

STATE OF CONNECTICUT – COUNTY OF TOLLAND
INCORPORATED

TOWN OF ELLINGTON

Ad Hoc Ellington Trails Committee

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

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LINDA ANDERSON

VICE CHAIRMAN
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Ad Hoc Ellington Trails Committee
Regular Meeting Minutes
April 1, 2026
McKnight Room, Hall Memorial Library

MEMBERS PRESENT: Linda Anderson, Cynthia van Zelm, Deanna Wambolt-Gulick, Donna Allen, Valerie Amsel, Robert Barone, Steve Austin, Stuart Lanz, Tom Palshaw, Ann Harford

MEMBERS ABSENT: Ryan Bibeau, Dan Chamberlin, Lindsay Neubecker

I. Call to Order

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

II. Citizens' Forum: No citizens wished to speak at this time.

III. Approval of Minutes

A. March 4, 2026

MOVED (BARONE), SECONDED (VAN ZELM) AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY TO APPROVE THE MINUTES OF THE MARCH 4, 2026 MEETING.

IV. Old Business

A. Hockanum River Crew Report

An issue has come up at Windermere Trail, as a “No Trespassing” sign has been put up. Ms. Anderson has been investigating who the property owners are. She will speak to the Town Attorney to see if an easement/permission would absolve liability for the landowner. The Committee is looking into the possibility of rerouting the trail if the property owner does not want people on the trail.

Ms. Anderson summed up that unless there is an easement given to allow use of property behind the building, the trail will need to be modified, limiting access to markers 11, 12, and H6. The path that goes around the pond is also very close to their property line, so the Committee will need to ensure that the path is as close to the pond as possible to ensure that hikers stay off private property. She urged that use and maintenance of the trail should be respectful of the property line.

Ms. Amsel brought up a concern; a sizable maintenance project was for the Committee to fix up the bridge at H10, but without an easement, the trail cannot continue past the bridge. If the Committee loses that trail, will they really want to maintain that bridge? Ms. Harford said the bridge can still be reached through other means, but Ms. Amsel is concerned that the trail would have to end right after the bridge. Ms. Anderson acknowledged the concern but says things must progress one step at a time.

Mr. Austin brought up State Statute 52-557G, which he summarized as permitting use of land does not assume responsibility for any injuries or liabilities that occur on the land. Ms. Anderson clarified that it states “permission of use” which Mr. Austin agreed with. Ms. Harford agreed that there has been verbal permission granted previously, but Ms. Anderson stated that written permission is required. Mr. Austin confirmed that permission in writing is in line with the statute he mentioned.

Mr. Palshaw clarified that the Committee is all in agreement with waiting for the Town’s decision regarding how to move forward, but asked if the trail markers should be taken out at this time. Ms. Anderson agreed that non-emergency signage should be taken down while the Town continues to navigate this.

There is money from Open Space that could potentially purchase land around this trail and add expanded routes for this trail, but at this point, Ms. Anderson is planning to talk to the property owner, talk to the Town, but cease use of the trail at this time. Ms. Anderson spoke to CT Trail Finder, which has added an icon reminding not to trespass and also a warning reminding users not to access the trail from the nearby industrial buildings.

B. Conservation Report

Ms. Amsel noted that there is a 20-acre parcel on Somers Road that abuts the state forest. Ms. Harford noted that this parcel was interesting to the Town because it abuts the forest, though it is landlocked. The appraisal, according to the land trust, is around \$4,000-\$5,000 as of a few years ago.

C. Easements for West Road

There was nothing new to share at this time.

D. T-Mobile Hometown Grant Update

Ms. Allen has applied for this grant for the third time, having completed the application over the weekend; she expects to have an answer by mid-June. She looked at other grants that were awarded and was surprised to see that they were not huge projects, so she is hoping that the Committee’s project will be approved.

E. Eagle Scout – Crystal Ridge Project

Ms. Anderson confirmed that this project is approved and that Scout Divja has been approved to begin fundraising. Ms. Allen asked if it would be possible for the Committee to meet the Scouts that plan projects for work on town trails, noting that it would be nice to know who is doing this work and who Committee members are working with when volunteering and supporting projects. Ms. Allen and Ms. Anderson mentioned scheduling concerns, but that it would be nice to be able to have them attend when possible.

F. CT Trail Finder

Ms. Anderson shared that all trails are on CT Trail Finder, noting that the response from local businesses has been very positive, including recently adding DiFiore, No Coast Taqueria, and Ellington Depot among many other local businesses and organizations. Ms. Anderson is planning to continue reaching out to local businesses as available.

G. Girl Scouts Cleanup – Batz

Ms. Anderson has not heard back yet.

H. Boy Scout Cleanup Day at Crystal Ridge

This event is still on and upcoming.

I. Forest Walk with Julia Sonen – DEEP

This event is scheduled for July 21st, 9 am at Ellington Highlands. She likes the location, lack of road noise, and diversity of land, including wetlands. She wants to limit participation to no more than 15 people. This event will be hosted with Hall Memorial Library, splitting the cost with the Committee.

V. New Business

There was no new business at this time, aside from the trail concerns discussed under the Hockanum report.

VI. Subcommittee Reports**A. Treasurer**

\$100 was spend on the hummingbird talk, leaving \$3,841.87 in the remaining budget.

B. Maintenance**1. Bluebird Houses/Outhouse – Batz**

Ms. Amsel noted that the concern to the outhouse door at Batz is the middle door; it appears that the return spring on the top of the door is all stretched out, Mr. Barone noted, as well as the doors needing new handles. Ms. Anderson added that the bluebird houses are being used; some are being used by wrens, but the majority are being used by bluebirds.

2. Two Gates for Crystal

Ms. Anderson ordered these. When Divja puts the trail in, a gate will be added to deter going up to the detention pond. The other one will go further down on the forest road, which goes from the trail down to the private property for 1 Crystal Ridge, deterring people from entering. There will be four gates at Crystal Ridge to help ensure that people are staying off of private property and staying away from detention ponds. Public Works has said that if people go around the gates, they'll place rocks to further deter this activity.

3. Cutting down of diseased tree at Batz

The tree will be cut down.

4. Mowing Schedule at Batz/Highland

Ms. Anderson went over the mowing schedule that will be followed this year. She also wants to put signs about the pollinator garden so that people know it is messy for a reason.

5. Bridges that need Railings

Ms. Amsel passed around information to detail the plans for different bridges needing railings and ramps. She noted that replacing the extension and adding a rail at H10 Hockanum is the priority, followed by adding a rail at K5 and bracing the edge at K7 on Kimball. Then at Highlands, moving the bridge at N1 and adding a rail and leveling the bridge at N6.

She noted that the standard is that anything that is over 30 inches should have a rail, anything else should have curbs. This is important information to consider as maintenance on trails continues.

Ms. Amsel explained that while walking on Kimball, she had difficulty finding the trail, and was not able to see the blazes. The trail really needs to be cleaned up and re-blazed. Ms. Anderson expects that the trail is potentially less clear because of leaf litter and lack of use during snow. The peach blaze is also not clear. Ms. Anderson suggested that the Committee look at blazes again and potentially switch to plastic blazes to ensure visibility. Ms. Anderson noted that this switch has been happening on many area trails. Mr. Palshaw recommended aluminum nails, instead of steel nails, called siding nails, if the switch is made.

C. Community Outreach**1. CT Audubon Talk on Hummingbirds**

This event was well-attended, with 27 attendees who learned a lot of new information.

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

This will be a repeat of the first event. Ms. Allen noted that the event is not on the Senior Center calendar or in the newsletter; Mr. Lanz checked and confirmed that it is now on the schedule.

- 3. Earth Day on the Green – April 25th, 10am-2pm, setup at 8:30 am; Ms. Allen, Mr. Bibeau, Ms. Amsel, Ms. Anderson and Ms. van Zelm will help set up, work the event, break down

There is still a plan to make sure that the canopy can be easily set up and broken down; Ms. Anderson and Ms. Allen will plan a day to check this.

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

This is scheduled.

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

This is scheduled and confirmed.

- 6. CT Trails Day, June 6th at 9am starting at Pinney Field with Vernon Greenways along the Hockanum River (pre-registration required)

The trespassing concerns at Windermere might require a change of plans. Ms. Anderson asked if there is time to change the plan, which Ms. van Zelm confirmed. Ms. Anderson recommended that the Committee wait and see how the conversation and concerns with the property owners and the Town progress.

Ms. van Zelm shared her plan for the hike, noting that there will be options to hike three different lengths of trail. The longest will be 5 miles, round trip, but the plan is for different hike leaders to turn back at different times with different groups who might not want to hike the entire length. It is considered easy-moderate and is labeled as such, because of tree roots on the trail.

Ms. Anderson said that the Committee will likely need five to six volunteers total to ensure the success of the hike and the ability to make sure that different leaders can bring back different groups of people. Ms. Anderson noted that she is available that day to help if needed.

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

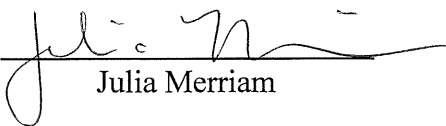
This is scheduled as planned.

- 8. Farmers Market – August/September, date to be determined

Details for this will be confirmed as the date gets closer.

VII. Adjournment

MOVED (VAN ZELM), SECONDED (BARONE) AND PASSED UNANIMOUSLY TO ADJOURN THE MEETING OF THE TRAILS COMMITTEE AT 7:34 PM.

Submitted by 
Julia Merriam