



APPROVED MINUTES
Ridgefield Conservation Commission
Town Hall annex, 66 Prospect Street
Ridgefield, CT 06877
(203) 431-2713 • conservation@ridgefieldct.org
June 21, 2021 at 7 P.M.
Via ZOOM

Present: Allan Welby Erik Keller Jack Kace
Jean Linville Kitsey Snow Matt Sharp

Absent: Jim Coyle Daniel C. Levine Dave Cronin Jim Liptack

Guests: Whitney Freeman

Dr. Kace chaired the meeting. Ms. Campbell-Gibson took the minutes.

1. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

UPON motion duly made (Sharp), seconded (Linville), and carried, it was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of June 7, 2021 be approved and ordered filed in the Town Hall. Vote: 4:0. Abstain 1 (Keller, not present in the meeting on June 7, Snow not yet present in this meeting to vote).

2. McKEON FARM

Stagecoach 1

Dr. Kace asked Mr. Welby to update us on the status of the bobolinks in Stagecoach 1. Whitney Freeman previously agreed to stop any further mowing or grazing of Stagecoach 1 because Bobolink were spotted singing in that field. Mr. Welby said that there has been no more Bobolink activity at McKeon. Mr. Sharp said he had not seen any Bobolink at McKeon since the week before the last conservation meeting. Ms. Freeman said that if there is no bird activity there, she would like to mow and graze the sheep in the field for the remainder of the season. She added that having left the field for three weeks so far has caused the quality of the grass to deteriorate. Mr. Welby said he would like the field left ungrazed for the season. Mr. Keller said that Ms. Freeman has a contract to use Stagecoach 1 for grazing. It was the consensus of the Commission that Ms. Freeman should continue to use the field again.

Parking Lot

Mr. Sharp said that the summer workers are able to extend the carpark area off Old Stagecoach Road. Mr. Keller suggested using the existing posts and rails, and to co-ordinate with Ms. Freeman when the best time to work in that area would least affect her access to the farm. Ms. Freeman asked if the car park work could be done in mid-July to give her time to plan and move her fencing. Mr. Welby asked what was being done to make the entrance/exit on old Stagecoach Road safer. Mr. Sharp said the summer workers would cut the brush and grass back and removed invasives from the stone wall to improve visibility into the road.

UPON a motion duly made (Keller) and seconded (Sharp) to schedule a time that suits Ms. Freeman and the summer workers' schedule to expand the car park off Old Stagecoach Road at McKeon. Vote: 5:0 (Snow not yet present in this meeting to vote)

Lauzen Field Haying/Mowing

This item was delayed until the end of the meeting to include Ms. Snow's input to the conversation.

Ms. Snow reports that she spoke to Carlos Trigueros regarding haying Lauzen field. He said he could come this week when he is doing John Katz's fields, in which case he would hay the field for free. Haying and baling requires cutting the grass to the ground. Ms. Snow mentioned Dr. Linville emailed the studies

regarding haying to all commissioners. It suggest leaving 15% of a field unhayed for the bees as a refuge during haying. The unmowed portion should be rotated each year. She will get more information on the bees when the entomologist does another bee count this year. Dr. Kace said the ground-nesting bees usually choose non-vegetated areas to nest.

Ms. Snow suggests asking Carlos to cut 2/3 of Lauzen as well as the upper meadow this week. This will be done for free if we do it now. If the field is cut after August 1, Carlos will charge for this service if the grass is not of good enough quality to be used as hay.

Mr. Welby said he would like the haying to be done after August 1st. Dr. Linville said that if the grass in Lauzen is cut later in the year and cannot be used for hay, it must still be removed because leaving it lying in the field is not good for the grass.

UPON a motion duly made (Keller) and seconded (Linville) to request that Carlos Trigueros hay and bale $\frac{3}{4}$ of the Lauzen field within a week of August 1, and to possibly co-ordinate this with when he hays the fields at John Katz farm. Vote: 5:0, abstain: 1 (Snow, requires more information).

3. OSWA Grant Open Space Acquisition

Cost of survey for DEEP requirements for Bear Mountain Property

Dr. Kace told the commissioners that the new survey required by DEEP in order for the grant money assigned to the commission to be realized, was a highly detailed survey that includes pinning. The lowest quote received for this task is \$12,500.00. A more detailed and description in the deed is required. The town attorney has written this description.

UPON a motion duly made (Keller) and seconded (Sharp) the commission approve the amount of \$13,000.00 to have a detailed survey with pinning completed, pending DEEP's acceptance of the land description done by Mr. Grogins. Vote: 5:0

4. Boy Scout Property Acquisition Update

Dr. Kace reports the title search is complete. There is 42 acres under deed restrictions and 15 acres that the Boy Scouts would like to sell to the commission. Mr. Sharp said the commission have record of five acres of this land having a conservation easement on it, leaving only 10 acres to purchase. Dr. Kace added that information has been sent to the Boy Scouts for comment and that both the commission and the Boy Scouts are eager for this deal to move forwards. Mr. Keller added that if the sale could be decided soon, it would give the commission enough time to apply for an OSWA grant for funds to purchase the land.

5. ENFORCEMENT ACTION

Tanglewood Court

Dr. Kace said that the conservation enforcement officer, Andy Hally, had written a report on the open space violation and states that he sees three violations: 1) mowing of open space land, 2) past dumping of grass cuttings and leaves on open space land, 3) recent dumping of shrubs and leaves on open space land. Dr. Kace asked the commission if the commission were to agree to allow Mr. Zusel to continue to mow to curb invasive growth. Dr. Linville said mowing once per year before seeds form would curb invasive growth. Mr. Keller said he did not agree with allowing a resident to mow open space land because further encroachment could occur and it sets a precedence. Dr. Kace said he would inform Mr. Hally to proceed with returning the encroached area to its natural state.

6. ROAD SIGN

"Turtle Crossing" sign for Farmingville Road

Mr. Welby gave feedback from an IWB meeting he attended where they requested the Conservation Commission pay for two signs to be installed on Farmingville Road and the intersection of Ligi's Way, that say "Turtles Crossing". This is a high traffic area. Ms. Linville said that "Turtle Crossing" signs in other parts of town were taken down. Mr. Keller said the Highway Department should approve and install the signs to prevent this happening. Mr. Sharp suggested setting up a "GoFundMe" account to collect money for these signs. Dr. Kace said he thinks the commission should pay for two and if further signs were required in town, funding by donation could be considered. Dr. Kace will give this feedback to the IWB. Ms. Campbell-Gibson is tasked with buying two "Turtle Crossing" signs.

UPON a motion duly made (Keller) and seconded (Welby) the commission agree to fund the purchase of two signs for the Highway Department to install at their cost at the location on Farmingville Road determined by the IWB. Vote: 5:0 (Snow not yet present in this meeting to vote.)

7. NRI UPDATE

Dr. Linville spoke to the executive director of Hudsonia, Eric Kiviat and the director of the Biodiversity Resource Center, Gretchen Stevens. They will assist with the NRI update in the form of guidance and a paid service. The cost of their input is to be determined once the scope of the work is decided. Dr. Linville will contact Michael Rubbo of Pace University for assistance with updating the vernal pool information. John Thompson has agreed to do drone photography. He still needs to submit his cost to Dr. Linville.

Dr. Linville said her contacts at Hudsonia suggest the commission focus on a few areas of concern and not to try to revisit every site. Volunteers are needed to assist with the NRI update project to keep costs down. There is grant money available to cover some of the costs of updating the NRI. Mr. Keller suggested asking the town to pay for a portion of the project. Dr. Kace added that he heard that the previous NRI was partially funded by Planning and Zoning.

8. CUMMUNITY OUTREACH

Mr. Levine was not present in the meeting to give an update on this topic.

9. MEETINGS FOR ATTENDANCE

Mr. Keller queried his meeting assignments. Ms. Campbell-Gibson will forward the annually scheduled meeting list to all commissioners to show the changes made when commissioners ask to swop with one another when they are unable to attend on their assigned day.

10. CHAIRMAN'S REMARKS

The final budget is projected to be under by approximately \$670.00. Last minute expenses should not exceed this amount and need to be submitted before the end of the financial year.

The next RCC meeting will be held on **Wednesday** July 7, 2021 at 7:00 P.M.

ADJOURNMENT

UPON motion duly made (Keller), seconded (Sharp), and carried, it was RESOLVED that the meeting adjourn at 8:23 P.M. Vote:6:0

SUPPORTING DOCUMENTS:

Haying information referenced during the meeting:

<https://journals.plos.org/plosone/article?id=10.1371/journal.pone.0085635>

<https://xerces.org/publications/guidelines/establishing-pollinator-meadows-from-seed>

<https://vtfishandwildlife.com/learn-more/landowner-resources/wildlife-habitat-management-a-landowners-guide>.