



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

Special Meeting
August 09, 2021 at 7 P.M.
Via Zoom

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

Absent: Daniel C. Levine

Guests: Whitney Freeman, Neda Ardalan, Jarret Liotta, David Whitehouse, Karen Pray

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

Call to order.

Mr. Coyle informed those present at the meeting of the meeting format.

Mr. Coyle explained the purpose of the meeting. He then explained the changes made to the new Henny Penny lease, which would include terminology regarding the protection of birds and a limit to the number of sheep allowed to graze on the fields included in the lease agreement.

Mr. Coyle also explained the restrictive covenant under which the Conservation Commission manages and conserves McKeon farm, which includes conserving McKeon as a farm.

1. HENNY PENNY LEASE AGREEMENT

Dr. Freeman gave a presentation on her experience leasing the farm over the past five years. She explained her close interaction with USDA-Natural Resources Conservation Service for guidance and the grants she had received that benefitted McKeon farmland. Dr. Freeman explained her manpower and financial investments in the farm and the benefits the town had received from these. She explained her involvement with the Conservation Stewardship Program and her pending grant from CPS, which will also benefit McKeon farmland.

About CPS grants and contracts: "The program represents a genuine commitment to conservation – CSP contracts are for five years, with the opportunity to compete for a contract renewal if you successfully fulfill the initial contract and agree to achieve additional conservation objectives. An NRCS conservation planner will work closely with you throughout the entire contract process."

Mr. Coyle allowed comments from those members of the public who attended. Everyone was asked to keep their comments factual and to limit their comments to three minutes. Four members of the public spoke.

The comments received indicated there was a concern about a commercial farming operation at McKeon. There was a concern that 150 sheep allowed to graze was too many. (Note: the lease limits the number of sheep to 85.) There was mention by two of the neighbors of odor coming from the farm at times. Everyone who commented thanked Dr. Freeman for the improvements she had made to the farm and the methods she was using, which considers conservation.

The discussion was opened to the commission members.

Dr. Kace made a MOTION to approve the five-year lease extension for Henny Penny Farm, LLC to lease land at McKeon Farm to graze 85 sheep and three llamas. The motion was SECONDED by Mr. Keller.

Every commissioner in turn gave comment on the proposed lease renewal. The discussion included a response to the issues raised in the public comments. Eight of the commissioners complimented and thanked Dr. Freeman for the years of work that she has performed at the farm.

Mr. Welby made a MOTION to postpone consideration of the motion on the table to the next meeting of the Conservation Commission on August 16. There was no second to this motion. The motion did not carry.

The VOTE on the motion on the table: 8:1. MOTION carries.

The draft lease will be submitted to the Board of Selectman for approval.

ADJOURNMENT

UPON motion duly made (Kace), seconded (Keller), and carried, it was RESOLVED that the meeting adjourn at 8:20 P.M. Vote: 9:0.