



**TOWN OF RIDGEFIELD**  
**Inland Wetlands Board**  
**WEB BASED MEETING VIA ZOOM**

**APPROVED/REVISED MINUTES**

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

September 12, 2024

Members present: Susan Baker, chair; Tim Bishop, Carson Fincham, Isaac Flattau, Alan Pilch, Secretary; Chris Phelps, David Smith

Members Absent: None

Also present: Aarti Paranjape, Recording Secretary, Thomas Beecher, Counsel; Robert Jewell, Pete Romano, Brian Carey, Seelan Pather, Jason Klein, Andy Soumeledis, Michelle Micoli, Marlee Antill, Steven Trinkaus, Kathryn Braun, Bill Dwinells, Zach Kuegler

**I: Call to order:**

Ms. Baker, Chair, called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM.

During roll call, Susan announced the appointment of new member Mr. Isaac Flattau

**II: Public Hearing(s):**

**1. IW-24-21; 599 Branchville Road;** Plenary Ruling application for a stream crossing and related site work for an accessway/driveway with some related drainage work within the upland review area of wetlands and watercourses.

*Owner: Moreton Binn. Applicant: Robert Jewell*

<https://ridgefieldct.portal.opengov.com/records/97450>

Staff read the new documents submitted since the last meeting on records.

Mr. Romano gave an overview of the existing property conditions. He talked about the temporary disturbance in the wetlands caused due to construction of the crossing. He added that the retaining wall plans are revised; it is a tiered wall with minimum of two feet to maximum of eight feet height. He showed the disturbance in the wetlands and upland review areas. The project includes robust vegetative buffer plantings. Septic and drainage area plan were shown. The property in the back shall remain undisturbed, the trails shall remain however the existing sheds shall be removed.

Mr. Carey gave the temporary and permanent impacts in the wetlands. He talked about the mitigation of those impacts. He presented the stormwater system which will meet the town's requirements, proper erosion measures shall be installed. The crossing shall have no impact on Cooper Brook based on the free span construction. Trees to be removed have been identified. The plantings will offer thermal and vegetative buffer to wetlands. Invasive species shall be removed and maintenance plan to the invasive species will be submitted.

Mr. Bishop inquired if 1.2 acres presented as permanent disturbance includes the impervious surface. He suggested demarcating the wetlands near the back (near the proposed septic fields) to avoid further encroachments.

Mr. Pilch stated on record his civil engineering credentials. He appreciated the changes incorporating the removal of the driveway near the first building hence reducing impervious. He suggested more robust mitigation plantings including trees, shrubs and herbaceous species.

Mr. Pilch expressed concerns about the proximity of the stormwater infiltrators system close to the septic leaching fields and its functioning to full capacity with the runoff.

He also added that the slopes in the upland review area where the spreaders are shown should be stabilized with a proper landscaping plan.

Mr. Fincham also stated his credentials as an environmental engineer for the records. He also acknowledged the changes. He mentioned since the cross section of the crossing has been submitted he will review and comment at the next meeting.

Mr. Romano commented that the stormwater system is designed for five, ten and 50 year storm events. The system addresses both quality and quantity of water.

Ms. Baker inquired again if there are any offsite wetlands within a hundred feet of the disturbed area. She expressed concerns with the shallow water in the proposed meadow. Applicant confirmed negative for both her concerns.

Ms. Baker opened floor for public comments.

Public expressed concerns regarding the crossings, whether there shall be more crossings when the water pipe and electricity shall be brought via underground to the proposed buildings. Vernal pools, grading and disturbance in wetlands that could ultimately affect the functioning of hydrology of the area also were areas of concern. Public also inquired about engaging a third party review for biological evaluation by the Board.

Discussion ensued and members agreed that Mr. Bishop, Mr. Pilch, and a member from applicant's biological team will determine the presence of vernal pools that may exist on a neighboring property. Vernal pools are typically active during spring, however Mr. Bishop said during dry season there are indicators to determine the possible presence of vernal pools.

### **Public Hearing continued to September 26, 2024.**

**2. IW-24-19; 27 Abbott Avenue;** Plenary Ruling application for the construction of 10 residential town houses with associated drainage and landscaping within the upland review area of wetlands and watercourses. *Owner: Veton Alimi. Applicant: Brian Carey.*

<https://ridgefieldct.portal.opengov.com/records/97127>

Ms. Baker asked the Board to determine and possibly grant Intervenor status to the neighborhood group as well as an individual from the neighborhood who submitted a petition to intervene.

Mr. Beecher explained to the Board about the process of intervention. In Phase I, the board shall determine if the alleged negative effect to the wetland from the proposed activity is within the Board's purview, and also if there is evidence presented that the activity will likely cause unreasonable pollution, impairment or destruction of the Public trust in the air, water or other natural resources. The Board must vote to acknowledge and grant status to intervenor.

**Mr. Bishop voted to grant intervenor status to Abbott Avenue Neighborhood and David Sachs. Mr. Phelps seconded. Motion carried unanimously.**

Mr. Klein stated that the applicant has reviewed the peer review comment and is ready to address them.

Ms. Micoli, peer reviewer for the engineering firm Artel Engineering expressed concerns regarding the retaining walls, the stormwater system and drainage for the retaining walls. She raised her concerns regarding the level spreader. She asked if the trench drain shown near the snow melt area shall be removed as its still showing on the plans.

Ms. Antill, biological peer reviewer from SLR discussed her report. She expressed concerns with the planting plan. She suggested cluster of shrubs as opposed to linear plantings. The plant selection should include hydrophyte species which will more successful. Site should have wetland flags.

Mr. Pilch expressed concern with the impact of the construction equipment to the location of stormwater. He added due to the compaction of the soil during construction, the soil infiltration function might be impacted.

Ms. Baker asked for public comments.

Public expressed concerns with flooding, status of pending litigation, and if it was legal to submit a new application. The intervenors team of Ms. Braun and Mr. Trinkaus presented their concerns regarding thermal, chemical pollution.

**Public Hearing continued to September 26, 2024.**

**III: Discussion (s)**

**IV: Applications for Receipt(s):**

- 1. IW-24-31; 92 Danbury Road;** Summary Ruling application for demolition and removal of existing structures, including the automobile service facilities, construction of a new retail filling station and convenience store, related site work including construction of a new driveway to provide access to Ligi's Way within the upland review area of wetlands and watercourses. *Owner: NEMCO LLC. Applicant: Robert Jewell. For receipt and scheduling a sitewalk and discussion.*  
<https://ridgefieldct.portal.opengov.com/records/98274>
- 2. IW-24-33; 233 Mountain Road;** Summary Ruling application for replacement of existing, partially collapsed retaining walls within the upland review area of wetlands and watercourses. *Owner: Dean Meyer. Applicant: Benjamin Doto. For receipt and scheduling a sitewalk and discussion.*  
<https://ridgefieldct.portal.opengov.com/records/98261>

**Mr. Pilch motioned and Mr. Flattau seconded to receive the two applications.  
Motion carried unanimously.**

**The sitewalk is scheduled for October 06 and discussion on October 10, 2024.**

**V: List of Ongoing Enforcement by Agent:**

None

**VI: Other Business:**

- 1. Aquarion – Ned's Mountain Road driveway improvements**

Mr. Dwinells and Mr. Kuegler presented accessway improvements on the Aquarion property. The existing driveway is crumbling and causing erosion. The driveway shall be regraded. Six water bars shall be installed every thirty feet which will direct the water to the edge of driveway. Stone check dams shall be installed at the end of each waterbar. The apron at the entrance shall be paved.

Discussion ensued and Mr. Bishop inquired about the timeline of the project. He asked the size of stones which will be used for regrading.

Mr. Kuegler mentioned the stone will be size of two to three inches.

Mr. Pilch suggested considering geocells filled with stones. He inquired about water bars and will it be regular kind.

Mr. Kuegler stated that they are using rubber waterbars which will withstand the occasional vehicular traffic. They will not be using geocells.

There shall be no modifications to the water main and they proposed to finish the project this fall.

Ms. Baker mentioned that this project does not require Board approval, but appreciated the project being presented to Board.

**VI: Approval of Minutes:**

- **Inland Wetlands Meeting:** August 22, 2024

**Mr. Bishop motioned to approve the minutes. Mr. Fincham seconded. Mr. Smith and Mr. Flattau abstained. Motion carried 5-0-2.**

- **Inland Wetlands Special meeting:** September 09, 2024

**Mr. Phelps motioned to approve the minutes. Mr. Bishop seconded. Mr. Pilch, Mr. Smith and Mr. Flattau abstained. Motion carried 4-0-3.**

**VII: Adjourn**

Hearing no further business, Ms. Baker adjourned the meeting at 10:25 PM.

Submitted by

Aarti Paranjape  
Recording Secretary