



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

**July 19, 2021 at 7 P.M.**  
**In Person**

Present:	Roberta Barbieri	Dave Cronin	Daniel C. Levine	Jean Linville
	Jim Liptack	Jack Kace	Kitsey Snow	Matt Sharp
	James Coyle			

Absent:	Allan Welby	Erik Keller
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Guests:	Timothy Bishop	Judd Zusel	Timothy Grove	Mr. Grove
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Jim Coyle chaired the meeting. Ms. Campbell-Gibson took the minutes.

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## 1. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

**UPON** motion duly made (Sharp), seconded (Liptack), and carried, it was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of June 21, 2021 be approved and ordered filed in the Town Hall.

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## 2. ENFORCEMENT ACTION

### 25 Tanglewood Court

Mr. Zusel was present at the meeting. He gave an overview of the events that have unfolded since Mr. Hobbs reported a possible violation of open space by Mr. Zusel. He explained the history of the piece of open space land being mowed by himself and two previous owners of 25 Tanglewood Court. He indicated a willingness to work with the commission to resolve his mowing of open space. In answer to the first violation cited in the NOV issued to him by the RCC CEO, although he stopped fertilizing the space, he said he is reluctant to stop mowing because he does not want weeds to grow there. Ms. Snow explained that fertilized, and/or mowed lawn is dead land from a conservation perspective because it does not support pollinators, indigenous plants or animals. The commissioners discussed planting options in the space to encourage pollinators, reduce the possibility of the growth of invasive plants and provide a barrier between Mr. Zusel's property and the open space parcel, and Mr. Hobbs' property beyond.

Mr. Zusel stated he did not agree with the second violation cited in the NOV on being required to remove the brush, clippings and yard waste on his property boundary in the open space land. He denies being the person who dumped the yard waste there and vouched for his garden service as not being guilty of dumping in that space. Dr. Kace asked Mr. Zusel (or his garden service company) to remove the yard waste and debris dumped along his property boundary line. Mr. Zusel did not agree to remove the dumped yard waste, commenting his removing the debris was akin to admitting guilt.

Mr. Coyle asked Mr. Zusel to respond formally to the NOV to enable the situation to move forward toward resolution.

### **3. TURTLE CROSSING SIGNS**

Mr. Bishop, a board member of the Inland Wetland Board, joined the meeting to discuss the turtle crossing signs requested by the IWB for the area of Farmingville road near the intersection with Ligi's Way. He will consult with the police department and the highway department on sign location and installation.

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### **4. EAGLE SCOUT PRESENTATION – Timothy Grove**

Timothy Grove is a scout with Troop 431. His project proposal is to create a low bridge to traverse a wet, rocky area on the Blue Trail in Hemlock Hills. The aim of building the bridge is for a safer traverse on the trail path; and to make the Blue Trail more accessible even during wet times of the year. He described the bridge construction and provided a cost of materials. He aims to install the bridge in a single day with the help of six to eight people. Mr. Cronin suggested having half-inch gaps between treads to allow debris and leaves to fall through rather than collect on the bridge. The cost estimate for the project is \$280.00.

**UPON** motion duly made (Sharp), seconded (Kace), and carried, it was RESOLVED to approve expenditure of a maximum of \$280.00 for the construction of a bridge on the Blue Trail in Hemlock Hills. Vote: 9:0

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### **5. OPEN SPACE EASEMENT REQUEST – Flat Rock Road**

MaryBeth Stow, a realtor in Ridgefield, has requested an easement be granted to her clients who wish to purchase 23 Flat Rock Road and install a circular driveway with one entrance being on the open space parcel D19-0028.

**UPON** motion duly made (Kace), seconded (Barbieri), and carried, it was resolved to deny the request for a driveway easement across open space parcel D19-0028. Vote: 9:0

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### **6. OPEN SPACE DONATION**

Mary Beth Stow also had a client who wished to donate 4 acres of land for conservation open space use of a property they wished to purchase at 222 Spring Valley Road. This item is removed from the agenda since Ms. Stow's client had ceased negotiations to purchase the property.

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### **7. INVASIVE SPECIES ON OPEN SPACE LAND**

Mr. Cronin brought up the Tree of Heaven invasive as well as the patch of bamboo growing on Old Trolley Road. The commissioners began discussing invasive species removal on open space land. Methods of invasive removal were discussed. Ms. Barbieri suggested continuous documentation of invasive species in Ridgefield to support successful management over time.

This item will be discussed further by the Invasive sub-Committee.

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### **8. SEED COLLECTION**

Ms. Snow requested adding this agenda item to discuss the possibility of allowing seed collection on open space by Aubree Keurajian, an expert at collecting and propagating native plants.

**UPON** motion duly made (Snow), seconded (Sharp), and carried, it was RESOLVED to add the discussion of seed collection on open space for the propagation of native species. Vote: 9:0

Ms. Snow explained the request from Aubree Keurajian to collect native seeds on Ridgefield open spaces for propagating native plants. Dr. Linville cautions that seed collection needs to follow strict protocols in order to prevent depletion of native species in the areas where seeds are collected because self-sowing needs of native plants require many seeds to combat birds eating the seeds. Dr. Linville mentioned that Geordie Elkins, operations director of Highstead, has a protocol outlined for native seed collection. She will reach out to Mr. Elkins to find out more details. Dr. Linville suggests the RCC have a seed collection policy on file.

Aubree Keurajian will be invited to attend the next regular RCC meeting on August 16, 2021.

This discussion is tabled until the next regular RCC meeting.

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## **9. NORWALK RIVER DAM DEMOLITION**

Mr. Coyle drafted a letter to the Natural Resource Conservation Service regarding the proposed demolition of the Norwalk River Dam No. 2. He noted there is another town hearing hosted by the BOS on 07/14/2021 to discuss this matter.

Mr. Cronin commented that the history of the dam should be added to the letter. He asked if the dam was built before or after the 1955 flood. Ms. Snow said the trend along the Norwalk River has been to remove dams, with the exception of New Canaan. She suggests this fact be added to the letter. Dr. Kace said that with climate change, flooding has increased. There is also greater potential for destruction due to flooding. He asked if it is wise to remove dams with the flooding hazard changing over time.

Ms. Snow asked if the commission would consider hiring PE Water Resources Engineer, Kevin Dahms. Mr. Cronin said the commission cannot comment on the engineering of the dam. Ms. Snow suggested adding the distinction between property damage and conservation. Ms. Barbieri suggests the commission only comment on the impact on the environment if the dam is removed, adding that from a purely environmental perspective it is recommended that dams on rivers be removed. Ms. Barbieri will finalize the letter. Mr. Coyle asked that the final letter be available for approval by the RCC at the next regular meeting on August 16, 2021 in order to be submitted by the close of the comment period (August 20).

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## **10. NRI UPDATE**

Dr. Linville asked for the support of the commission. Volunteers are needed to lead sections of the update. Funds need to be approved to pay for the stipend for the PACE and WestConn graduate students who will work on the NRI update, to pay for camera batteries for wildlife camera traps, to pay for drone photography, and to pay for the GIS work.

Dr. Linville said the outcome of the NRI update is to produce GIS map with all the data loaded and accessible interactively. Mr. Sharp asked why the commission is considering doing an NRI update. Ms. Barbieri explained that the previous NRI gives a baseline and an update will show what changed over time. In order for an NRI to have more value, more data over time is required. Ms. Snow highlighted the action items in the NRI, which should guide activities for improvement or better management of open spaces. Mr. Coyle said an updated NRI would also provide an opportunity to fill in the gaps in information missing from the previous NRI – he cited water quality in all nine rivers in Ridgefield is an area needing additional data.

Mr. Cronin said he believes the BOS should fund an NRI update. Mr. Coyle said the RCC must consider approving the spending of funds from the Discretionary account now, in order for the project to get underway. Other sources of funding would also be investigated.

**UPON** motion duly made (Snow), seconded (Barbieri), and carried, it was **RESOLVED** to approve the use of \$10,000.00 to initiate the NRI update project work. Vote: 7:1 (Cronin opposed, Kace, abstained).

## **11. COMMUNITY OUTREACH**

Dr. Linville asked if the citizen science project for the NRI update could be included in the fall newsletter.

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## **12. MEETINGS FOR ATTENDANCE**

Dr. Linville and Mr. Liptack will swap P&Z meetings in September.

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## **13. CHAIRMAN'S REMARKS**

Mr. Coyle asked that any communication with the conservation administrator go through the town email account only. Due to FIOA requirements, all commission business needs to be available on the town servers for possible FIOA requests. To ensure all commission emails are FIOA compliant, Ms. Campbell-Gibson has blocked emails from the commission to her personal email addresses and will not receive emails unless they are sent to the conservation email accounts.

The next regular RCC meeting will be held on **Monday** August 16, 2021 at 7:00 P.M. A special meeting is scheduled for Monday August 9, 2021 at 7: P.M.

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## **ADJOURNMENT**

**UPON** motion duly made (Cronin), seconded (Liptack), and carried, it was RESOLVED that the meeting adjourn at 9:20 P.M. Vote: 9:0.