

APPROVED MINUTES



Ridgefield Conservation Commission

Town Hall Annex, 66 Prospect Street

Ridgefield, CT 06877

(203) 431-2713 • conservation@ridgefieldct.org

Meeting September 19, 2022 at 7PM

Present: Peter Nichols
Allan Welby

James Coyle
Matt Sharp
Jim Liptack

Jack Kace
Jean Linville
Benjamin Nissim

Erik Keller
Kitsey Snow

Absent: Roberta Barbieri

Chairman Coyle called the meeting to order at 7 P.M.

1. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

UPON motion duly made (Keller), seconded (Liptack), and carried, it was RESOLVED that the minutes of the meeting of September 7, 2022 be approved and ordered filed in Town Hall. Vote: 8:0

2. ENFORCEMENT ACTION

Mr. Coyle gave an update on the two enforcement actions:

- 162 Old West Mountain Road is moving slowly. Mr. Coyle will have another conversation with the town's counsel and push them to contact the property owners counsel to resolve the NOV and fine.
- an NOV has been issued to the owner of 258 West Mountain Road. RCC will work with Andy Hally on the best path forward to remove the fence posts on RCC property.

3. OPEN SPACE

3.1 BS Property Trails

Mr. Sharp will arrange another site visit for the proposed trails at Pine Mountain in Spring, Summer and Fall.

3.2 Trail Closure

Mr. Liptack explained the closure process in opening a more sustainable trail to connect around other portions of trails that have been completely overused and to move bikers off the yellow trail. Signs will be added to closed trails. Ms. Snow to follow up with Mr. Rubbio to address trails in Hemlock Hills, Pine Mountain and Sarah Bishop. Mr. Sharp to get in touch with Dave to make the changes on the trail maps.

UPON motion duly made (Keller), seconded (Liptack), and carried, it was RESOLVED that the RCC move forward with phase 1 of the Pine Mountain property, discontinuing a portion of the orange trail and replacing it with the red trail. 8:1 Ms. Snow has not walked the trails yet to be able to see the changes.

3.3 Parking Pine Mountain

Dave Buccitti has proposed a meeting with RCC, highways, police chief, and first selectman as in the past some residents have expressed safety concerns. Ultimate goal is to make the parking for the trails and roadway as safe as possible.

4. NATIVE PLANT POLICY

The Native Plants Policy is on the agenda at the BOS meeting September 21st. Mr. Coyle and Ms. Snow discussed the new policy, which was to be written as an ordinance versus a policy, and now has changed back to a policy. If approved by the BOS, Ridgefield will be one of the first towns in CT to have a native plants policy to mandate 100% native plants on all town property.

5. NRI UPDATE

Ms. Linville gave an update and hopes to have revisions of the NRI maps by our next meeting for review. RCC would like to overlay trails and vernal pools onto the GIS maps. Mr. Coyle to investigate where the town is on updating its GIS system.

6. NEW BUSINESS

Mr. Coyle mentioned a request from a property owner of Lot 6 Wilton Road East and their hope to reconfigure a conservation easement on the property. The owner has approval for a brook crossing on their property, however a wetlands engineer proposed moving the crossing to the conservation easement lot as this would have less impact on the wetlands and the environment. The RCC will make a plan to walk the property in the coming weeks and is generally in favor of the proposed plan. However, the RCC needs to understand all legal constraints attached to the easement.

Mr. Coyle discussed the RCC's tree removal/reporting process. As of now if a tree located on open space falls on one's property, then it is the property owner's responsibility to take care of it. The Town does have a reporting system and tree warden. However, he is often inundated with requests and operating on a very limited budget. RCC will reach out to understand how other towns may handle similar situations, as well as discuss with the Tree Committee, to see how the RCC can support the Tree Warden and Committee to request more funds from the Town.

Ms. Snow reached out to the Tree Committee in regards to the Beech Tree Leaf disease and would like to get the Highway Department involved to help in a concerted effort to manage the Tree of Heaven and the Spotted Lantern Fly. Ms. Snow will try to meet with the Tree Committee September 21st to discuss options and possible group meetings.

Mr. Welby will have another hawk watch on September 24th at McKeon Farm.

Mr. Keller is in the process of updating the RCC Fall Newsletter, which will be sent out in a couple of weeks. All commissioners are encouraged to provide articles for the newsletter.

8. MEETINGS FOR ATTENDANCE

P&Z

September 28 – Linville
October 11 - Nichols

IWB

September 22 – Snow
October 13 – Barbieri

9. CHAIRMAN'S REMARKS

Mr. Coyle mentioned RCC is on the BOS meeting schedule for Wednesday September 21st regarding the proposed Open Space Declaration. Of the roughly 1,100 acres for which we were asking for additional

protection, we should receive approval for about 1,000 acres. Both Prospect Ridge and East Ridge properties (approximately 44 acres) will be removed from our Open Space Inventory.

ADJOURNMENT

UPON motion duly made (Keller), seconded (Sharp), and carried, it was RESOLVED that the meeting adjourned at 8:49 P.M. Vote: 9:0.