



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

November 2, 2020 7:00 P.M.

Present: Carroll Brewster Jim Coyle Jack Kace Erik Keller
 Jean Linville Matt Sharp Kitsey Snow Eric Beckenstein
 Dave Cronin Dan Levine Allan Welby
 Beth Peyser – Conservation Enforcement Officer

Guests: Mike Malwitz, Jeremiah Boobar, Quin Mahoney, Jordan Mooney, Joseph Isaac.

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

1. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

The minutes of the October 19, 2020 meeting were approved.

UPON motion duly made (Brewster), seconded (Cronin), (Levine and Welby abstained – absent from October 19 meeting, Snow was not yet present in this meeting to vote) and carried, it was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of October 19, 2020 be approved and ordered filed in the Town Hall.

2. OPEN SPACE

Pierrepont Biker Trail

Mike Malwitz and Jeremiah Boobar of FCNEMBA propose to build a biker trail at Pierrepont Preserve with parts of the trail crossing from state land onto Ridgefield open space land. Their proposal would provide accessibility to more users, provide access to hidden areas of open space land and fix areas with erosion. They require permission from the commission before taking their proposal to the state. The hope is to build this new trail in spring of 2021.

Mr. Keller asked if the new trail would traverse any habitat with rare plants or endangered animals. Mr. Boobar was not aware of any. Mr. Sharp supports this new trail. Mr. Cronin is not enthusiastic about it but acknowledges that it could alleviate congestion at the Hemlock Hills bike trail.

Mr. Coyle asked to walk the site for a better understanding of what is being proposed. A site walk is set for 10 am on Nov 9. Anyone able to join this site walk must meet at the car park on Pine Crest Road. Mr. Malwitz will send a gps file of the route.

Eagle Scout Presentations

- Quin Mahoney – Goodwill Trail Bridges, finished project
Quin's Eagle Scout project saw the completion of two bridges on the Goodwill Trail. The build covered 3 days and took 114 man hours, using up to 17 volunteers. The final cost of his project was \$984.39, which is lower than the approved amount because he could use some of the wood the commission had in storage to build the bridge.
- Jordan Mooney – Hemlock Hills Bridges, finished project
Jordan's Eagle Scout project was to build two bridges in the Hemlock Hills on the green trail. With the help of 10 volunteers and 3 hours work, she managed to complete her project under budget. The approved amount was \$500 but her final cost was \$365. During the project, Jordan was able to use wood from the two old bridges she removed to repair a third bridge that had some rotten wooden beams.

- Joseph Isaac – Ridgebury Educational Trail, new project

Joseph's Eagle Scout project will create an educational trail at Ridgebury Elementary School, to help students and the community appreciate the ecosystem near the school. He will installing two large and 19 small signs on the Horseshoe trail detailing the fauna and flora of the area. He outlined the timeline for his project, aiming to complete it in December. The cost of the signs for this project is being covered by the Ridgebury Elementary PTA. The material costs are to be covered by the Conservation Commission. However, because the number of small signs has increased from 10 to 19, the cost of materials required has increased from \$350 to \$700.

UPON motion duly made (Keller), seconded (Cronin), and carried, it was **RESOLVED** to approve funds of \$700 for the materials required for the Educational Trail at Ridgebury Elementary School proposed by Joseph Isaac. These approved funds replace the previously approved amount of \$350.

Open Space Violations

Ms. Peyser joined the meeting to report back on open space violations being investigated.

- Bike ramps at Lounsbury Lane

There are two ramps off the Jones trail, up the slope. One ramp is made out of wood, another is made from earth dug up and stacked against a fallen tree. Eight small trees were cut to make space for these ramps. Mr. Brewster said he is aware of these ramps and knows who built them. The students have been told that this activity is a violation of open space rules and were asked to remove the ramps. Mr. Brewster's son-in-law will follow-up with the students' parents and help them to remove the violation within two weeks.

- 25 Norrans Ridge dumping

Evidence of garden debris is visible over the stone wall on open space land. A notice of possible violation was issued on October 28, requesting a meeting by November 9.

- John Soluri ramp construction

Evidence of earth disturbance to build a ramp on open space is visible on the Red Trail. Mr. Cronin said this matter would be corrected next spring with the help of the summer workers, since finding who the violators are would be impossible.

- 6 Settlers Lane play structure, dumping and neighbors ice rink

The resident called to say he had removed a play structure and still needed to remove garden debris discovered to be on open space land after a survey of his property lines showed these to be on open space land. Ms. Peyser will follow up with the resident regarding this violation of open space. Another issue exists where the neighbor builds a winter ice rink each year overlapping open space land and 6 Settlers Lane property. Ms. Peyser will follow up on this issue too.

- Pine Mountain Meditation Structure

This structure was determined to be a probable violation of open space use in June 2020 and was to be deconstructed by the end of October 2020. The structure has not been removed yet. The builder of the structure asked how he should dispose of the wood used to build it. The commission ask that the wood be dispersed over the area from which it was collected and not dumped in a single pile. Ms. Peyser will follow up on this issue.

McKeon Farm

- New Gate

A new gate for McKeon Farm was donated and installed by Ron Paltauf. The commissioners all agree the gate looks great and thank Mr. Paltauf for this donation.

- Pollinator Garden

Ms. Snow reports that the plants have been purchased. Planting was rescheduled due to rain. Further expenses for this project are the de-sodding of the garden area, which required a de-sodder and someone to operate it and the cost of seed to reseed the area. Parks and Recreation are able to de-sod the garden area. A quote from a Massachusetts company was \$750 plus mileage for de-sodding.

Parks and Recreation should charge less since mileage is not a cost for them. The cost of the seed will be approximately \$1,700, shared in a 50-50 split between NRWA and the Conservation Commission. Additional funding of about \$1,000 will be required for raking, fencing, and straw. Ms. Snow will confirm this estimate at our next meeting.

UPON motion duly made (Kace), seconded (Welby), and carried (Cronin abstained); it was RESOLVED to approve funds of \$1,600 to de-sod and for half the cost of seed required for the upper meadow.

Mr. Kace requests full cost analysis up front for all future projects to prevent cost creep eating into the budget once projects are approved and implemented.

- Lauzen field potential burn, feedback

Mr. Coyle has not heard back from Mr. Marconi regarding his position on burning Lauzen hayfield. The burn is being considered as an alternative to herbicide use and is being done to control invasive species growing in the field. In order to budget for a burn and seeding of Lauzen field, Mr. Coyle asked MS. Snow and Mr. Welby for a detailed proposal with cost estimate to complete the work. While the USFWS will pick up the cost of the burn, an unknown amount of funding will be needed for seeding and maintenance should the burn be implemented. Ms. Snow suggests revisiting the possibility of a burn next fall. Mr. Welby brought up what Evan Abramson has said about doing a burn at Lauzen hayfield at the same time as other burns planned in the northeast area to keep the cost to a minimum. If the commission applies to USFWS for the burn to take place in the spring when other burns are planned in the northeast, then the cost would be substantially lower. Ms. Linville also suggested that we could possibly pursue some grants for the project. Ms. Snow and Mr. Welby will do the necessary follow-up re this project.

Ms. Snow said she had spoken to Carlos, who has done haying in Lauzen in the past, about cutting the field to 10-inches before winter. Carlos is able to do this with a brush hog.

UPON motion duly made (Kace), seconded (Brewster), and carried, it was RESOLVED to approve \$900 to mow Lauzen hayfield to a length of 10-inches this November. Ms. Snow will follow up with Carlos to get him started.

Lake Windwing ADA compliant trail

Mr. Keller explained the proposal to make a portion of the trail around Lake Windwing accessible to wheelchairs and walkers. The estimated cost from Timber and Stone, the company working on the NRV, is \$125,000 for a 200-foot long boardwalk and 1,100 feet of compacted stone dust. Because Parks and Recreation owns the land, the commission decided to pass on the information on to Phil Kearns, chair of the Parks and Recreation Commission and ask that they consider the project.

3. MEETING ATTENDANCE

P&Z	Nov 4 -	Linville	IWB	Nov 9 -	Snow
	Nov 10 -	Sharp		Nov 23	Welby
	Nov 24	Snow			

No issues were reported with any of the required meeting attendance.

4. PUBLIC OUTREACH

Mr. Sharp suggested articles on winter hiking and the benefits of hiking, which he will write and send to Mr. Levine.

Mr. Keller suggested an article on witch hazel, which he will write up and send to Mr. Levine to post on social media.

5. CAPITAL EXPENSES BUDGET

Mr. Coyle asked for the submission of all capital expenditure proposals by the end of November.

Mr. Coyle will distribute the status of the FY2021 expense budget to the commissioners. He asked for input to budget expenses for FY22. Mr. Cronin suggested a rake attachment for the tractor, which will cost around \$400. Ms. Linville suggested signs at McKeon like the ones going to be installed at Ridgebury Elementary School Horseshoe trail. Mr. Keller said he would work on these signs. Ms. Snow suggested funds be allocated to webinar and seminar costs.

6. CHAIRMAN'S REMARKS

Mr. Coyle and Mr. Keller met with the director of the Golf Course regarding designating some of the land as open space; the outcome looks positive. Mr. Coyle will provide feedback on progress at the next meeting.

The Boy Scout property has a deed restriction on 40 of the 50 acres. The commission will continue negotiations with the scout council.

There are approximately 1,300 acres of Section-490 property in Ridgefield possibly worth pursuing for deed restriction or conservation easement purposes.

Mr. Cronin reported that he has found locks on the gates of open space land that do not belong to the commission. Nobody he has asked knows who has the keys to these locks or why conservation commission locks were removed. He will cut these locks off and buy new locks for these gates.

Mr. Cronin also indicated that a number of our parking lots need repair of their surfaces. Ms. Campbell-Gibson will contact Parks and Rec about doing this work as Highways has indicated that they are unable to do the repairs.

Mr. Coyle asked Ms. Campbell-Gibson to report on a request received from Eileen Murphy regarding placing a geocache in Nod Hill Preserve. Ms. Campbell-Gibson said Eileen had asked permission for a premium cache to be placed. Mr. Welby said he has no objection to the placement of a cache. The rest of the commissioners agreed.

Ms. Snow wanted to remind the commissioners of the library of conservation books in the conservation office. A list of books and a sign out sheet is available in a folder in the tall grey cabinet that houses these books. Ms. Snow donated a book and encourages other commissioners to take out books and to donate conservation books they have read and want to share.

The next RCC meeting will be held on Monday, November 16, 2020 at 7:00 P.M.

ADJOURNMENT

UPON motion duly made (Brewster), seconded (Cronin), and carried, it was **RESOLVED** that the meeting adjourn at 9:21 P.M.