



# Town of Simsbury

933 HOPMEADOW STREET

SIMSBURY, CONNECTICUT 06070

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## OPEN SPACE COMMITTEE

Wednesday February 2, 2022

4:30 P.M.

## REGULAR MEETING AGENDA

### Virtual Format Only

#### Call to Order

#### 1. Public Audience

- Email [townmanager@simsbury-ct.gov](mailto:townmanager@simsbury-ct.gov) by noon on Wednesday, February 2, 2022 to register to address the Open Space Committee live through Zoom
- Written comments can be emailed to [townmanager@simsbury-ct.gov](mailto:townmanager@simsbury-ct.gov). Written comments will not be read into the record, but forwarded to all members via email

#### 2. Approval of Minutes

- November 3, 2021

#### 3. Open Space Workgroup Updates:

- No Mow Zone Signage
- Discussion on ARPA Funding for Open Space
- Discussion on Open Space Rangers Program
- Discussion on Invasive Plant Removal Practices

#### Adjourn

**Open Space Committee**  
**Wednesday, November 3, 2021**  
**4:30PM- Via Zoom Video Conference**  
**REGULAR MEETING MINUTES - DRAFT**

**PRESENT:** Eric Wellman, Margery Winters, Susan Masino, Helen Peterson, Bill Rice, Kelly Kearney, Tim Walczak

**ALSO PRESENT:** Maria Capriola, Town Manager, Tom Tyburski, Director of Culture, Parks and Recreation, Tom Fitzgerald, Management Specialist, Francine Beland, Town Assessor, and Tom Hazel, Zoning Compliance Officer.

**Absent:** Anne Erickson

**Call to Order**

Ms. Winters called the meeting to order at 4:34 PM

**1. Public Audience**

Mr. Brigham and Ms. Rudnicki shared a presentation on a proposed ecology trail next to Massaco State Forest. They shared that one of the main goals of the ecology trail is to promote environmental education for all ages, the trail will allow them to interact with and learn about the nature and history that surrounds their school and community. Their initial proposal is a QR code on a sign at the trail. The QR code will lead to a website where people can learn about the forest and follow the stations.

Mr. Wellman stated that he didn't know exactly what permissions would be needed in order to construct signage or the QR codes but he would work with Ms. Masino to figure out who the right people are in town government to navigate the process.

**2. Approval of Minutes, October 6, 2021**

Ms. Peterson asked Ms. Winters for clarification about a comment in the minutes regarding the mowing practices for Meadowood. Ms. Winters stated that she was under the impression that they were going to have a committee formed to look at some of these issues. Ms. Peterson asked if there is a model that is followed as to how you put certain properties into the sequence of maintenance and if there are any thoughts for this season. Mr. Tyburski agreed that a subcommittee of the Open Space Committee would probably be best to discuss where they are going to do it, where should trails go, etc. He stated that the area on Firetown Road behind the remaining tobacco barns, if no one leases that next year that's something they would treat like the triangle and mow once a year after the first frost. He stated they will treat it as a meadow until told differently. The Committee members voted unanimously to approve the minutes of the October 6, 2021 meeting.

**3. Bobcat Tracking Program (Oral Report)**

Mr. Tyburski shared that UCONN is working with the CT Department of Energy and Environmental protection on this year three or four of a bobcat study. He stated they will trap a number of bobcats annually this time of year through early winter, they collar them and take some measurements and then release them and do their research study. They have approached the

Town, as well as some surrounding towns, and would like to use some of the Town's open spaces and some private properties to continue their research. It would start in early December.

#### **4. Recommended PA-490 Policy/Criteria**

Ms. Beland shared that they do currently have some parcels that are receiving the benefit of the PA-490, however it was discovered that nothing was actually approved and there needed to be some guidelines and criteria that are approved and enacted in order for the Assessor to approve any property owners wanting to take advantage of this. Ms. Beland shared that it is part of PA-490 which includes an open space classification, which is by ordinance only. Once a property qualifies for it it's a reduction in the assessment and therefore reduction in taxes. Once a property is placed in that classification and approved, they are under a 10 year penalty period so if they sell the property within that 10 year period there's a penalty and each year the penalty goes down. If they split the property and sell a portion that portion is penalized. Once the 10 year penalty period is over they still have the benefit of that assessment reduction based on the classification. Ms. Beland stated that in order to approve anyone for this classification it also needs to be reflected in the POCD. The first guideline would be to verify on the POCD if a parcel is within an area that has been approved for that classification, then the second criteria is the size sufficient.

Mr. Rice asked for clarification regarding the POCD being part of the guidance for this PA-490. Ms. Beland stated that there is talk about it in the POCD, however there is no approval process based on the statute once it is approved as an ordinance by the Town the directive is to have it identified in the POCD. Mr. Rice agreed that it is lacking detail in the POCD, however they really have to be careful about how they include it in there as it is not a legislative document. He stated that when the Planning Commission discussed this they didn't think the POCD would be identifying certain regions where PA-490 could be applied, however they will take a look at it and see how it could impact them financially.

Mr. Hazel stated that what the Open Space Committee's role is in all of this is to give the Town Assessor a positive referral from their Committee as they don't have any jurisdiction over the PA-490 as it is state legislation. Their role is to make sure the Assessor's criteria is sound and that they see it as a benefit to the Town to offer it. Mr. Rice questioned if the Assessor's office will come up with the policy. Ms. Capriola shared that the Board of Selectmen would essentially need to do some sort of policy resolution accepting the criteria so her understanding is they would be the last stop. Mr. Rice asked if the current properties under this would have to reapply. Ms. Beland stated she would send them an application based on the guidelines that would be established.

Ms. Masino made a motion that the Open Space Committee agrees in concept and that needs to be developed and submits a positive referral to the Assessor's office. Ms. Peterson seconded the motion. The motion passed with all in favor.

#### **5. Draft Open Space Acquisition Policy**

Ms. Masino shared that she added the first portion of the document titled "Purpose" and tried to make it more general to embrace the 15 points below.

Ms. Masino made a motion to accept the Draft Open Space Acquisition Policy and to forward it to the Board of Selectmen. Mr. Rice seconded the motion. The motion passed with all in favor.

**ADJOURN**

Mr. Kearney made a motion to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Ms. Peterson. All voted in favor. Motion passed. Meeting adjourned at 5:32 pm.

Respectfully submitted,  
Heather Taylor  
Committee Clerk



# Why is the grass taller here?

This area has been designated as a

## No-Mow Zone

By allowing the grass and natural vegetation to grow, we are:

- Increasing habitat for insects and wildlife
- Saving energy and reducing CO2 emissions by not using mowers and equipment
- Promoting sustainable landscapes
- Encouraging native plant growth
- Providing an environment for observation





Hello Rangers!

Often, I talk to friends and neighbors about our trails and open spaces and people really seem to have no idea what the RCC does, and especially how invaluable Ridgefield's Rangers are. We rely on you to know the condition of our trails and open spaces. My goal is to expand the Ranger Program and bring more (town-wide) attention to our Rangers. I fully understand that people's lives get busy and commitments change, so the first thing is to find out if you would still like to be a Ranger, or if you would like to be removed from the list. Before you answer, let me list how I plan on making the Ranger communications very simple and easy.

First of all, as you know, the Ranger Responsibilities are:

1. Walk a trail (or open space) at least 4 times per year (just 4 times!!!)
2. Keep trails free of any debris or litter (if you are able)
3. Be on the lookout for any damage
4. Check to see if trails are clearly marked
5. Communicate to the RCC with your comments

To make this easy, I have created a special email address – just for Rangers – where you can send you notes. From the received emails, I'll update our files (on the status of each trail) and we will take into account any and all of your observations (only Rangers will have this email address). This email address is [RidgefieldRangers@gmail.com](mailto:RidgefieldRangers@gmail.com) (the email address that I am contacting you from).

Even if your trail is in perfect shape, it would be such a help to hear that as well! A simple email like: "April 15, walked the trail, all looks good!" – helps us to know the conditions. Never any need to fill out a report, just a brief email (to me at this email address) and I will update our "trail files".

**To review:**

All you have to do is hike your trail (at least) 4 times per year, email us, and that is it!! Being a ranger is a perfect way to give back. You are helping our community maintain an invaluable resource - nature!

Please let me know if you feel you can still serve as a Ranger, and I will update our list.

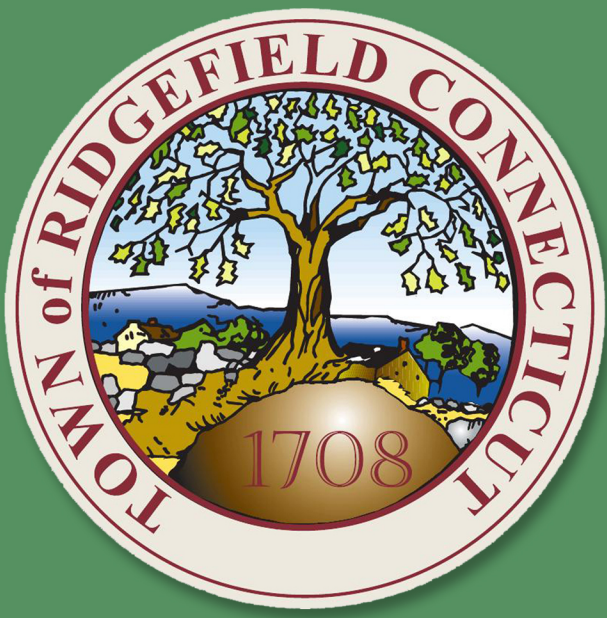
We are also looking to implement "Ranger Families" to our list - where a family serves as "Ranger". If you are interested in becoming a Ranger Family, please indicate that.

As I mentioned, we are looking for ways to increase our Ranger list, so if you want to forward this email to anyone else that you think would be interested, please do so. Also, if you have any suggestions about how we can improve our program or ideas for other ways we might recruit more Rangers, please let us know that too.

I look forward to hearing back from you.

Daniel C. Levine





If you love the outdoors and value Ridgefield's incredible open spaces, being a Ranger might be for you!

Become a *Ranger*

The Town of Ridgefield  
Conservation Commission

*Ranger*  
Program

With minimal time commitment, just walk your favorite trail, observe, and communicate to the Town of Ridgefield Conservation Commission.

203-431-2713  
RidgefieldRangers@gmail.com  
66 Prospect St., Ridgefield, CT 06877  
[www.ridgefield.org](http://www.ridgefield.org)



## The Job of a Ranger

- » Walk a trail (or trails) at least 4 times per year.
- » Keep trails free of any debris
- » Be on the lookout for any damage, impassible areas, or evidence of any violation.
- » Communicate to the Town of Ridgefield Conservation Commission with your observations and comments.
- » Encourage friends and neighbors to appreciate Ridgefield's valuable open spaces and trails!

Support our community while enjoying the beauty of our local natural environment. Volunteer today!

203-431-2713  
RidgefieldRangers@gmail.com



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So to review:

All you have to do is hike your trail (at least) 4 times per year, email us, and that is it!! Being a ranger is a perfect way to give back. You are helping our community maintain an invaluable resource - nature!

The attached letter is one of our "older" Ranger responsibility documents. Please DO NOT feel that you have to complete all of the duties listed!!!! All we expect and require is what is listed above!

Thank you.

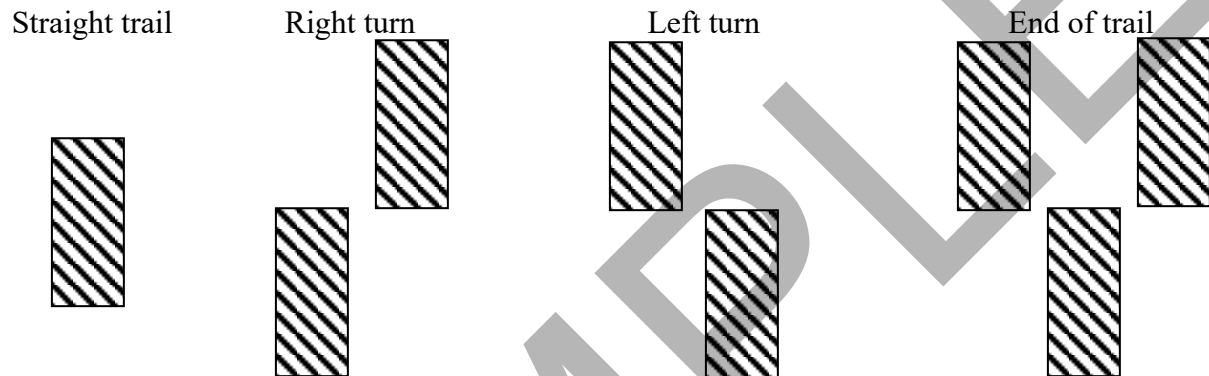
Daniel C. Levine  
Ridgefield Conservation Commission

# Trail Blazing 101

Currently, with the exception of Bennett's Pond trails, the trails in Ridgefield are marked with painted blazes. There are some trends to go to small metal or plastic squares (diamonds) nailed to trees, but for the near future, we will continue to mark trails with painted blazes. There are some accepted conventions for markings as shown below.

## Trail Blaze Conventions

Blazes should approximately **2x6** inches and should be placed at eye level for best visibility in the woods. As shown, a single blaze marks a straight trail, a double blaze indicates a turn with the top blaze offset in the direction of the turn, and 2 blazes over 1 indicate the end or beginning of a trail.



A good exterior oil or latex paint is recommended for painting blazes, and latex paint is generally easier to work with and much easier to cleanup afterward, although may not last as long as oil. Spray paint is generally not recommended for blazes since it is reported not to last as long as exterior oil or latex paint. We recently repainted the blazes in Hemlock Hills using exterior latex paint from Ridgefield Hardware, using standard colors of red, yellow, orange, and white. It was found that the standard blue was too dark and has to be lightened by mixing in some white. Some paint is currently available at the Conservation Commission office, or, the office will recommend the paint and colors and the cost of materials will be reimbursed by the Commission. Call the Commission at 431-2713.

In repainting an old trail, there may be times when the old blaze must be removed – it was too large, too high, wrong tree, or the trail is being relocated. In a lot of cases, old blazes can be removed with a paint scraper as long as care is used to avoid going into the cambium (green) layer of the tree – this won't work on thin barked trees like beech and birch. If they can't be scraped off, they can be over painted with grey spray paint. It may also be helpful on very rough-barked trees to make a flat area for the blaze with the paint scraper.

A desired tool kit for blazing consists of a plastic pail to carry everything, a paint scraper, quart can of paint, paint can opener, small plastic container for paint, a bottle of water for cleaning up mistakes or spills, grey spray paint and a rag or cloth. It is much easier to work in pairs, with one person ahead, spotting and preparing the locations for blazes and the other doing the painting.

If anyone has questions about blazing, please don't hesitate to call Dave Cronin at 203-438-2978 or [davcron@aol.com](mailto:davcron@aol.com)