



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

**FEBRUARY 8, 2021 at 7 P.M.**  
**Via ZOOM**

Present:      Carroll Brewster              Jim Coyle              Allan Welby              Erik Keller  
                 Jean Linville              Matt Sharp              Jim Liptack              Dave Cronin  
                 Kitsey Snow              Jack Kace

Absent:        Daniel C. Levine

Guests:        Debra Long, Lisa Andrzejewski, Robert Roth, Steve Lavatori, Daniel O'Brien

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

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## **1. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

**UPON** motion duly made (Cronin), seconded (Keller), and carried, it was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of January 20, 2021 be approved and ordered filed in the Town Hall.

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## **2. TREE COMMITTEE**

### Membership

The Conservation Commission may appoint four members to the Tree Committee per the Town Charter. In February 2020, two positions expired but due to Covid-19, the Tree Committee did not meet during 2020 and reappointments did not take place on this committee. Two more positions expire in February 2021, meaning that this year all four Conservation Commission appointments to the Tree Committee require reappointment.

Ann Dunnington, Cheryl Ann Cook and Eileen White have expressed interest in being reappointed to the Tree Committee. Mr. Coyle will notify the First Selectman's office of their intention to serve another term and convey the Conservation Commission's recommendation for their reappointment.

A single vacancy is available. This vacancy was advertised and seven applications were received. Two candidates were interviewed by the commission: Lisa Andrzejewski and Debra Long.

### Lisa Andrzejewski

She completed a certificate in Energy and Environmental Law. She worked with the Town of Rocky Hill on their bamboo remediation program, has worked with DEEP, as well as serving as the vice chairperson on the Inland Wetlands Commission of Seymour and as the vice chairperson for the Recreation Department of Seymour. Ms. Andrzejewski now works for Robinson & Cole in construction litigation.

Mr. Keller asked what Ms. Andrzejewski sees as the role of the Tree Committee in Ridgefield and if volunteers could accomplish the tasks. Ms. Andrzejewski answered to advise, review plantings, resolve tree related issues and to spearhead education programs regarding trees in town and stated that willing volunteers could accomplish a great deal and do a lot of good.

Ms. Snow asked what Ms. Andrzejewski's commitment was to using native as opposed to non-native trees in Ridgefield. Ms. Andrzejewski answered that she has no preference but that the choice of tree should always consider the use of native trees first if possible. She said she would be willing to learn all about trees and their best use in town.

#### Debra Long

She is a Mechanical Test Engineer supporting the aerospace engineer industry with vibration, thermal, and vacuum testing. Ms. Long has a M.S. in Mechanical Engineering and a B.S. in Aerospace Engineering. She currently works at Danbury Mission Technologies.

Mr. Keller asked Ms. Long what she thought the Tree Committees job was in dealing with the Ash tree problem in Ridgefield. (The Emerald Ash Borer Beetle, an invasive insect alien to Connecticut is killing off Ash trees). Ms. Long said the first step was to research the issue. She suggested educating the public on the issue. Mr. Keller asked how Ms. Long would balance the beauty of a tree with the maintenance requirements when considering trees to plant along Main Street. Ms. Long said that aesthetics was important to her, and that choices should be in keeping with what already exists.

Mr. Brewster asked Ms. Long if she thought the Tree Committee should have responsibility for trees in the forest or just along Main Street. Ms. Long said that other areas were as important but that consideration should be given to not over extend the committee.

The commissioners will deliberate further. A vote to appoint one of the candidates will take place at the meeting scheduled for February 22, 2021.

#### Tree Committee

Present at this meeting were Robert Roth, chairman, and Steve Lavatori, tree warden for the Tree Committee. Mr. Roth reported that 100 plus trees were taken down due to damage by the ash borer beetle or storm damage. The Tree Committee intend planting a tree in honor of John Pinchbeck, the previous, now deceased tree warden. Mr. Coyle offered the support of the Conservation Commission for the planting of the memorial tree.

Mr. Cronin asked Mr. Roth if the Tree Committee have a position on invasive trees. Mr. Roth said the committee have no plans to replace trees unless they die. Then they will be replaced by native trees where possible. He said there will be a number of maple trees lost during the Main street upgrade.

Mr. Daniel O'Brien, chairman of the Historic Society of Ridgefield, was also a guest in the meeting to discuss the trees on Main Street, said the Historic Society is interested in the treescape as it is part of the history of the town. The Historic Society is concerned by the number of trees coming down and are requesting information on the long term plan the Tree Committee have for the town. Mr. Lavatori, the tree warden, said the immediate concern is taking down the affected Ash trees. He agreed that the trees removed must be replaced. Mr. O'Brien asked if there were budget constraints and offered assistance from the Historic Society in replacing trees along Main Street. Mr. Lavatori said the selectman's office is aware of the need for budget to replace trees and mentioned that there is grant money to be used for this project.

Mr. Welby asked Mr. Lavatori how the relationship with Eversource was with regard to cutting trees along power lines. Mr. Lavatori said that Eversource had been great in responding to requests to remove overhanging branches and trees in danger of falling on power lines.

Dr. Kace stated that the concern of the commission was clearcutting done by developers and asked if there was something the tree warden could do about that. Mr. Lavatori said that trees on private property are difficult to protect because the tree warden has no jurisdiction and added that he had not heard any complaints about tree clearing. Dr. Kace asked is a tree ordinance would be considered. Mr. Roth said that that had been considered in the past but nothing had been finalized.

### 3. OPEN SPACE

#### McKeon – Henny Penny Farm Report by Whitney Freeman

Ms. Freeman leases pastures at McKeon to graze sheep and llama. This 5-year lease expires in 2022. There are license agreements that run for one year at a time restricting the number of animals allowed on the farm and the pasture areas to be used. In 2020, Ms. Freeman had 28 adult sheep, 21 lambs and 4 llamas between four and five paddocks, separating sheep by age and gender (and breed at times). Ms. Freeman sent her 2020 report to the commission a week in advance for everyone to read. In summary, she said that 2020 was a good grazing year. Soil tests were done to determine calcium, magnesium, phosphorus, potassium, organic matter, and pH levels. These tests show that where liming was done there was improvement in the soil.

Her plan for 2021 is to request to be allowed to graze 36 adult sheep, up to 55 lambs and 4 llamas at McKeon as she feels that a flock this size will make a positive grazing impact on plant diversity and soil health. By 2023, she would like to graze 50 adult sheep and 100 lambs seasonally at McKeon and said that if Ridgebury 1 and Stagecoach 2 improved, this would be feasible. She has applied for a grant to improve the livestock farming at McKeon.

Ridgebury 1 and Stagecoach 1 and 2 need liming. Ridgebury 1 needs an increased pH level to aid the germination of grass seeds. Ridgebury 2 needs seeding. The orchard has shown an increase in phosphorus levels, organic matter and pH.

Ms. Freeman suggests planting trees to break the wind across the pasture. She also suggests more easily seen trail markers for people hiking on the farm as many say they cannot find the path. Lastly, she asked about parking allocation for the increase in visitors to the farm.

Mr. Coyle said that the deed restrictions amendment to move the parking allocation has been approved and signed. People were mostly parking on Lauzen Lane at present. Dr. Linville said that there are plans to install signs and trail maps installed along the trail. Mr. Keller added that the signs would resolve the issue of hikers walking across the fields unable to find the trail path.

Dr. Linville expressed concern over the increase in phosphorus levels in the apple orchard – rising from 5 lbs. per acre in 2017, to 56 lbs. per acre in 2021. This nutrient loading could get into the water table. Dr. Linville suggests soil testing be done on an annual basis as well as water testing to determine nutrient load. She suggested liming with a calcium-based product to curb the increase in magnesium levels.

Mr. Welby asked how raising the herd annually to 150 sheep by 2023 would benefit the Conservation Commission. Ms. Freeman said that conservation of habitat and conservation of farmland was not mutually exclusive. The grazing of livestock encourages a diversity of plants and nutrients, which encourages diversity in insect and small animal life. If she had a larger flock, she would move them often and supplement grazing with rolled hay bales, which introduce grass seeds to the pasture. Dr. Linville asked if there is a density standard. Ms. Freeman answered that she calculates grazing days by the number of animal units and this year she saw she could accommodate more animals. Dr. Kace said the Conservation Commission should only discuss an increase in the number of animals when more data was available regarding the phosphorus levels and when a water test had been done to determine nutrient load. Ms. Freeman said she would reach out to Diane Blais at the USDA-NRCS to discuss the development of a Nutrient Management Plan and to explain the results.

Mr. Coyle expressed appreciation to Ms. Freeman for all she has done at McKeon. He suggested Ms. Freeman continue this discussion at the next meeting to be held on Monday February 22. He reiterated the commissioners concern that an increase in the number of animals could negatively impact the farm.

#### Posting on Open Space

Mr. Cronin reported that the result of the commissioners investigating the presence of postings on open spaces allocated to them was that there are minimal postings. He suggests gradually posting all the open space parcels along roadways over the next few years. Mr. Coyle added that a new Conservation

Enforcement Officer was to be appointed and since 5 hours per week are allocated to work for the commission and we could request some of that time is used to post unposted open spaces.

Dr. Kace said that open spaces abutting private properties should be posted to prevent dumping. Mr. Cronin said that posting adjacent to private property has been difficult in the past because residents remove the signs.

#### NRVT

Ms. Snow indicated that she would not report on this at this meeting and requests to move this item to the next meeting.

#### Tree Planting Grant

Ms. Snow will send an email to the commissioners regarding this item tomorrow.

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### **4. PUBLIC OUTREACH**

Mr. Levine was unable to attend the meeting to give input on the progress of the RCC Newsletter.

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### **5. MEETING ATTENDANCE**

No issues were reported with the required meeting attendance.

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### **6. CHAIRMAN'S REMARKS**

Mr. Coyle reported that he and Dr. Kace were present at the budget meeting with the BOS last week to discuss the budget for 2022. The FY2021 budget is \$41,000; the requested budget for FY2022 is \$45,000 but Mr. Marconi approved only \$40,000. Ms. Manners and Ms. Kozlark were against this decrease in budget and persuaded Mr. Marconi to review it again.

The Conservation Commission is projected to be \$4,500 over budget this year. Mr. Coyle suggests using discretionary funds to cover the costs of the pollinator garden at McKeon. Mr. Coyle also indicated the need to cut expenses for the remainder of this fiscal year ending June 30, 2021.

Mr. Coyle reported that the BOS has appointed Jim Liptack as an alternate member to the commission. Mr. Liptack will be sworn in next week.

The amendment to the Restrictive Covenant at McKeon was approved. A signed copy of the document was received today.

Dr. Linville asked if the Tree Committee could report to the commission at least twice per year going forward.

The next RCC meeting will be held on **Monday** February 22, 2021 at 7:00 P.M.

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### **ADJOURNMENT**

**UPON** motion duly made (Brewster), seconded (Keller), and carried, it was RESOLVED that the meeting adjourn at 9:03 P.M.