



**Town of Ridgefield Parks & Recreation Commission Meeting Minutes**  
**Tuesday, June 27, 2023 at 6:30 pm**  
**Meeting held via Zoom**

**PRESENT:** P. Kearns, B. Dobbin, D. Shofi, E. Bottali, K. Hulber, D. DiPinto, B. Schneider, M. Knox, A. Platt

These minutes are a general summary of the meeting and are not intended to be a verbatim transcription. A recording of the meeting will be available for 45 days post:

<https://www.ridgefieldparksandrec.org/about-parks-recreation/commission>

**Meeting called to order by Chair at 6:32pm.**

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

David Shofi made a motion to approve the agenda. Seconded by Barbara Dobbin. Discussed amending the agenda to move New Business before the approval of the Meeting Minutes. David Shofi motioned to approve and Barbara Dobbin seconded the motion. Motion carried 5-0.

**Recognition of Guest:**

Robert Pattison, Eagle Scout candidate

Harrison Lovett, Eagle Scout candidate

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

Motion made by David Shofi to approve the May minutes. Seconded by Kim Hulber. Motion carried 6-0.

**NEW BUSINESS**

1. Robert Pattison presented his completed Eagle Scout project for the improvements made to the exterior of Sturges Cabin.

David Shofi made a motion to approve and accept the final project. Seconded by Kim Hulber. Motion carried 5-0.

2. Harrison Lovett presented his proposal for Eagle Scout project to build and install bird houses for native Chickadees along the Recreation Center walking trail.

Barbara Dobbin made a motion to approve the project with slight modifications, including using a colored PVC that will blend in with the landscape. Seconded by David Shofi. Motion carried 5-0.



## **BUSINESS UPDATES**

### **Chairperson's Report – Phil Kearns**

Nothing new to report outside of the committee reports.

### **Director's Report – Dennis DiPinto**

- Project Updates:
  1. Governor Park Courts Project: On-schedule
  2. Barlow Mountain Pool Dehumidification: Moving ahead with prep work; HVAC unit delivery is expected in September.
  3. RAC Barlow Mountain Pool Improvements: Phase 1 includes the construction of a single restroom, new starting blocks and replacing the bleachers in the upstairs viewing area. BOF has approved funding the balance of funds required to start the project. Will be combined with funds RAC has already fundraised.
  4. Proposed Pickleball Court Location: Met with First Selectman, Jake Muller & CCA to review initial pro bono designs, however none of the designs have been approved to-date and will require input from the Town Attorney with regards to property lines.
- Meeting Attendance:
  1. Monthly Revenue Meeting
  2. Monthly Budget & Policy Committee Meeting
  3. Dept. Head Meeting
  4. Met with the Friends of Ridgefield P&R Commission for our annual meeting where two new members were voted-in, and officers were elected for the next year.
  5. Provided the new BOE Director of Security with a tour of the Rec Center
- Staff Updates
  1. Ed Gabbianelli was promoted from Parks Maintainer to Building Maintenance Supervisor on June 2<sup>nd</sup>.
  2. Maggie McCormick joined the Rec Center staff last week as the Asst. Supervisor Member Services on evenings and Sundays.
  3. Working to complete staff performance reviews as required

### **Financial Update – Phil Kearns reported on behalf of Eileen Cipolla**

Mr. Kearns provided the monthly financial report. Revenue and expenses are on-target.

### **Assistant Director of Parks' Report – Bob Schneider**

- Working on some plumbing updates at Barlow Mountain Pool
- Extensive cleaning of maintenance areas in the Rec Center hallways in compliance with Fire Marshall
- Governor Park courts demolition work was completed in order to expedite new court construction
- Fireworks are scheduled for Sun., July 2<sup>nd</sup>. Parks crew will be setting up the trash receptacles & safety areas. Rain date is July 9<sup>th</sup>.



**Assistant Director of Program Operations' Report – Mary Knox**

- Adventure Day Camp is underway as well as other Specialty Camps with good attendance.
- Celebrating the 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the MacDonald-Pin Dancers
- Planning involvement in the Ridgefield Summerfest event this year

**COMMITTEE REPORTS**

**Marketing & Promotions – Evie Bottali**

Nothing new to report.

**Membership – Kim Hulber**

- Ms. Hulber is interested in reviewing current member segments with a focus on lapsed members.
- Member Satisfaction: Discussed the importance of collecting a constant flow of data via surveys and other resources.
- Ms. Hulber will draft questions and share with the Commission regarding the types of questions we should be asking when collecting insights from our members/lapsed members.

**Aquatic & Programs – Barbara Dobbin**

Nothing new to report.

**Budget & Policy – Phil Kearns**

Nothing new to report.

**Buildings & Grounds – David Shofi**

- Pleased to have the Governor Park project underway and to have funding secured for the Barlow Mountain Pool improvement projects. Have also reviewed the lease terms with RAC to move to a 3-5 year rental term.
- Native Plant Policy will be covered under New Business.

**Special Services & Community Outreach – Pete Nichols**

Nothing new to report.

**NEW BUSINESS (continued)**

- Native Plant Policy: Mr. Shofi shared the revised policy [Attachment A] as reviewed with members of the Conservation Commission. Next step is to schedule a planning meeting in early Sept and then request be added to BOS agenda in the fall.

David Shofi made a motion to approve the amended native plant policy as presented. Seconded by Barbara Dobbin. Motion carried 5-0.

With no further business, Barbara Dobbin moved to adjourn the meeting at 8:12pm. David Shofi seconded the motion and the motion carried 5-0.

**REMINDER: Next meeting scheduled for Tuesday, July 18 at 6:30 pm via Zoom.**



[Attachment A]

## Policy on the Use of Native Plants on Town-Owned Property

xxxxxxxxxx 2023

### PURPOSE

The purpose of this policy is to establish minimum standards for the use of Native Plants on municipal properties in the Town of Ridgefield, CT. A **Native Plant** is defined hereinbelow.

The Town recognizes the necessity to maximize the use of Native Plants to protect and restore natural habitats in our area. **Non-native Plants** (defined hereinbelow) do not provide the same level of food and habitat that Native Plants provide to native fauna (i.e. insects, birds, and mammals). As development increasingly encroaches on land in the Town, native flora has been destroyed, often replaced by Non-native Plants. The uncontrolled proliferation of Non-native Plant species has become a significant ecological hazard, altering the structure and function of the Town's natural environment. Establishing a minimum standard to use Native Plants in Town-owned properties in Ridgefield, CT, is a critical first step to reverse this trend by providing an example of Native Plant alternatives to Non-Native Plants thereby improving ecosystem health and biodiversity. In furtherance of this policy, the Ridgefield Conservation Commission will take a leadership role to provide education regarding Native Plants and their benefit to the environment.

### REQUIREMENT

Henceforth, subject to the Exceptions listed hereinbelow, all new plantings of trees, shrubs, herbaceous perennials, and ground cover plantings and any replacement plantings, including but not limited to trees, shrubs, and perennials felled by storms, disease, redevelopment/expansion, or other reasons will solely incorporate Native Plants. The policy also applies to seeds used in place of plants.

Every effort must be made to use straight species of Native Plants from Ecoregion 59 (Level III).

**Cultivars** of Native Plants may be used on a case-by-case basis after consultation with the Ridgefield Tree Warden and with notice to the Ridgefield Conservation Commission.

To assist the municipal departments with their plantings, a list of exemplary Native Plants, sorted by use case, will be maintained by the Ridgefield Conservation Commission in consultation with the Tree Committee and will be updated and published on an annual basis.

To support the objective of using Native Plants on Town-owned property in Ridgefield, this policy also sets forth the town's aspiration to remove Non-native Plants that are also identified as **Invasive Plants** from Town properties over time. It also will encourage private landowners not to use Invasive Plants on their properties.

**Commented [DS1]:** Is this consistent with our definition of Native Plants that includes mid-atlantic region?

**Commented [2]:** Reply to David Shofi (05/02/2023, 17:31): "..."  
Yup as will be defined



## EXCEPTIONS

This policy does not apply to:

- Annuals, bulbs, corms, or plants grown for food, lawns (including athletic fields and golf courses), or green roofs, or other applications that have a clear reason to use Non-native Plants.
- Ballard Park in its entirety.
- Clusters of certain trees in East Ridge Middle School, Veterans Park School, Ridgefield Community Center, Richardson Park, and Ridgefield Recreation Center. A listing of these plants are on file with the Ridgefield Conservation Commission.

## ENFORCEMENT

This policy shall be implemented, administered and Town departments will be held in compliance with it by the Office of the First Selectman.

## DEFINITIONS

- A **cultivar** is a subspecies classification describing plant varieties that are produced through selective breeding.
- **Ecoregions** (or ecological regions) are areas where ecosystems (and the type, quality, and quantity of environmental resources) are generally similar.
- **Invasive plants** are Non-native Plants listed on 1) the Connecticut Invasive Plant List, both invasive and potentially invasive, as determined by the Connecticut Invasive Plants Council in accordance with Connecticut General Statutes §22a-381a through §22a-381d; and 2) the New York State invasive plant list, as stipulated in 6 NYCRR Part 575.<sup>1</sup>
- **Native plants** are those that existed in the Northeastern and mid-Atlantic regions of the United States prior to the arrival of European settlers.
- **Non-native Plants** are trees, shrubs, herbaceous perennials, and ground cover plantings that are not Native Plants. (Many have been imported from Europe and/or Asia.)

---

<sup>1</sup> NY State invasive plants are included here given our recognition that any plantings in Ridgefield will inevitably spread beyond our town border into NY and vice versa.