack	Dave Cronin
	Kitsey Snow	Jack Kace	Daniel Levine	

Guests Speakers: Cece Berger, Whitney Freeman

Guest Attendees: Susan Baker, Peggy Thomas, S Consentino

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

1. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

UPON motion duly made (Cronin), seconded (Brewster), and carried, it was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of February 8, 2021 be approved and ordered filed in the Town Hall.

2. VOTE: PROPERTY ACQUISITION

An Executive Session was held on February 08, 2021 from 6:30 P.M. to 6.58 P.M. to discuss details of a certain property acquisition for open space.

UPON motion duly made (Cronin), seconded (Brewster), Levine abstained due to absence from the executive session and carried, it was **RESOLVED** that the commission move forward on the investigation into the property acquisition as discussed in the executive session on February 8, 2021.

Mr. Coyle has followed up with the parties concerned and they have expressed interest in pursuing the sale of the property to the commission. Mr. Cronin said it would take some time because the deeds and documentation have been difficult to find and anomalies in the documentation have been found.

3. OPEN SPACE

McKeon – Cornerstone Home and Gardens, Cece Berger

Cornerstone Home and Gardens (CG&H) is a 501(c)3 organization leasing space for their garden in the upper meadow at McKeon Farm. The garden provides special needs educational gardening and job experience to young adults with ASD and other related disabilities, as well as providing volunteering opportunities to Ridgefield High School students. In partnership with Ridgefield Social Services, CG&H donates fresh vegetables harvested at the garden to Ridgefield families in need.

Ms. Berger presented her annual report to the commission with highlights of 2020. The one-year license agreement between the commission and G&H is up for renewal. Many of the commissioners congratulated Ms. Berger on the success of the project and agreed to renew the license agreement.

UPON motion duly made (Brewster), seconded (Linville), and carried, it was RESOLVED that the license agreement between the commission and CH&G be renewed, the term length to be determined. However, anything more than one-year would require a lease agreement.

McKeon – Henny Penny Farm, Whitney Freeman

Ms. Freeman returned and addressed the commission again in an effort to clarify her request to graze more sheep at McKeon ahead of the renewal of the one-year license agreement between Henny Penny Farm and the commission. Ms. Freeman explained various farming methods showing her preference for regenerative agriculture using adaptive livestock grazing to improve biodiversity at McKeon. (Please contact the offices of the commission for a copy if you would like the full presentation details.)

There were still concerns expressed by Dr. Linville regarding the results of soil sample test. Ms. Freeman explained that the soil samples were taken by her intern, who took samples from the incorrect depth. Ms. Freeman will retest the soil after the ground has thawed sufficiently. Many of the commissioners agreed that more data is required before considering giving permission to increase the size of the flock allowed to graze the pastures at McKeon.

Mr. Coyle highlighted that timing of any new agreement is important because the one-year license agreement has expired and needs to be renewed, and Henny Penny is in the fifth year of the five-year lease at McKeon.

Mr. Welby expressed concern in signing another long-term lease with Henny Penny Farm, and wanted on the record that he is against an agricultural grazing farm operation at McKeon. Mr. Coyle mentioned that the fields used by Henny Penny Farm according to the lease is not going to be increased in size. Mr. Welby asked why the commission even considers leasing land for livestock grazing. Ms. Snow answered that in 2016 the commission took a decision to lease land at McKeon to cut down on the maintenance burden placed on the commission and said that maintenance forms part of any lease agreement for the area included in the lease. This has worked out very well with the lease in place so far. Also, to obtain federal funding from the Natural Resources Conservation Service for a new well and other site improvements a longer term agreement was necessary between the commission and Henny Penny.

Mr. Coyle will discuss further details with Ms. Freeman to determine the best way to move forward with a new license agreement for 2021. Ms. Freeman hopes to have the testing redone by the end of April, and by that time, Ms. Freeman will also know how many lambs have been born during the lambing season to give a more precise size of the flock she would like to graze at McKeon this year.

NRVT

Ms. Snow said she could not report to the commission on this yet. There have been unforeseen delays preventing this report from going public.

Tree Planting Grant

Ms. Snow applied for the tree funding through OneTreePlanted. It is an agreement to cover most of the cost of purchasing tree saplings. The application was approved. Trees will be planted at three locations: one at the Town's river study site, one at Aldrich Park, and one hundred seedlings to hand out to the public. These seedlings will be available to hand out by mid-May.

Mr. Coyle asked if there were any trees being planted at McKeon Farm. Ms. Snow said there were not since the location of these trees needed to be decided and the commissioners were not ready to commit to a decision in time for the grant to be submitted.

Additional item for discussion: OSWA grant announcement from DEEP.

The commission has been invited to a Zoom meeting this Wednesday, February 24, 2021. The discussion will be about the grant award decision and winners of the grant will be announced.

4. PUBLIC OUTREACH

Mr. Levine had to leave the meeting early due to other commitments and could not give input on the progress of the RCC Newsletter. Mr. Coyle asked the commissioners to submit items for the newsletter by the end of February.

5. MEETING ATTENDANCE

No issues were reported with the required meeting attendance.

6. CHAIRMAN'S REMARKS

The Conservation Commission has received a request for an internship program. After a brief discussion, the commissioners decided that the commission would not create an internship program given the commission resources that would be necessary to supervise such staff.

Planning and Zoning are setting up a task force to work on the implementation phase of the 2020 POCD and require someone who can be our representative and attend an initial kick-off meeting. Moving forward, it is anticipated that there will be meeting every few months, perhaps quarterly, to check in on progress and discuss ideas and opportunities. Mr. Coyle asked for volunteer/s to send their name/s to him by Friday this week.

The next RCC meeting will be held on **Monday** March 8, 2021 at 7:00 P.M.

ADJOURNMENT

UPON motion duly made (Brewster), seconded (Cronin), and carried, it was RESOLVED that the meeting adjourn at 9:10 P.M.