

STATE OF CONNECTICUT – COUNTY OF TOLLAND
INCORPORATED

TOWN OF ELLINGTON

Ad Hoc Ellington Trails Committee

CHAIRMAN
LINDA ANDERSON

VICE CHAIRMAN
CYNTHIA VAN ZELM

SECRETARY
DEANNA WAMBOLT-
GULICK

55 MAIN STREET – PO BOX 187
ELLINGTON, CONNECTICUT 06029-0187

VALERIE AMSEL
DONNA ALLEN
LINDSAY NEUBECKER
BILL SCHULTZ
TOM PALSHAW
DAN CHAMBERLIN
ROBERT BARONE
ANN HARFORD
STEVEN AUSTIN
STUART LANZ
RYAN BIBEAU

Ad Hoc Ellington Trails Committee
Regular Meeting Minutes
February 11, 2026
McKnight Room, Hall Memorial Library

MEMBERS PRESENT: Linda Anderson, Cynthia van Zelm, Deanna Wambolt-Gulick, Tom Palshaw, Robert Barone, Stuart Lanz, Donna Allen

MEMBERS ABSENT: Valerie Amsel, Bill Schultz, Dan Chamberlin, Ann Harford, Steven Austin, Lindsay Neubecker, Ryan Bibeau

I. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 6:33 pm.

II. Citizens' Forum

No citizens wished to be heard.

III. Approval of Minutes

A. November 5, 2025

MOVED (BARONE), SECONDED (ALLEN) AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE NOVEMBER 5, 2025 MEETING.

IV. Old Business

A. Hockanum River Crew Report

Mr. Barone shared that the trails and walkways seem to be in good shape and there are likely no repairs needed. There seems to have been some heavy equipment moving over the pavers that were put down. Some were cracked, but they still do the job.

Mr. Palshaw mentioned that the bridge is slippery; Ms. Anderson agreed and will speak to this under the Maintenance section.

After the snow, there was foot traffic on the trail; it looks like some people utilized it for cross country skiing. Depending on the snowmelt, it might affect access to the trail going forward, with possible concern of flooding as things melt.

B. Conservation Report

There was no update. Ms. Amsel sent an email mentioning that they would like Public Works to plow Batz; they will contact Public Works.

C. Easements for West Road

There was nothing new to report at this time.

D. Facebook

Ms. Anderson celebrated Mr. Austin for doing a great job keeping the page updated. She urges members of the Committee to contact her, Ms. van Zelm or Mr. Austin if there is anything they wish to have shared.

E. T-Mobile Hometown Grant Update

Ms. Allen shared that a decision on the grant is expected by the end of February. Ms. Anderson asked if there will be another round if the Committee doesn't receive the grant; Ms. Allen is hopeful that there will be.

F. Eagle Scout – Crystal Ridge Project

Ms. Anderson met with the Eagle Scout to check on the progress of the project. She is thinking of May or June for a projected completion. Ms. Anderson asked if blue would be a good color. She has verified that the emergency markers will be installed as part of the project. Ms. Anderson also suggested that the Committee move towards metal blazes, and as such, purchase and installation of such blazes will be a part of the project.

Ms. Allen asked if the blazes are nailed into a tree, which Ms. Anderson confirmed. Mr. Barone recommended that the Committee look into plastic, as it will be less prone to corrosion. Ms. Anderson agreed, recalling that she believes she suggested that the Eagle Scout look into plastic ones.

Ms. Anderson followed up that the project is moving along; she needs to sign some paperwork, but the trail will go up along the ridgeline and will include a bench up at the top. It will have a beautiful view. Public Works will also purchase a gate out of the Committee's budget and install it by the retention pond nearby.

G. CT Trails Finder

Ms. Anderson is meeting with them next Thursday to start the process.

V. New Business

A. Northern CT Land Trust

Ms. Anderson shared that the Committee will be assisting with promoting trails that are a part of the NCLT, including featuring their trails on Committee newsletter submissions.

B. Canopy

Mr. Lanz described the canopy that he is offering as very heavy duty, unlikely to blow away, as well as manageable to be put up and down. It is 10x10 and he said he will bring down to storage once the weather breaks. Ms. Anderson agreed that it would be worth practicing how to put the canopy up and break it down prior to Earth Day.

C. Handrails on Bridges

Ms. Anderson shared that Ms. Harford was very concerned about the section of the bridge that was recently repaired on the Windermere trail. She consulted with Ms. Amsel, and they agree that, moving forward, railings should be put in on any steps/ramps leading up to bridges. There are currently handrails on high bridges, but for better safety, handrails should be installed on any steps/ramps.

Ms. Allen asked if there need to be footings installed. Ms. Anderson and Mr. Barone said that there are designs that could be done without footings. Ms. Anderson shared that the Committee will need to identify the bridges that need to have handrails installed. This might include Windermere, Crystal Ridge, and anywhere else that might have slippery bridges/steps.

D. Girl Scout Cleanup

Ms. Anderson met with two Girl Scouts who were at the Hall Memorial Library Mini Golf event. They are going for their Silver Award and are interested in helping clean up the trails by picking up trash. Ms.

Anderson expressed that there aren't many trails with significant trash. She suggested that Batz could likely be an option for cleanup. She believes that this will potentially happen in the spring.

E. Boy Scout Cleanup Day at Crystal Ridge

Ms. Anderson shared that there are Boy Scouts reaching out for service hours. This event will be similar to what's been done in the past: leaf-blowing trails, cutting down brush, replacing drainage stones around the bridge, etc. Cutting down the brush will help make it easier for the Eagle Scout project to be completed. If there are enough Scouts present, Ms. Anderson would really like to put in 4x4s with ropes along two particularly steep sections of the trails. Tying rope from one tree to the next would be a potential option as well.

F. Outhouse at Batz

Ms. Allen raised a question about the outhouse at Batz, asking who is responsible for the maintenance. Ms. Anderson shared that the Committee has typically maintained it and has been fixing the door yearly, but it continues to need repair. She will bring it up to Ms. Amsel.

G. Trail Walks

Mr. Palshaw asked if the Committee plans to walk the trails once hiking season picks up in the spring. Ms. Anderson shared that typically, members of the Committee will walk the trails and determine any needs that need to be addressed.

H. Geology Feedback

Ms. Anderson read a letter from a boy who participated in a recent geology walk. He had found a large rock that was displayed in Hall Memorial Library for some time. He expressed gratitude to have participated in the event and looks forward to upcoming events.

VI. Subcommittee Reports

A. Treasurer

Ms. Anderson shared that there is currently \$3,941.87 remaining in the Committee's budget. The Trails Committee budget for 2026-2027 has been submitted; the amount of \$4,900 is the same as last year.

Mr. Palshaw expressed concern that there will likely be some cuts to many budgets, due to tight budget concerns.

B. Maintenance

Trail maintenance projects were previously discussed, including plans to add handrails as needed and upcoming cleanups.

C. Community Outreach

1. Annual Thanksgiving Walk at Snipsic Lake – November 29th, 2025

There was some good participation; Ms. Anderson appreciated the participation from Vernon Greenways and is looking to keep that partnership going.

2. Geologist Talk – January 15th, 2026 at Hall Memorial Library

Ms. Anderson noted that she wishes there had been better participation, as this was a wonderful talk. It was very engaging and informative.

3. Mini Golf at Hall Memorial Library – January 31st, 2026

This was an extremely successful event. There were over 400 paid participants. Ms. Anderson noted that the Committee's both gave away 65 maps; next year, she plans to bring 100 maps. Ms. Anderson thanked Mr. Bibeau, Ms. Amsel, and Ms. Allen for helping set up, participate, and clean up.

Ms. Wambolt-Gulick mentioned that the design of the hole was a big hit for her family; Ms. Allen mentioned plans for next year's layout.

4. CT Audubon Society Talk on Hummingbirds and Landscaping for Hummingbirds and Other Birds at Hall Memorial Library, 6:30 pm on March 25th – cost of \$100 out of Trails budget

For this event, the cost will be split with the Library.

5. Bird Walk, April 4th, 2026 at 7:00 am

Ms. Anderson reminded Ms. van Zelm to reach out to Denise for this event.

6. Clean Day at Crystal Ridge in April: there was no further discussion on this item.
7. Geologist Talk on April 9th, 2026 at 1:00 pm at Ellington Senior Center

The last talk was very interesting and the Committee is looking forward to this event.

8. Earth Day on the Green – April 25th, 2026, 10am-2pm, setup at 8:30 am

Both Northern CT Land Trust and Vernon Greenways will be present with the Committee. The Green Earth Club from Ellington High School will be there as well, and potentially a mountain biking group from Pomfret. There should be a lot of outdoor activity representation.

9. CT Trails Day, June 6th and 7th

The Northern CT Land Trust is planning something at 10:00 am on Saturday. Ms. Anderson is planning to do something with Vernon Greenways. It will start in Ellington, on Windermere trails, and go up along Hockanum through Vernon. There is more planning of details to come, but it will potentially be in the afternoon, around 1:00 pm, so as to not conflict with the event from the NCLT.

Mr. Palshaw expressed concern about where people will park. Ms. Anderson agreed that there needs to be communication about where to park, what portions of the walk people could do, and where they could pick up the hike if not looking to complete the whole thing.

Ms. van Zelm asked if people would think Saturday afternoon or Sunday morning would be better. Ms. Anderson believes that participation is typically better on a Saturday afternoon, due to potential conflicts.

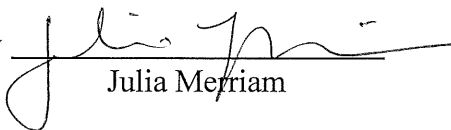
10. Astronomy Event at Pinney Field, August 12th or 13th, 9:00 pm-midnight for meteor showers

Ms. Anderson shared that this event will be on August 12th; the Committee is hoping for a clear night for optimal viewing, and this will coincide with the Perseids meteor shower.

VII. Adjournment

MOVED (BARONE), SECONDED (ALLEN) AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY TO ADJOURN THE MEETING OF THE TRAILS COMMITTEE AT 7:22 PM.

Submitted by


Julia Merriam