



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

APPROVED MINUTES
Thursday, April 23, 2026

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

Members present: Susan Baker, Chair; Tim Bishop; Vice Chair; Alan Pilch, Recording Secretary; David Smith; Keith Carlson; Noah Berkowicz; Carson Fincham (joined late at 8:14PM)

Members Absent: None

Also present: Caleb Johnson, Inland Wetlands Agent; Tom Beecher, Attorney; 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: Public Hearing

1. **(Contd) IW-26-9; 599 Branchville Road;** Plenary Ruling application for construction of a 75' clear span bridge, multifamily dwellings, driveways, septic and associated sitework within the upland review area of wetlands and watercourses. Owner: Moreton Binn. Applicant: Robert Jewell.
<https://ridgefieldct.portal.opengov.com/records/104519>

Mr. Johnson read the new documents into the record. Ms. Baker clarified that the application fees that were charged to the applicant were correct and would not be refunded. Ms. Baker also stated that the application received was for the crossing and not the entire project. The IWB is looking at the entire project. The previous application has been added to the record.

Both peer reviewers were present.

Mr. Jewell stated that Mr. Bishop was not present at the first meeting. Mr. Jewell would like a finding on the record that Mr. Bishop did review the record and how he reviewed the record. Mr. Beecher stated that Mr. Bishop does not need to have familiarized himself unless a vote is taken this evening. Mr. Jewell would like to make sure that the record is reviewed in the order that it has been presented and if he has not familiarized himself yet, he should recuse. Mr. Bishop stated that he has not listened to the last hearing yet.

Mr. Jewell is going to present the alternative designs once again. Mr. Jewell asked again for a refund for fees since this was a reapplication and not a new application. Mr. Jewell made introductory statements. Ms. Baker explained that the IWB has changed their fee structure between when the initial application came in and then the resubmission and the fees stand.

Ms. Ford with Ecomaps presented the peer review on the application. Discussion ensued by the IWB. Mr. Carlson asked questions about the bridge as designed now. Mr. Jewell said the updated bridge design will be completed by next week. Mr. Carey was not present at the time he was called. Mr. Jewell attempted to reach out to him. Mr. Jewell discusses the alternative plans. Ms. Baker asked if the newly identified wetlands would change any of the alternative plans. Mr. Carey entered the meeting and stated that he will have his comments for the next meeting. Mr. Jewell asked if the consulting engineers could speak to the applicant engineers between meetings. The IWB discussed whether or not the consultants should discuss off the record. The general consensus is that as long as all information is funnelled through the wetlands agent for transparency and ease of

following, he can keep the flow back and forth outside of the public meetings. Mr. Ginter is a professional engineer hired to peer review the application. He presented his peer review of the application. Discussion continued by the IWB. Mr. Pilch asked about the proximity of stormwater placement up gradient of the septic and the impacts that would have on the upland review area adjacent and the wetlands. Mr. Pilch also thinks the erosion control plan are rudimentary. Mr. Bishop stated his concerns with the proposed rock cut.

Ms. Baker wrapped up the conversation by stating that the applicants will have a discussion through Mr. Johnson but with a paper trail so the IWB can follow.

Mr. Jewell does not have responses to the comment this evening. He will have the bridge design within a week or so.

The Public Hearing is continued until May 14. The Public Hearing discussion ended at 8:12PM

At this point Mr. Fincham was invited back to the meeting by Ms. Baker because the public hearing has ended.

III: Discussion

- 1. IW-26-13; 160 Wilton Road West;** Summary Ruling application for grading and associated sitework within the upland review area of wetlands and watercourses. Owner: Owen and Melissa Barthelmes. Applicant: Dean Pushlar. <https://ridgefieldct.portal.opengov.com/records/104856>

Mr. Pushlar was present to represent the applicant. He shared his screen to show the plans and discuss the new additions to the application.

Discussion ensued by the IWB. Mr. Bishop inquired about soil test pits. Mr. Pilch asked questions about runoff from the driveway. He also asked about drainage from the courtyard to the graded slope. Mr. Pushlar drew the explanation and sketches on his screen. Mr. Bishop complimented the native plantings on the planting plan. Ms. Baker commended the stormwater additions.

Ms. Baker expressed concerns that the plans came in at 4PM this afternoon and the IWB did not have a chance to review the changes on their own time.

Mr. Bishop supports coming back with the application because he didn't have a chance to fully review the new plans. He was vocal at the last meeting about being opposed to the plans with no stormwater. So, he believes it is much improved and he applauds that but he wants time to take a look at the plans. He has shifted to closer in favor.

Mr. Pushlar will address the comments from this meeting. Ms. Baker has asked for the plans to be back within a week so the IWB can review the plans.

This discussion will continue on May 14.

IV: Application(s) for Receipt:

No application(s) for receipt.

V: List of Ongoing Enforcement by Agent:

No ongoing enforcement discussion.

VI: Other Business:

- Ms. Baker and Mr. Bishop attended the riparian buffer presentation by UConn CLEAR. It was informative to help understand what options there are to consider. The town regulations need to reflect the changes in the state regulations. They talked about “riparian corridor” as a definition.
- Mr. Bishop shared a document that Mr. Johnson passed around with information from CTDEEP.

1. Inland Wetlands & Watercourses Regulations discussion

This discussion was left at all IWB members will submit any comments and Mr. Bishop would clean up the document.

New discussion ensued about fees and including a statement that fees are not refundable.

Mr. Carlson cross referenced our proposed language with other towns’ language. He discussed recurring practices. He also discussed unwritten language and how that can be countered when something is not clarified. He also discussed limiting the conversation to the IWB jurisdiction and not wandering too far out.

VII: Approval of Minutes

- **Inland Wetlands Meeting:** April 9, 2026

Motion made by Mr. Pilch to approve the above minutes as is. Mr. Fincham seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

VII: Adjourn

Hearing no further business, Ms. Baker adjourned the meeting at 8:56 PM.

Submitted by

Beth Peyser, Recording Secretary via Zoom Recording

Note: The Zoom recording for this meeting can be accessed at the following link:

https://us02web.zoom.us/rec/play/RBrU6-6_4QscJgLVecSV9s8xZ2n-o_VPCKapDO2hfiQ68SUdfc48HIFXgsBan_IGSb3q8geMHD11sKi5.1PAI7_gRiy4y1x1H