



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

Meeting
September 20, 2021 at 7 P.M.
Via Zoom

Present: James Coyle Roberta Barbieri Dave Cronin
Allan Welby Jack Kace Erik Keller
Matt Sharp Kitsey Snow

Absent: Daniel C. Levine, Jean Linville, Jim Liptack

Guests: Robert Jewell, Dave Grogins, Andy Hally (Conservation Enforcement Officer)
Ines Taleb, Barb Hartman, Shannon Capocci, Jeremy Capocci

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

1. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

UPON motion duly made (Keller), seconded (Barbieri), and carried, it was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meetings of September 08, 2021 be approved and ordered filed in the Town Hall. Vote: 7:0 (Cronin, not yet present to vote.)

2. SCOUT PRESENTATION – Ines Taleb

Ms. Taleb is a scout from Troop 19. For her Eagle Scout project, she proposes to clear a path of about 25m from Dawn Lane to Haviland Pond, make a clearing then fill it with wood chips overlooking the pond, and build and install a wooden bench at the site using 2X4X8 wood and 2.5" screws. This project is projected to begin at the end of September or the first week of October. Ms. Taleb will get help from her troop to complete the project.

Mr. Keller asked that Ms. Taleb use 3" screws instead of 2.5" screws and he asked that Ms. Taleb use landscape fabric under the wood chips at the clearing for the bench to prevent weeds. Mr. Sharp said the RCC tools are available for use to complete the project.

UPON motion duly made (Keller), seconded (Sharp), and carried, it was **RESOLVED** to approve expenditure of \$150.00 for Ms. Taleb's project to install a bench at the Haviland pond, with the changes and additions requested by the commission. Vote: 8:0

3. ENFORCEMENT ACTION

3.1 34 Rustic Rd - Mr. Jewell asked that this item be moved to the end of the meeting. He will join the meeting later to discuss this matter with the commission.

Mr. Hally said the IWB has decided not to pursue the violation of land disturbance because there is no proof of who added land fill to the wetlands side of the parcel. The dock may remain but needs to be permitted. There are trellises, a private property sign, and a fire pit that need to be removed from Town land. The Notice of Violation of Open Space needs to be revised too. Dr. Kace asked if the area was still being mowed. Mr. Hally said it looked like mowing has stopped and he is sure nature would take over and the area would return to a natural state.

A week ago Mr. Jewell sent a batch of deeds and maps to the commission on the history of the Town parcel being used by Ms. Clem of 34 Rustic Road. Mr. Hally forwarded these to town attorney Dave Grogins for review.

Mr. Grogins and Mr. Jewell joined the meeting. Mr. Jewell said that when Ms. Clem received the notice of violation she immediately removed her garden furniture. What remains are the dock, the trellises and the bricks used to create a homemade fire pit. Ms. Barbieri highlighted that fire on town property and open space is a hazard.

Mr. Jewell said that Ms. Clem has the option to apply for a permit to keep the dock and asked how she would access the dock. Dr. Kace asked how the other residents along Rustic Road access the water's edge. Mr. Jewell said they walk through the trees. Mr. Coyle said that residents are allowed to walk across town land and Ms. Clem could do the same.

Mr. Grogins said he had reviewed the documents compiled by Mr. Jewell. He noted that he needs to research if the parcel in question is designated as open space, but added that it is Town-owned land, not private land and residents cannot obtain rights to town property by adverse possession.

Mr. Jewell said the parcel is much more pleasant for residents the way it is being maintained by Ms. Clem and mentioned Windwing being a pleasant location similarly maintained. Ms. Campbell-Gibson mentioned the "private property" sign indicating to the general public that it is private. Mr. Cronin clarified that Lake Windwing is designated as a park and is maintained as such, which is different than an open space being preserved for nature.

Mr. Coyle ended the discussion by requesting Mr. Grogins continue to research the deed restrictions of the parcel in question.

3.2 Other – Mr. Hally will send closed violation notices to 25 Tanglewood Court and 90 Canterbury Lane after Mr. Coyle has reviewed and approved both notices. Both homeowners have now resolved the issues of violation to the satisfaction of the CEO.

4. OPEN SPACE

4.1 Land Donation – The Phase 1 study of the property has begun. Once complete, the Board of Selectmen will then hold a public hearing and Town meeting to formally accept this donation.

4.2 NRVT – Residents in the Bobby's Court area have concerns with the NRVT trail through the Bobby's Court open space. A list of grievances was received via email from resident Shannon Capocci. Mr. Coyle invited Ms. Capocci to speak but first stated that this is not a public hearing and only one resident will be permitted to speak; the items on the grievance list are for the NRVTA to address and should be sent directly to the NRVTA; the trail is in the early planning phase and many of these details would be addressed by the construction documents once these are available for review; the commission will be holding meetings with the NRVTA to ensure the conservation of the open space. Ms. Snow said that the Ridgefield section of the trail is only in the fund raising stage. She added that there have been multiple information sessions for residents so far and there will be more as the project progresses. Ms. Snow loosely defined the phases: first funds are raised, then an application is submitted for a grant to cover the bulk of the project expenses, then permit applications are submitted for approval (residents are able to weigh in at this stage), then plans are submitted (residents are able to weigh in at this stage, too).

Ms. Capocci said the NRVTA did not answer her questions, which is why she submitted them to the commission. She wants to ensure the wetlands surveys consider periodic flooding and that this will not affect surrounding homeowners; historic stone walls are not disturbed; and exact trail path is communicated to the residents before construction.

Mr. Coyle said the commission would discuss these concerns with the NRVT when the project plans and construction documents are designed and presented for review.

4.3 Woolly Adelgid – Dr. Kace sent an article to the commissioners regarding the woolly adelgid and the destruction it causes to Hemlock trees. There are beetles that eat the woolly adelgid and they are for sale to release in infected areas should the commission wish to pursue this route to curb it's spread.

Ms. Snow said she has seen infected areas of woolly adelgid in Hemlock Hills in the past 5 years but not recently, suggesting a survey could indicate current infection rate. Mr. Cronin agreed that he isn't aware of a current need to get the beetles and suggested asking the rangers to go into the open spaces to look for woolly adelgid and report their findings to the commission. Dr. Kace will create an information sheet on the woolly adelgid for Mr. Levine to send to the rangers. The commission will consider this again in 6 months.

4.4 Maps – It will cost approximately \$380 to print a batch of 750 tri-fold kiosk maps. Ms. Campbell-Gibson requests these funds. Ms. Snow asked if paper maps are useful since all the maps are available online. Mr. Cronin said while the commission is unable to determine how well used these maps are, we do know that they are taken from the kiosks and therefore we should have them available for hikers to take.

UPON motion duly made (Cronin), seconded (Keller), and carried, it was **RESOLVED** to approve expenditure of \$380.00 to print additional kiosk maps. Vote: 8:0

5. NATIVE PLANT POLICY

Ms. Snow proposed that the RCC create a native plant policy for the Town. She said Newtown has such a policy to ensure that town departments only use native plants from a recommended list when planting on town property and they have proposed having a native plant policy for commercial property, too. Mr. Keller said he disagrees with having a dictum to imposed plantings on residents. Ms. Barbieri said there is a negative impact on fauna and flora when certain invasive plants spread beyond the borders of private properties. Mr. Coyle asked Ms. Snow and Ms. Barbieri to create a guideline of native plantings for review. He suggested perhaps having two versions – the short one prepared by Mr. Hally and the long one prepared by Newtown.

6. COMMUNITY OUTREACH

The Fall Newsletter has gone out to our mailing list. Mr. Coyle thanked the commissioners for their submissions to the newsletter and commended Mr. Levine on another great edition.

7. MEETINGS FOR ATTENDANCE

No issues were reported.

8. CHAIRMAN'S REMARKS

Mr. Coyle reminded the commissioners that the Henny Penny lease is the subject of the Town meeting this Wednesday, September 22. The vote is by Town residents (decision by head count) and all are encouraged to attend and vote.

Ms. Snow said the invasive Chinese Spotted Lantern fly is killing fruit trees in neighboring counties. They like the tree of heaven fruit. Tree of heaven is a fast growing invasive plant found along the sides of roads and is spreading. Mr. Cronin mentioned a large growth of Tree of Heaven on Oscaletta Road.

Ms. Barbieri asked if the RCC use interns, mentioning the seniors will be looking for spring internships early next year. Mr. Coyle said they have been selected in the past but that supervision of internship work was a problem as there is no one who is available full time to supervise their conservation work.

ADJOURNMENT

UPON motion duly made (Barbieri), seconded (Sharp), and carried, it was **RESOLVED** that the meeting adjourn at 8:23 P.M. Vote: 7:0.