

1 Essex Conservation and Trails Committee (CTC)

2 Regular Meeting Minutes

3 81 Main St. Essex Jct., VT 05452

4 February 10, 2026

5 *Draft meeting minutes prepared by Erin De Vries, submitted on February 17, 2026*

6 **Attendees:**

7 **Members present:** Bino Cummings (Vice Chair), Erin De Vries (clerk), Duane Millar
8 Barlow, Steve Dowd, Sarah Salatino

9 **Staff Present:** Hans Nedde, Harlan Smith

10 **Public present:** Cheryl V, Phillip, Charlie Messines

11 **1. Call to Order 6:10 PM**

12 Vice Chair Bino Cummings called the meeting to order at 6:10 PM.

13 **2. Agenda Additions/Changes**

14 None.

15 **3. Approve Agenda**

16 Approved.

17 **4. Approve Minutes**

18 **Action Item:** The minutes from the January 13, 2026 meeting were presented for approval.
19 There were no changes to the meeting minutes.

20 **Motion:** Moved by Erin De Vries. Seconded by Steve Dowd. Passed (5-0).

21 **5. Public to be Heard**

22 Public will weighed in with comments during the Forest Management Plan discussion and DRB
23 review of applications.

24 **6. Business Items**

25 a. **Presentation on Indian Brook Park Forest Management Plan + Q&A**

- 26 i. The Conservation and Trails Committee meeting focused primarily on
27 reviewing a forest management plan for Indian Brook Forest,
28 presented by Brandon Benedict, which outlined plans for selective
29 cutting and invasive species removal to promote ecological diversity
30 and wildlife habitat. The committee discussed concerns about deer
31 wintering areas, trail closures during logging operations, and potential
32 impacts on recreation trails.

33 ii. **Action Steps**

- 34 1. Brandon Benedict: Finish marking the groups for the Indian
35 Brook forest management plan within the next month or two.
- 36 2. Brandon Benedict: Prepare and send out a request for
37 proposals (RFP) for logging operations at Indian Brook,
38 targeting winter 2026-2027.
- 39 3. Harlan Smith and Hans: After logging operations, evaluate the
40 skid trail for potential recreational trail use, including
41 assessment of water management and trail value.
- 42 4. Harlan Smith: Ensure logging contract specifies that all
43 equipment is clean and free of invasive species before entering
44 the site.
- 45 5. Harlan Smith: Check logging equipment for cleanliness upon
46 arrival to prevent spread of invasives.

47
48 **b. Approve Trail Caretakers Program - CTC Responsibilities**

- 49 i. CTC members: Develop a set of uniform interview questions for
50 volunteer program applicants.

51 **Motion:** Approve CTC Responsibilities and next steps for the Trail
52 Caretakers Program. Steve Dowd motioned. Seconded by Erin De Vries.
53 Approved 5-0.

54
55 **c. Advise DRB on Development Applications**

- 56 i. The Conservation and Trails Committee reviewed two property
57 proposals: a 3-lot subdivision at 835 Old Pump Road and a
58 development at 45 River Road. A member from the public, raised
59 specific concerns about the latter's proximity to a popular trail and
60 gas station emissions. For the River Road site, the committee
61 approved a memo recommending screening bushes and shrubberies
62 for privacy between the proposed duplex and an existing trail.

63 **Motion:** Erin De Vries motioned to approve said memo, Sarah Salatino seconded.
64 Approved 5-0.

65 **7. Committee Announcements**

66 The committee also discussed planning for Arbor Day in April, with Sarah offering to
67 contact Horsfords nursery about donating a tree. Steve was tasked with organizing a
68 table at the upcoming town meeting on March 2nd, with Essex and others planning
69 to attend.

70 **5. Adjourn**

- 71 • Motion to adjourn made by Steve Dowd, seconded by Sarah Salatino. Approved 5-0.

72 February 10th meeting adjourned at 7:03pm

73 Meeting recording: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=fqLC069xY5Q>

74 Next meeting scheduled for March 10, 2026

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