



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

July 7, 2021 at 7 P.M.
In Person

Present: Allan Welby Erik Keller Dave Cronin Jim Liptack
Matt Sharp Daniel C. Levine Roberta Barbieri
Andrew Hally (Conservation Enforcement Officer)

Absent: Jack Kace Kitsey Snow Jean Linville

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

1. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

UPON motion duly made (Sharp), seconded (Keller), and carried, it was **RESOLVED** that the minutes of the meeting of June 21, 2021 be approved and ordered filed in the Town Hall.

2. ENFORCEMENT ACTION

34 Rustic Road

Mr. Hally, Conservation Enforcement Officer (CEO) for the Conservation Commission (RCC) and Inland Wetlands Agent, and Mr. Baldelli of Planning and Zoning visited the Rustic Road violation site in a Zoning and Wetlands capacity resulting in Inland Wetland violations. Wetlands violations are handled by the Inland Wetland Board.

A serious violation of our open space use ordinance was identified across the road from 34 Rustic Road. The site has been cleared for recreation purposes, land fill had been brought in to level the land to the water's edge, and a jetty has been built into the lake. The owner of 34 Rustic Road said her parents had owned the house and cleared the area. In 2012 she had built the jetty. Mr. Hally drafted a Notice of Probable Violation (NOPV) to the home owner at 34 Rustic Road for a series of open space violations.

UPON motion duly made (Cronin), seconded (Keller), and carried, it was **RESOLVED** to instruct the CEO to issue a the NOPV to the homeowner of 34 Rustic Road for the violation of open space rules documented in Mr. Hally's report. Vote: 6:0 (Welby and Barbieri not yet in attendance).

Mr. Hally invited the commissioners to attend the IWB meeting on July 22 when the homeowner will appear before the board. He explained the essential steps involved in mitigation of violation of wetlands: removal of all improvements and submission of a mitigation plan.

25 Tanglewood Court

Mr. Hally visited the site on June 14, 2021 to follow up on a NOPV sent by the commission. He found that Mr. Zusel was still mowing the area in violation of open space rules and perennials had been dumped in open space next to Mr. Zusel's property. The CEO drafted a Notice of Violation (NOV) for RCC approval.

UPON a motion duly made (Keller) and seconded (Sharp) it was resolved to instruct the CEO to issue the NOV addressing the violations documented in Mr. Hally's report. Vote: 7:0 (Welby not yet in attendance).

Other Enforcement Actions

Mr. Hally will address the possible violation at 125 Norrans Ridge Road.

Other possible violations to be addressed include dumping at Old Trolley Road and a trail in Casey Lane/Mar-Joy Pond Preserve.

Mr. Hally invited the commissioners to read and comment on a development plan approved by the Town of Redding, for a project that is within 50feet of the Ridgefield/Redding border. The address of the development is 241 Ethan Allan Rd.

3. FINANCIAL REPORT

Ms. Campbell-Gibson reported on the financial year ending FY2021. The commission spent \$41,025.49 of their \$41,532.00 FY2021 budget. The 2020 Annual Appeal was doing well with donations still coming in.

4. SIGNS FOR McKEON FARM

Mr. Keller and Dr. Linville have created trail signs for McKeon Farm. These were sent to the commissioners for comment. Edits have been made based on the feedback received. These should be ready for installation in the fall. Mr. Sharp asked how the signs will be mounted. Mr. Keller mentioned one sign that would be best installed at an angle, and based on Mr. Cronin's recommendation to reduce weathering, the rest of the signs should be best installed upright. Mr. Keller asked if the trail could be extended to include the apple orchard, and therefore a sign could be created for it. Mr. Sharp agreed that this would be an easy task and would be a good addition to the existing trail. Mr. Cronin felt that a trail there was unnecessary.

5. NORWALK DAM DEMOLITION

An environmental assessment report by the Natural Resource Conservation Service meets the requirements of such an assessment but Mr. Coyle feels the RCC may not have the necessary expertise to comment on the detailed engineering analysis of floodplain impacts as a result of the removal of the dam as opposed to increasing the dam capacity to cope with a 500-year flood event.

Mr. Welby attended the town meeting held by the First Selectman for the town's residents to comment on the project. He reports that though he is in favor of the dam being removed for environmental reasons, the townsfolk and the selectmen are against its removal due to increased flood possibility on a regular basis for at least 12 homes in the flood zone. A retired town engineer (possibly Mr. Charlie Fisher, though Mr. Welby could not confirm this) testified at the hearing and is also against the removal of the dam. The NRCS assessed the possibility of a breach of the dam during a 500-year storm and came to the conclusion that it is cheaper to remove the dam than it is to increase its holding capacity.

Mr. Liptack commented that the decision regarding removal or to increase its capacity, is between the federal and state governments. Mr. Coyle will contact Ms. Sesto of the IWB for input. The commission will discuss this again after further consultation.

6. DEEP BIOASSESSMENT BY VOLUNTEERS

Ms. Barbieri responded to a request from DEEP that the RCC partner with them to accumulate data regarding the bugs found in stream riffles. This project will determine the health of the waterways. It will be done in the fall. The RCC is asked to find volunteers, who will be trained using DEEP training material, and then be lead on a weekend data collection excursion. Ms. Barbieri will captain this initiative and stay in

contact with the DEEP representative regarding obligations and outcomes. Mr. Cronin mentioned that a project like this was done during the last NRI project.

7. BEECH TREE LEAF DISEASE

Mr. Levine reported a concern to the commission of a disease that is killing beech trees in the Ridgefield forests. Ms. Barbieri asked if Ridgefield has a tree inventory. Mr. Cronin said there was none but there is a book of notable trees in Ridgefield. Mr. Coyle suggests this matter be brought to the attention of the Tree Committee. Mr. Welby suggested informing the public about the disease, with information on what to expect. Mr. Levine will include this information in the next RCC newsletter. Mr. Keller will write the article.

Mr. Keller spoke of numerous ash trees he had removed from his property in the past. He said the canopy of these trees was so thick that nothing grew on the forest floor. Since removing the ash trees, he has seen saplings of Cherry, Hickory, Maple and Black Birch grow in their place. The point of mentioning this is to highlight that though the loss of trees is a worry, sometimes it is necessary to thin out a dense canopy to let the sunlight reach the forest floor to allow other tree species to flourish in their place. He cautioned that if invasive species are seen, these must be kept at bay while indigenous sapling species take hold.

8. OPEN SPACE PRESERVATION PLAN

Mr. Coyle has prepared a document for this plan and sent it to the commissioners for comment. He reports that he has received comments from three commissioners and has addressed those in the document. The goal is to have the document ready to submit to Sustainable CT by their August deadline.

9. COMMUNITY OUTREACH

Mr. Levine will prepare the next newsletter for distribution in September. Commissioners are reminded to submit articles and photos for inclusion.

10. MEETINGS FOR ATTENDANCE

Mr. Levine cannot attend the P&Z meeting on July 13. Mr. Welby will attend on his behalf. Mr. Cronin is unable to attend the July 8 IWB meeting. Ms. Barbieri will attend on his behalf.

11. CHAIRMAN'S REMARKS

Mr. Coyle welcomed Ms. Roberta Barbieri as the newest member of the commission. Ms. Barbieri was sworn in at town hall this morning as an alternate member of the RCC.

A special meeting of the RCC will be held on August 9, 2021 to discuss the renewal of the lease for Henny Penny Farm.

The next RCC meeting will be held on **Monday** July 19, 2021 at 7:00 P.M.

ADJOURNMENT

UPON motion duly made (Barbieri), seconded (Keller), and carried, it was **RESOLVED** that the meeting adjourn at 8:25 P.M. Vote: 8:0.