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

FINAL MINUTES
Thursday, October 22, 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, Secretary; Carson Fincham; Noah Berkowicz

Members Absent: David Smith; Keith Carlson

Also present: Caleb Johnson, Inland Wetlands Agent

I. Call to order:

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

II: Discussion

1. **(Contd) IW-26-29; 225 Bennetts Farm Road;** Revision to Summary Ruling application #2013-014-SR-REZ-A-S-SP for work done without approvals within the upland review area of wetlands and watercourses. Owner: Justin Stoney. Applicant: Michael Mazzucco. https://ridgefieldct.portal.opengov.com/records/106788

   Ms. Baker read the application for discussion into the record. This application is tabled until the next meeting because the IWB is waiting on the survey which should be complete in the next week.

   Continued to November 12.

2. **(Contd) IW-26-38; 47 Boulder Hill Road;** Summary Ruling application for construction of an addition, septic system, stormwater management system, driveway extension and landscaping within the upland review area of wetlands and watercourses. Owner: The Leir Retreat Center Inc. Applicant: Alex Bellina. https://ridgefieldct.portal.opengov.com/records/108736

   Ms. Baker read the application for discussion into he record. Mr. Bellina was present to represent the application. Landscape plan by McManus and Throckmorton. Ms. Baker reminded him that they were waiting on the grading detail. Ms. Throckmorton began by discussing the landscaping plan. She worked toward adding the drainage from the site plans and to expand the planting since the last presentation. Her focus was the new swale along the driveway. It has been replanted with shade tolerant perennials that can spread. The basin also received specific planting. At the discharge additional ferns and shrubs along the pond edge. She added specifications on the seeding and stabilization for the septic system. McManus presented the site plan based on comments at the last meeting. The grass swale was added along the driveway for additional stormwater treatment and to slow down runoff from the driveway before discharging to the wetland. Also added grading information near the yard drain to clarify the collection area. The stormwater management report was revised to include the 100-year storm. There was additional coordination on the outlet of the bioretention area.

   Discussion continued by the IWB. Mr. Pilch asked if the intention was to retain the rip rap pad and plant the herbaceous material and plant around the material. Ms. Throckmorton clarified that the intent was to plant around it with Cinnamon Fern knowing that once they are established they will spread. Mr. Fincham said his initial questions had been answered from the previous meeting.

Motion made by Mr. Pilch to approve the application with standard conditions and no special conditions. Seconded by Mr. Fincham. Motion passes 5-0. Publication date is October 29, and effective date is October 30, 2026.

3. **IW-26-40; 955 Ethan Allen Highway;** Summary Ruling application to correct a wetlands violation of site work within the upland review area of wetlands and watercourses. Owner: 955 Ethan Allen LLC. Applicant: Enrico Imbrogno. https://ridgefieldct.portal.opengov.com/records/108877

   Ms. Baker introduced the application. Mr. Imbrogno presented the application. Mr. Johnson shared his screen with a markup of where the work had been conducted. Mr. Imbrogno gave an overview of the work that had been done. Drainage was existing roof drains. There is an internal roof drain coming from the middle of the building. The roots had grown into the pipe and the pipes were clogged. A camera would only go in a few feet. He changed the pipes and redid them with the outlet in the same location as previous. He put gravel on one location at the southside of the property because that is the area that drains directly into the pond. Cars were parking on his topsoil and he wanted to add gravel for parking so it still drains and doesn't turn into mud. He admitted he did work without approvals and is asking for gravel for parking.

   IWB discussion ensued. Mr. Bishop has concern about filling wetlands with rip rap in the water. He thinks the IWB should discuss that subject in more depth. He also has concerns with the fence causing a safety issue. Mr. Imbrogno agreed that he could remove the gravel if directed. Mr. Pilch said seeing it in person was helpful. With the discharge point he didn't think it was in the wetland, it was just beyond it. He thinks having stone at the discharge point is helpful because it prevents erosion at the discharge from going into the pond. He wonders if a small depression instead would reduce the velocity of runoff going into the pond – perhaps a plunge pool. Mr. Pilch discusses the parking pressure that is creating the muddy situation with cars parking on the grass near the wetland. Mr. Johnson pulled up the wetlands sketch to give context for the discussion of where the wetlands boundary is located. Mr. Pilch stated that if it is going to be constantly driven over then yes, gravel would be effective. The fence could also be relocated 3 feet off the edge of pavement to prevent people from parking there. Mr. Bishop asked if the fence, if authorized, would prevent vehicle intrusion into the wetland. Mr. Bishop asked if they could consider boulders to prevent parking and erosion. Mr. Imbrogno stated that vehicles will hit whatever is placed there.

   Mr. Imbrogno suggested additional work on invasives possibly next year and planting of native vegetation. He wants to make that change. Mr. Bishop said the IWB is in support of native planting. Ms. Baker restated that it is very important to make sure he comes to the IWB before making those vegetative changes. Mr. Fincham questioned the size of the smaller gravel area. He has concern about a travel area over the 36 inch feeder pipe prior to having investigative work to make sure it is safe. Mr. Imbrogno thinks there must be a record of the wetlands construction on this site. He believes it would be fine to drive on the 36" RCP pipe. Mr. Fincham reiterated shortening the gravel area to avoid the pipe. Mr. Imbrogno said no problem, he will avoid the pipe.

   Mr. Pilch asked Mr. Johnson to show the wetlands sketch. This confirmed the gravel pads are not on the wetlands area. He also shares Mr. Fincham's concern with having heavy traffic or heavy trucks on the 36 ich pipe and stop the gravel a few feet before the pipe. He doesn't see it having a significant impact on the wetland by adding gravel parking there. Mr. Bishop asked what is in the application. Ms. Baker stated that it is work after the fact. Corrective action of work done without permits. What the IWB would be issuing would be an order to correct for the two areas where the drainage pipes go into the pond.

   Mr. Johnson said it would make the most sense for Mr. Imbrogno to submit a separate permit for the two gravel areas since that work has not been done and is separate from the violation. Mr. Imbrogno could submit an administrative permit for the gravel parking since it has been discussed and include

the fence. Mr. Pilch suggested identifying the separation of the split rail fence from the edge of pavement by distance, and the gravel areas should be defined in length and width.

Mr. Imbrogno was instructed to work with the IWB on the additional permit.

Motion made by Mr. Bishop for approval of the corrective action with standard conditions and no special conditions. Seconded by Mr. Pilch. Motion passes 5-0. Publication date is October 29, and effective date is October 30, 2026.

4. **IW-26-41; 63 Woodlawn Drive;** Summary Ruling application for construction of a pool within the upland review area of wetlands and watercourses. Owner: Michael and Megan Seff. Applicant: William Romaniello. https://ridgefieldct.portal.opengov.com/records/108750

   Ms. Baker introduced the application. Mr. Romaniello was present to discuss the application. He is representing the homeowners at 63 Woodlawn Drive. He shared his screen to discuss a pool, patio, and retaining wall within the upland review area of a pocket wetlands on an odd shaped lot. He did an extensive design plan to find the most appropriate location for the pool. The alternate options would require extensive tree clearing. He did his best to protrude as little as possible in the upland review area while remaining out of the wooded area. He shared the planting plan which enhances the plantings. There is only one tree within the upland review area that is being removed, in addition to one that is not in the upland review area but the branches extend into the upland review area. He explained the native planting plan. This is a mature wooded lot so plantings must be shade loving.

   Ms. Baker added that it is not a steep downhill to the wetland. Mr. Romaniello stated that the whole property is sloped but not at a steep slope.

   Discussion ensued by the IWB. Mr. Bishop stated he was not on the site walk but applauds the planting plan using natives and ecologically appropriate species. Ms. Baker noted that there are some plantings near the CULTEC system. Mr. Romaniello stated he put plantings in all locations downhill of the disturbances proposed. Mr. Pilch agreed that the plantings are suitable and he appreciated the minimized impacts to the upland review area. Mr. Pilch asked for the number of plantings, size at the time of planting, and spacing to be included in the plan. He also looked at the engineering plan but he didn't see a silt fence or limit of disturbance line to limit intrusion into the upland review area below the pool. He also asked about the proposed splash pad to the north of the pool at the corner and what it was. He also asked about the 3-inch mini channel drain that conveys runoff to the CULTEC chambers and if that is accurate. Mr. Romaniello addressed the splash pad. There is no backwash from the pool. He believes it is taking whatever is getting caught in the existing catch basin on the house and bringing it down and around. He isn't' sure why the engineer didn't tie it into the drainage system. Mr. Pilch wanted awareness of that from a design perspective. He believes the engineering plan is hard to read. Mr. Romaniello stated that he is not the civil engineer, but he can get that information including the splash pad and the mini channel drain.

   Ms. Baker asked about planting between the pool patio and retaining wall. Mr. Romaniello stated that it would be a mix of grass and perennials. It would not be all impervious. Ms. Baker asked if the IWB would like another meeting for results of plantings and numbers. Mr. Pilch would like to see the plan that shows it.

   Special Conditions:
   - *The number of plantings, size of plantings, and spacing between plants must be provided to the IWA.*
   - *Splash pad should be rerouted to the CULTEC and shown on the plan, if possible. If there is an engineering reason that it is not possible, Mr. Johnson must be notified of that and why. The location of the silt fence should be on the engineering plan.*

Motion made by Mr. Bishop to approve the application as described with Special Conditions as discussed. Seconded by Mr. Fincham. Motion passes 5-0. Publication date is October 29, and effective date is October 30, 2026.

III: Application(s) for Receipt:

1. **IW-26-46; 33 Oak Knoll Road;** Subdivision application for resub division of one lot into two lots within the upland review area of wetlands and watercourses. Owner: Michael and Isabel Forbes. Applicant: Robert Jewell. *For receipt and scheduling a sitewalk and discussion.* https://ridgefieldct.portal.opengov.com/records/109153

   Motion made by Mr. Bishop to receive the application and schedule a sitewalk for November 8 and discuss on November 12. Seconded by Mr. Bishop. Motion passes 5-0.

IV: List of Ongoing Enforcement by Agent:

No ongoing enforcement to discuss.

V: Other Business

1. IW-23-4; 127 Wilton Road East – Planting bond release ($5,448.00)

Mr. Johnson described current site conditions. He inspected in May. All but one planting had survived. The picture showed under girding of the wall and some erosion. A new homeowner lives at 199 Wilton Road East. The property owner Mr. Schmidt was present and shared pictures of existing conditions in May 2025. He purchased the home from Mr. Stefano and took over responsibility for the planting bond. Erosion is from an extreme rain event on August 18, 2024. He showed a picture of the flooding conditions of the East Branch of the Silvermine River which created the erosion and shifting of the wall. There was no runoff and no shifting of the wall to any large extent during rain events of 3-4 inches. A local mason thinks the wall is not repairable and needs to be fully replaced. The cost to repair the wall is $15,000-$20,000. He would prefer to do nothing since no additional shifting has occurred. The plantings were more than 85% thriving. He is asking to leave everything as is and for the release of the bond in full. If the wall shifts more, he will come back to the IWB.

Discussion ensued by the IWB. Mr. Bishop was on the site walk. He has concerns about the frequency and severity of storms. He thinks at some point when there is wall failure, that the property owner comes back with a more natural design to prevent scour and loss of property in a more natural way. Mr. Bishop thinks the current design is terrible and poorly engineered and designed. Mr. Bishop asked about the survivability of the plants and amount of bond which was 1 mortality and $5,448. Mr. Bishop asked if Mr. Johnson had any additional concerns with stability and survivability. Mr. Johnson said everything was fairly well grown including the sedges on top of the retaining wall. ‘

Mr. Fincham agrees that it wasn’t the best design. He is also impressed that it is standing at all after the major flooding event. Ultimately, he believes the wall will fail at some point but if the plantings are stable, he feels comfortable releasing the bond but noted that the wall will have to be reconstructed with a suggested new design at some point.

Motion made by Mr. Bishop to release the bond in full. Seconded by Mr. Fincham. Motion passes 5-0.

VI: Approval of Minutes

- **Inland Wetlands Meeting**: October 8, 2026
- **Sitewalk Minutes:** October 18, 2026

Motion made by Mr. Fincham to approve the meeting minutes from October 8, 2026, as is. Seconded by Mr. Berkowicz. Motion passes 5-0.

Motion made by Ms. Baker to approve the sitewalk minutes from October 18, 2026. Seconded by Mr. Pilch. Mr. Fincham, Mr. Berkowicz, and Mr. Bishop abstain. Motion passes 2-0-3.

VII: Adjourn

Ms. Baker reminded the IWB members that they should review the regulation revisions in order to be ready to answer potential questions during the public hearing that will begin on November 12.

Hearing no further business, Ms. Baker adjourned the meeting at 8:15 PM.

Submitted by

Beth Peyser, Recording Secretary via Zoom Recording