



TOWN OF RIDGEFIELD INLAND WETLANDS BOARD
Web Based Meeting Hosted on Zoom

DRAFT MINUTES

These minutes are a general summary of the meeting and are not a verbatim transcription.

October 9, 2025

Members present: Susan Baker, Chair; Keith Carlson, Noah Berkowicz, Alan Pilch, Recording Secretary; Tim Bishop, Vice Chair; David Smith

Members Absent: Carson Fincham

Also present: Caleb Johnson, Inland Wetlands Agent; Beth Peyser, Recording Secretary.

I. Call to order:

Ms. Baker, Chair, called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM. A quorum was present.

II: Discussion:

- 1. IW-25-35; 14 Rowland Lane, 35 East Ridge, 43 East Ridge, 34 Market Street; Summary Ruling** application for dredging and debris clearing along the Rowland Lane watercourse at the above four properties within the upland review area of wetlands and watercourses. Owner: 14 Rowland Lane - Seth Byerley; 35 East Ridge – James Zegarelli; 43 East Ridge – William Najam; 34 Market Street – Douglas Barile. Applicant: Town of Ridgefield - Jacob Muller. <https://ridgefieldct.portal.opengov.com/records/102170>

Mr. Muller, Town of Ridgefield, presented the application on behalf of the Town of Ridgefield. Mr. Muller provided a brief background of the flooding issues associated with the properties on this application which is why they have submitted an application to dredge the watercourse along these properties to help the home owners. Joseph Canas, of Tighe & Bond, presented the plan as the design engineer on the project. He shared the design on the screen as he walked the IWB through the plans. The proposed work is between Rowland Lane and Market Street. The project covers a very large area and volume of dredging and debris with erosion control measures during the dredging event. Mr. Muller added that the Town has a majority of funding in place as part of MS4 mitigation efforts during the next construction season.

IWB discussion ensued on topics such as proposed equipment used (an excavator); time of year for activity (low flow periods between June and September); anti-tracking pad for access (stone); restoration and planting plan for around the pond (there is not currently one because it is on private property with work being done by the town, but not opposed); long term maintenance plan to prevent the need for future dredging; bottom of forebay material for maintenance purposes (proposed cobbly bottom because a hard bottom would be incredibly large); depth of water in the forebay; easement or permanent access (a temporary construction access with a permanent maintenance agreement with the land owners); opportunities for LID approaches upstream such as tree boxes or other opportunities to reduce peak runoff (the watershed is so large that there are limited direct impacts it feels like the cumulative impact of all in a very heavily developed and dense old neighborhood – Mr. Muller suggested an area to the southeast of East Ridge and into the northeast corner of parking lot, it is in conceptual stages for disconnect and water quality issues); and where will the dredged materials be placed (taken off site); planted mitigation plan (open to further discussion).

Suggested Condition of approval:

- Activity must occur during low flow periods during the summer
- Long term maintenance plan shall be submitted

Discussion ensued on further topics that need researched: maintenance plan, easement issues, planted mitigation plan, and hard bottom issue. This would take approximately 6-8 weeks before the Town would be ready to bring further information to the table. At that time the application would likely be approximately 80% complete – with continued work on easements between the Town and the property owners. IWB would like to have the maintenance plan and mitigation plan to them prior to signing off on the project.

This discussion will continue and subject will be placed on the October 23 agenda to bring forward the discussion on the mitigation and maintenance plan.

2. **(Contd) IW-25-39; 1 Hidden Lake Court;** Summary Ruling application to correct a wetlands violation of site work within the upland review area of wetlands and watercourses. Owner/Applicant: Anthony Belardi. <https://ridgefieldct.portal.opengov.com/records/102430>

Mr. Belardi presented his application to the IWB. He gave a brief overview stating that he had presented a planting plan at the last meeting and was waiting on a surveyor to complete a final survey of the property at that time. He has since updated some plans and shared them on his screen. Mr. Belardi presented the updates to the plans and explained the planting plan.

Discussion ensued by the IWB on topics including wood chips located in the wetlands (that has been removed); clarification on tree species (suggestions were made on additional or different plantings); discussion on seed mix and mowing; and seeing a final survey with planting plan prior to moving forward.

Overall the IWB did not have any additional concerns with what they are seeing other than subjects already discussed, they would just like to see more formal plan prior to moving forward. This is still awaiting surveyors final formal survey.

Discussion will continue on October 23, 2025. The 65-day time periods for discussing this application ends October 18, 2025, so to continue discussion on the next meeting, an extension must be granted by the applicant in writing to Mr. Johnson.

3. **IW-25-45; 653 Branchville Road;** Summary Ruling application for proposed demolition of existing dwelling within the upland review area of wetlands and watercourses. Owner: Candeas Branch LLC. Applicant: Robert Jewell. <https://ridgefieldct.portal.opengov.com/records/102930>

Mr. Jewell represented the applicant. The application is to demolish an existing structure and turn it into lawn. The house will be demolished by large equipment, carried off property, and the newly vacant land will be seeded. Erosion control measures have been proposed.

IWB discussion ensued on topics including the property downgradient from the house and into the wetland line and concerns with previous disturbance by removal of invasive species (stabilization has been recommended); reusing some of the foundation stones to stabilize the bank (yes, the cobblestone is very nice material); and disturbances by heavy equipment in regulated upland review areas. The IWB noted concerns with the earth disturbance associated with the adjacent pond dredging activities which are not part of this application, but an application had been granted for pond dredging by the IWB.

Mr. Carlson motioned to approve the Summary ruling as described. Mr. Smith seconded. Motion carried 5-1 with Mr. Bishop opposed.

III: Applications for Receipt(s):

1. **IW-25-46; 233 Mountain Road;** Summary Ruling application for revision to prior Inland Wetlands Board approval IW-24-33. Owner: Dean Meyer. Applicant: Benjamin Doto. For receipt and scheduling a sitewalk and discussion. <https://ridgefieldct.portal.opengov.com/records/103064>

The IWB addressed Mr. Doto, who was in the audience, and stated that he could not discuss the application formally but he had a few things he wanted to say. Mr. Doto briefly explained what lead to his application to the IWB.

Mr. Pilch motioned to receive the application and schedule a sitewalk on October 19, 2025 with discussion on November 13, 2025. Mr. Carlson seconded. Motion passed 6-0.

IV: List of Ongoing Enforcement by Agent:

215 Farmingville Road is a new violation associated with two brothers. One brother owns the property while the other seems to be renting it out and living there. The property is predominantly wetlands as shown on the soils map. The home owner excavated a large trench across the property and brought in three truck loads of fill. It seems likely that he is trying to create lawn. The property has been graded. Mr. Johnson advised the property owner and his brother to put in some erosion control measures immediately due to storms coming this weekend. Sump pumps and pipes were evident on the property. It seems that he is moving the sump pumps to redirect the water to possibly drain the wetland. The IWB discussed the violation and suggested the first action that should occur is stabilize the area immediately. He should also disconnect any manmade manipulation of the wetlands. The IWB will be adding this property to their sitewalk on October 19, 2025. The IWB would like to see the violation and then draft a corrective action order.

V: Other Business:

Ms. Baker asked Mr. Johnson if anything was submitted for the 145 High Ridge application. She would like to know if this should be removed from the agenda. Mr. Johnson stated that the applicant is aware that he will likely have to withdraw his application but has not yet. It may not be possible to get something like this approved in two meetings with a public hearing. It sounds like he will be entirely updating the plans.

Mr. Pilch mentioned that the CACWIC meeting is next month and encouraged others to go because the agenda looks relevant. Ms. Baker asked Mr. Johnson to check details and get back to members with information about registering.

Mr. Bishop welcomed the old IWA back in her new role of recording secretary.

VI: Approval of Minutes

- **Inland Wetlands Meeting:** September 25, 2025

Mr. Carlson motioned to approve the above minutes as is. Mr. Berkowicz seconded. Mr. Pilch and Mr. Smith abstained. Motion carried 4-0-2.

- **Sitewalk Minutes:** October 5, 2025

Mr. Pilch suggested edits that Matt Sharp was also present on the Conservation Commission.

Mr. Smith motioned to approve the above minutes as amended. Mr. Pilch seconded. Mr. Bishop and Mr. Berkowicz abstained. Motion carried 4-0-2.

VII: Adjourn

Hearing no further business, Ms. Baker adjourned the meeting at 8:46 PM.

Submitted by

Beth Peyser, Recording Secretary