

The Ridgefield Conservation Commission (RCC) has proposed to the Charter Revision Commission (CRC) that the Planning and Zoning Commission (P&Z) and the Inland Wetlands Board (IWB) be separate regulatory bodies (they are currently combined). Ridgefield is one of only seven communities in Connecticut that don't have separate boards.

When a building application that includes disturbances within 75' of a wetland or 100' from a waterbody, is submitted, the IWB must review the application. If the disturbance is deemed significant, it goes to a hearing before the IWB, for a ruling. The RCC serves as an advisory body to the IWB, but it is not a regulatory board. A separate IWB would be a regulatory board.

The reasons the RCC is requesting this split are:

- A separate IWB could be made up of residents with knowledge specific to wetlands and water quality, resulting in decisions made with the primary goal of protecting water quality.
- Separate entities would have more time to thoughtfully and thoroughly consider each application. As development continues in the town, much of the combined board's time is spent on planning and zoning issues.
- Combined boards often deal with conflicts of interest between development goals and the protection of wetlands.

The process to change the Charter is:

- A change must formally be requested to the CRC (the RCC did this in January).
- The CRC will consider the reasons for the proposed change. **Residents are invited to comment on this issue either at a public hearing (one specifically for this proposal is scheduled for March 12), or via letters or emails to the CRC.**
- The CRC will vote on the proposed change. (anytime between March and August)
- If the vote is to accept the change, the proposal is passed onto the Board of Selectmen.
- The BOS will consider the proposal and will vote to support it or deny it (anytime between March and September).
- If it is supported by the BOS, it will be passed onto the town to vote on at a referendum. (most likely in November).

How to take action:

- Send an email to the CRC at: crc@ridgefieldct.org (The chairman's name is John Seem). Please include a cc to First Selectman Rudy Marconi at: selectmen@ridgefieldct.org.
- Send a letter to the CRC, addressed to John Seem, CRC Chair, 400 Main Street.
- Come to a hearing: March 12, Town Hall Conference Room, 7:00pm (3/12 is dedicated to this proposal, but anyone can speak at the public hearing portion of any CRC meeting).

What to say/write:

Feel free to use any of the above points, either from the RCC's reasons or from the GCA's directives, but comments about your personal experience with our wetlands, rivers, streams and lakes are relevant and effective.

What the CRC decides (and the Board of Selectmen, and the town, if the proposal is passed on) will affect how the town is developed. Development goals and protecting the wetlands don't have to be at odds, but properties should be developed using best management practices—practices that balance development needs and water quality protection.