

STATE OF CONNECTICUT – COUNTY OF TOLLAND
INCORPORATED

TOWN OF ELLINGTON

Ad Hoc Ellington Trails Committee

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STUART LANZ
RYAN BIBEAU

Ad Hoc Ellington Trails Committee
Regular Meeting Minutes
March 4, 2026
McKnight Room, Hall Memorial Library

MEMBERS PRESENT: Linda Anderson, Cynthia Van Zelm, Deanna Wambolt-Gulick, Valerie Amsel, Donna Allen, Tom Palshaw, Robert Barone, Ryan Bibeau

MEMBERS ABSENT: Lindsay Neubecker, Bill Schultz, Dan Chamberlin, Ann Harford, Steve Austin, Stuart Lanz

I. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 6:30 pm.

II. Citizens' Forum

Mr. Palshaw shared that he has updated the Emergency Management Director about the emergency signage. He isn't sure if the Vernon Police Department is aware of the signage; he thinks it would be important for them to be aware since they're close. He suggested sharing this information with them, and Ms. Anderson agreed that it would be a good idea.

III. Approval of Minutes

A. February 11, 2026

MOVED (ANDERSON), SECONDED (WAMBOLT-GULICK) AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE FEBRUARY 11, 2026 MEETING.

IV. Old Business

A. Hockanum River Crew Report

Mr. Barone shared that he has walked the trails and noticed evidence of snowmobile activity. Weather dependent, he said that the Committee will need to look at the conditions of the trails. He also mentioned the need for railings but plans to discuss this further under maintenance.

B. Conservation Report

Ms. Amsel shared that they are looking to put 25 houses in the area by Crane Road. If that occurs, 10-20% of the property will need to be put aside as town land. Mr. Palshaw suggested that if open space is set aside, and it is attached to the powerline space, it could be developed into a parking lot that could link up to trails along the lines. They are also looking at buying the property by where the radio tower is. If this happens, the Committee may own the Franklin Trail. They are looking into it, but the price would likely need to come

down before it is a viable purchase. Ms. Amsel agrees, but notes that it has come up again as a property to look into.

C. Easements for West Road

There was nothing new to share at this time.

D. T-Mobile Hometown Grant Update

Ms. Allen shared that, unfortunately, the Committee's application was rejected and asked if anyone else would like to consider writing an application for the grant. Ms. Anderson thinks Ms. Allen should reapply if possible and see what happens. Ms. Allen will polish up the wording and resubmit the application. If another application is submitted by the end of March, the Committee should hear back by the end of April. Ms. Anderson noted that it wouldn't hurt to apply again since it would be a great program for the Committee's needs.

E. Eagle Scout – Crystal Ridge Project

Ms. Anderson shared that she has signed the paperwork and the project is in motion.

F. CT Trails Finder

Ms. Anderson talked to CT Trails Finders today and will let the Committee know when Ellington's trails are in the system. They are taking the Committee's maps, which they appreciate as very well done, and will upload them with the provided descriptions. She also got a list of town businesses and will work on including them into the maps as well. Kloter Farm's Ice Cream Barn is already on there, as is the Ellington Farmers Market.

Ms. Allen asked Ms. Anderson to clarify what it means for a local business to be on CT Trails Finder. Ms. Anderson encouraged the Committee to check out the website. She clarified that you can look up trails, but it also denotes supporting businesses and allows you to shop locally while exploring local trails. The Committee is planning to include Hall Memorial Library, the Friends of the Library, and Crystal Lake's Sandy Beach. It helps people to go and hike but also plan a day of other activities that the town has to offer. Ms. Anderson added that Ellington is the first town to be added to CT Trails Finder with emergency signage on the trails. They really appreciated that addition and will be sharing that information and potentially supporting it being added in other towns.

Ms. Allen asked how Ms. Anderson has been approaching local businesses. Ms. Anderson explained that if these town businesses create an account, they can update their listing and attract customers. Mr. Barone asked if it costs anything for businesses to be put into the CT Trails Finder. Ms. Anderson confirmed that it does not; it is free advertising for these businesses in collaboration with trails and hikers of those trails.

G. Girl Scouts Cleanup – Batz

The scouts are looking into this and will get back to the Committee when and if they decide on the specifics of the project.

H. Boy Scout Cleanup Day at Crystal Ridge; date set for May 2 after Bird Walk – will install drainage stones, blow leaves, and install 4x4 posts with ropes on orange trail and ropes on trees on Zach's trail

Ms. Anderson shared that they are willing to do the work as outlined above; there are plenty of students that are willing and ready to volunteer this year.

I. Plowing of Snow at Batz/Pinney

Ms. Anderson shared that there has been a push to plow the parking area of Batz. The trail sees significant usage during the winter and people have been inquiring. Ms. Anderson thinks it would be a nice idea to potentially look at incorporating the Batz Property into a winter event for the Committee. She mentioned that it might be a concern for neighbors given it would increase traffic, especially traffic of snowmobiles.

Mr. Bibeau shared his concern of the wear and tear of the area and any potential ice and erosion. Ms. Anderson said that this has been a concern brought up by Public Works when the area is not plowed.

Ms. Amsel asked if any trail parking is currently plowed. Mr. Palshaw shared that the parking area by the Pinney Fields is plowed, which can create ease of access for cross country skiing, but it is likely plowed and maintained for other projects. Ms. Anderson suggested that if Batz is not an option to be plowed/maintained, perhaps they can plow and maintain Pinney.

J. Forest Walk with Julia Sonen – with DEEP either July or August

Ms. Anderson explained that she reached out to Julia Sonen, who ran a walk that Ms. Allen participated in and really enjoyed. Ms. Anderson is looking into seeing what Ms. Sonen's availability is. Ms. Allen explained that they hiked a trail, and all along the way the group would stop to discuss the flora and items that struck their interest. She gave everyone a magnifying glass, and people were really encouraged to learn and ask questions. She also had participants stop and create their own little circular space with some yarn and really sit and observe. Ms. Anderson thinks that kids would really enjoy this activity. Ms. Anderson is looking forward to hearing back from her and hopefully setting up a walk.

V. New Business

There was no new business reported at this time.

VI. Subcommittee Reports

A. Treasurer

Ms. Anderson shared that there have been no changes, as the Committee hasn't made any purchases.

B. Maintenance

Ms. Amsel looked over the maintenance list and prioritized the projects. She noted that the first thing is fixing the ramp at Hockanum and putting a rail on it. She also noted that adding rails where needed will be a prioritized project. Ms. Anderson noted that moving the bridge at Highland is critical as well, to ensure the access of emergency vehicles. The bridge doesn't need to be moved too far, and it isn't too heavy, but it will require some hands to help move.

She continued that Metcalf needs its usual weed control. Ms. Anderson suggested some Saturday cleanups. Ms. Amsel asks if she is discussing Batz, but if Batz is used a lot, the trails don't need as much maintenance. The outhouse at Batz will also need maintenance again. Much of it needed minimal brush control last year. Metcalf will likely need some brush control, though Ms. Amsel noted that there is an overgrown trail that people haven't been using. It is suggested that perhaps that trail is just left to grow over.

C. Community Outreach

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

This talk is upcoming; registration is through the Library with a participant cap of around 40.

2. Geologist Talk on April 9th at 1:00 pm at the Ellington Senior Center

Mr. Palshaw shared that listening to this presenter is amazing. Ms. Anderson is hoping to set up another talk with him during an evening sometime as well.

3. Earth Day on the Green – April 25th, 10am-2pm, setup at 8:30 am; need volunteers to set up and man the table

Ms. Allen, Mr. Bibeau, Ms. Amsel, and Ms. van Zelm volunteered to help set up or break down. Ms. Allen asked if the Committee has met to learn how to set up the canopy that Mr. Lanz offered; this still needs to be arranged.

- 4. Bird Walk on May 2, 7am at Batz

This is planned and upcoming, with a cleanup event afterwards.

- 5. Cleanup Day at Crystal Ridge with Troop 96, 9am on May 2 (after bird walk)

This is planned and upcoming.

- 6. CT Trails Day, June 6th and 7th with Vernon Greenways along the Hockanum River (please pre-register)

Ms. van Zelm has spoken with someone about how to plan the hike, ensuring that there are multiple opportunities to join or drop off the hike. Ms. Amsel clarified the path of the hike, which is planned to be from Pinney in Ellington through to Dart Hill in Vernon. The hike would be around 8 miles long. However, if there are enough hike leaders, it would be possible for people to go for a length of the trail and stop and turn back as needed, being led back to Pinney, with other hike leaders continuing on with other groups of hikers that don't want to turn back. Ms. van Zelm thinks the participation will depend on how hot the hike day is but doing it this way should provide ample opportunity for people to participate as they would like.

Event registration closes on May 1st, so there are still two months to officially register; Ms. van Zelm is planning to register soon.

- 7. Astronomy Event at Pinney Field, August 12th, 9pm-midnight

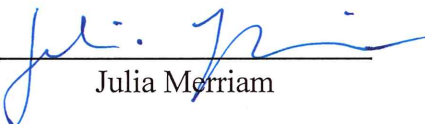
This event is planned and upcoming.

- 8. Farmers Market – August/September

The Committee is planning to participate in a Farmers Market in August or September. More details will be determined closer to the date. Mr. Bibeau suggested that having the Committee there earlier might be good to spread awareness of the trails ahead of peak seasons, as the weather is getting nicer. This can be looked into, though there are benefits and downsides to all different times of the year.

VII. Adjournment

MOVED (VAN ZELM), SECONDED (ALLEN) AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY TO ADJOURN THE MEETING OF THE TRAILS COMMITTEE AT 7:28 PM.

Submitted by 
Julia Merriam