

APPROVED MINUTES



Ridgefield Conservation Commission

Town Hall Annex, 66 Prospect Street
Ridgefield, CT 06877
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Meeting

March 28, 2022 at 7 P.M.

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

Chairman Coyle called the meeting to order at 7 P.M.

1. Approval of Minutes

Mr. Keller made a motion, seconded by Sharp, to approve the minutes of March 14, 2022. Approved 9-0.

Mr. Coyle requested to add an item 3.3 onto the discussion around McKeon Farm concerning the repair of fencing and other issues. Keller made the motion, which was seconded by Sharp, to add the item. Approved 9-0.

2. Enforcement actions: None at this time.

3. McKeon Farm

3.1 Eagle scout project by Emily Fox to replace current set of bog bridges in wetlands area. The bridges' poor condition is an often complaint by hikers. The Commission requested that the bridges be increased in width from 20 to 24 inches and ground 4x4 inch timber supports placed every 4 feet. Fox agreed. Mr. Sharp made a motion, seconded by Ms. Barbieri, to approve \$1,200 for the construction of the walkway. Approved 9-0.

3.2 Eagle Scout project by Petru Zubek to create pollinator garden in fenced-in well area. Project will be executed in mid-May and supervised by Mr. Keller. Based on increased project scope, budget request increased to \$1,300. Keller recused himself from the vote. Motion to approve the budget increase and project made by Ms. Barbieri, seconded by Mr. Sharp. Approved 8-0.

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3.3 McKeon fencing replacement. The RCC will soon have \$9,000 in capital funds, approved by the Town, to spend on fencing. Messrs. Keller, Sharp and Coyle examined the fencing recently at McKeon determining that all posts and 50 percent of all rails needed replacement. Mr. Coyle was able to get an estimate for fencing replacement of \$11/foot, which is extremely favorable when compared to prior estimates ranging from \$24-35/foot. Mr. Keller made a motion, seconded by Ms. Barbieri, to approve the expenditure of approximately \$20,000 to replace all the posts and half the rails on Lauzen Lane and Ridgebury Road. The motion was approved 7-1-1 with Ms. Snow dissenting and Mr. Levine abstaining.

There was also discussion about using asphalt tailings that are in position of the Town's highway department to create a paved parking area off Old Stagecoach road. Ms. Snow raised the concern of the environmental risks concerning this approach. Mr. Keller said he would research the topic and report back to the RCC by the next meeting.

The lease granted to Cornerstone Gardens to use space at McKeon Farm to grow vegetables is up. It was agreed that a new 1-year lease would be drafted by Mr. Coyle.

4. Open Space Preservation Plan

The Commission discussed a wide variety of properties for acquisition. The current focus of the RCC is to have the BOS approve a Townwide open-space declaration for approximately 1,100 acres of property that are not protected, though listed as open space. After that is completed, the RCC will then approach the Town to designate over 100 acres of identified land that is owned by the Town (that is not currently on OS maps) as open space. Mr. Coyle is continuing to speak to State representatives to deed over land currently owned by the State that has open space value. The Commission continues to look for private properties with open space value. The three largest parcels identified comprise approximately 350 acres. The Town has started proceedings to seize a small parcel in western Ridgefield known as the Port of Missing Men. The Commission agreed to continue to seek acquisition opportunities.

5. Invasive plant support letters.

Mr. Keller made a motion, seconded by Ms. Barbieri, to approve two letters in support of better controlling and regulating the sale of invasive plants.

A letter from a homeowner adjacent to an open space parcel was discussed. The homeowner is looking for assistance in the eradication of invasive plants adjacent to the property. A wide discussion ensued concerning the existence and eradication of invasive plants on open space property with opinions ranging from doing nothing to hiring workers to attack the problem. Ms. Snow and Ms. Barbieri volunteered to visit the site and see how bad the situation is and possible remedies. They will report back to the commission at the next meeting.

6. Natural Resource Inventory

Ms. Linville said that the initial kickoff with volunteers and college students went well. For the next few weeks the focus will be on vernal pools. Mr. Coyle requested that Ms. Linville and Ms. Snow present budget numbers for the NRI effort ASAP.

7. Community Outreach

Mr. Levine is finishing the RCC newsletter, which should be out within the next week.

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8. Chairman Remarks

The newly appointed member of the tree commission is unable to join as the member he is to replace has not formerly resigned. It is hoped that this is resolved soon. Another member of the tree commission has resigned and Paul Shotton, who was interviewed by RCC in the prior round of interviews, has been offered and has accepted the position.

Ms. Barbieri, seconded by Mr. Keller, made a motion to end the meeting at 8:50 PM. It was passed 9-0.