



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

Meeting
January 3, 2022 at 7 P.M.
Via Zoom

Present: James Coyle Roberta Barbieri Daniel C. Levine
 Allan Welby Jack Kace Erik Keller
 Matt Sharp Kitsey Snow Jean Linville
 Jim Liptack

Guests: P. Shotton, B Nissim, D. Hulnick, P. Nichols

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

The meeting was called to order at 7:04pm

Mr. Coyle asked for three agenda items to be added:

- 8) Dog debris on trails
- 9) ATV's on trails
- 10) Interns

UPON motion duly made (Keller), seconded (Linville), and carried, it was **RESOLVED** to add the three agenda items as numbered above. Vote: 9:0

1. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

UPON motion duly made (Keller), seconded (Kace), and carried, it was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meetings of December 13, 2021 be approved and ordered filed in the Town Hall. Vote: 9:0

2. ENFORCEMENT ACTION

Mr. Hally did not attend this meeting to give a status report.

Mr. Coyle reported that a formal complaint from a resident was on hold at the resident's request while they try to resolve the matter 1:1 with their neighbor.

3. OPEN SPACE CONSERVATION FUND APPEAL

Ms. Campbell-Gibson reported that the donations received thus far stand at \$22,500.00 with more donations to process.

4. GRANTS

4.1 Thrift Shop Grant – Mr. Welby presented items for possible inclusion into the RTS grant application. Items were a tractor and mower attachment (approx. \$24,000), owl boxes for screech owls (approx. \$1000) and bird feeders (approx. \$3000). Dr. Linville suggested adding signage near the feeders to educate residents about birds.

4.2 Lewis Fund Grant – Mr. Sharp and Mr. Liptack suggested a grant application for tools for trail maintenance.

The commissioners discussed applying for funds to help with the purchase of the Boy Scout property.

The decision: Apply for \$23,000 from the RTS (\$15,000 towards the purchase of the Boy Scout property, \$8,000 towards bird feeders, signage, and owl boxes.). Apply for \$5,000 from the Lewis Fund (to assist with the purchase of the Boy Scout property).

UPON motion duly made (Kace), seconded (Keller), and carried, it was **RESOLVED** to apply for the funds as described above in the decision reached by the commissioners. Vote: 9:0

5. OPEN SPACE

5.1 Boy Scout Property - There is a public hearing on Wednesday regarding this purchase. Mr. Coyle will present the commission's wishes to purchase the property at this hearing. On January 19, 2022, there will be a Town meeting to vote on this purchase. Since this town meeting date and time coincides with the next RCC meeting, the commission will change the time of their January 19 meeting to 5pm.

5.2 OSWA Grant – Mr. Coyle reports that OSWA agent Ms. Clarke requested the resigning of many of the documents for the application. Mr. Marconi has signed these and the documents have been submitted to OSWA. We await feedback from Ms. Clarke regarding when the payment of the awarded grant money will be effective.

5.3 G08-0012 Land Donation – Mr. Coyle reports that the donation has been approved. 7.5 acres of open space land has been acquired on Route 7 because of this donation.

5.4 Trails – Mr. Shotton reported on the progress he has made regarding his proposal to re-blaze trails in Bennett's Pond State Park. He has been in contact with Nathan Hale of CT DEEP. Mr. Hale was positive about Mr. Shotton's suggestions and referred him to the Friends of Bennett's Pond volunteer group run by Ellen Burns. Ms. Burns was not as positive about the blazing of the unofficial trails in the northern section of the park. Ms. Burns says this area is close to duck breeding grounds and the Friends of Bennett's Pond do not want to encourage hikers to trek past the ducks when they are breeding. The slope in the northern region of the park is steep making trails dangerous and susceptible to erosion.

Mr. Cronin, ex-commissioner, had been in discussions with Mr. Hale about these trails in the past. Mr. Coyle said the response from the state would determine how to move forward. Mr. Coyle will contact Ms. Burns to discuss these trails and a possible compromise.

Ms. Snow would like an updated trail map to include the trail that joins Pine Mountain, Bennett's Pond, Hemlock Hills and Wooster Mountain. Mr. Liptack said these trails are listed on Gaia GIS and can be downloaded from there. Mr. Sharp suggested contacting Mike Malwitz since he works closely with the state regarding trails used by the FCNEMBA group.

5.5 Mr. Coyle will present a proposal to create a conservation easement to protect 90+ properties under the management of the RCC, at the BOS meeting on Wednesday January 5, 2022. These 90+ properties currently have no deed language protecting the land as open space in perpetuity.

6. COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Ms. Linville mentioned that a colorblind friend has explained the difficulty they experience when hiking the trails and suggested using a method of distinguishing trail blazes for colorblind hikers. Dr. Kace suggested contacting the US Forestry Services for assistance. Mr. Keller said that as a colorblind person himself, he can attest to the fact that something needs to be done that the forestry services do not currently do to assist colorblind hikers on the trails. This project could be a future Eagle Scout project. Mr. Sharp will present this suggestion to the Scouts.

7. MEETINGS FOR ATTENDANCE

The commission approved the meeting attendance register for meetings during 2021.

UPON motion duly made (Keller), seconded (Sharp), and carried, it was **RESOLVED** to approve the attendance register for the 2021 meetings as written. Vote: 9:0

Ms. Campbell-Gibson will submit the 2021 Attendance Register to the Town Clerk.

Mr. Levine cannot attend the P&Z meeting on January 11, 2022. Mr. Keller will attend in his place.

8. DOG DEBRIS PICKUP

Mr. Liptack reported on the menace of dog poop bags littering the trails. People pick up their dog's excrement but leave the bag on the trail or at the trailhead. The commission has no resources to clean up this mess and residents will be asked to carry out what they carry in, including what their dogs leave behind. An article will be placed in social media and in the papers to this effect. The RCC has tried to have dog poop bags and bins at trail heads in the past, but residents would then dispose of all sorts of waste in these bins making emptying them a more regular task. As volunteers, the commissioners do not feel they should be using their valuable volunteering time to clean up after residents and their dogs, when it is a very easy task for them to dispose of their litter at home. Signs will also be placed at trailheads to request litter removal by hikers, including their dog's poop.

9. ATV'S ON TRAILS

There have been reports of ATV's using the trails in Pine Mountain. Mr. Sharp said he saw evidence of ATV activity just off the trail near Ives Court. The riders cross the Cioffoletti private property to get to the section of Pine Mountain open space where they are riding.

Unauthorized motorized vehicles are not permitted on trails and in Ridgefield open spaces.

Mr. Coyle said that this problem is not new. A few years ago, the commission asked Mr. Cioffoletti to assist in preventing ATV's from accessing the open space via his property but nothing happened. The police have been approached in the past but they are not able to station an officer on Ives Court for any length of time to catch the riders in action. Ms. Snow suggested putting a chain across the path at the point of entry and Ms. Barbieri suggested adding a sign. These actions would make it abundantly clear to the riders that ATV activity is not permitted and might dissuade them. Mr. Cronin had been in discussion with Mr. Cioffoletti in the past regarding this problem. Ms. Snow suggested placing cameras to try to identify the ATV riders. Mr. Sharp will contact Mr. Cronin for feedback on this issue.

10. INTERNS

Ms. Campbell-Gibson reported that Dan Chittenden, the college intern who is helping with NRI data entry, had been hard at work in the office today. He is doing data checks and entry requested by Dr. Linville. Ms. Campbell-Gibson said she had encouraged Mr. Chittenden to apply for an internship in summer to work on the NRI again since more data will need to be checked and entered then. Mr. Chittenden is taking GIS course this semester and Ms. Campbell-Gibson encouraged him to consider working on the GIS story maps for the NRI update project with the student from Pace University.

The commission has received a request from a Ridgefield High School student regarding a 30-hour per week internship in March/June 2022. The commissioners discussed how the RCC could accommodate interns.

Ms. Campbell-Gibson has tendered her resignation. The commissioners discussed the ramifications of this resignation and because there is no guarantee that a replacement person will be up to speed by the time the interns need to start, the decision was taken not to have high school interns this year.

11. CHAIRMAN'S REMARKS

Mr. Coyle wished to discuss Ms. Campbell-Gibson's resignation as administrative assistant. The vacancy advertisement is due to go out on Tuesday January 4, 2022. Ms. Campbell-Gibson has offered to work remotely until the position is filled, using Zoom to train the new recruit when necessary. Mr. Coyle commented on the valuable contributions made by Ms. Campbell-Gibson during her time with the commission.

ADJOURNMENT

UPON motion duly made (Kace), seconded (Liptack), and carried, it was RESOLVED that the meeting adjourn at 8:51 P.M. Vote: 9:0.