

1 Essex Conservation and Trails Committee (CTC)

2 Regular Meeting Minutes

3 81 Main St. Essex Jct., VT 05452

4 April 14, 2026

5 *Draft meeting minutes prepared by Erin De Vries, submitted on April 17, 2026; revised with*
6 *changes May 15, 2026*

7 **Attendees:**

8 **Members present:** Ken Signorello (Chair), Bino Cummings (Vice Chair), Erin De Vries
9 (Clerk), Duane Millar Barlow, Paul Davis, Carrie Macfarlane, Steve Dowd, Sarah
10 Salatino

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

12 **1. Call to Order 6:04 PM**

13 Chair Ken Signorello called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM.

14 **2. Agenda Additions/Changes**

15 No Changes to the Agenda

16 **3. Approve Agenda**

17 No Changes therefore no need to approve the Agenda

18 **4. Approve Minutes**

19 **Action Item:** The minutes from the March 10, 2026 meeting were presented for approval. There
20 were two changes made to these meeting minutes which include: 1) Line 38 change Vote from
21 8-0-0 to 9-0-0 and 2) after Line 79 add Approved Indian Brook Spring Clean-up 9-0-0.

22 **Motion:** Bino Cummings moved to make those changes to March 10, 2026 meeting minutes.
23 Seconded by Sarah Salatino. Passed 8-0-0.

24 **Action Item:** The minutes from the March 24, 2026 special meeting were presented for
25 approval. There was one change to the meeting minutes, revise Carrie's last name to
26 Macfarlane.

27 **Motion:** Steve Dowd moved to make that change to the March 24, 2026 meeting minutes.
28 Seconded by Duane Millar Barlow. Passed 8-0-0.

5. Public to be Heard

None.

6. Business Items

a. Trail Caretakers Program Interviews

- a. Committee members interviewed Susan Brown, applicant to the volunteer Trail Caretakers Program.
- b. Committee members and Susan Brown got to know each other and the trails she would like to maintain as part of the Trail Caretakers Program.
- c. Discussed program capacity and volunteer coordination with Hans Nedde. Trail Caretakers Program Orientation will be on May 5.

Motion: Bino Cummings moved to confirm Susan Brown for the Trail Caretakers Program. Seconded by Steve Dowd. Passed 8-0-0.

b. Advise DRB on Development Applications

- d. 235 River Road
 - i. Carrie Macfarlane asked where she might find guidance on what Essex CTC members can comment on for DRB applications. Hans will provide a guidance document to the entire committee.
 - ii. Cheryl Van Epps, member of the public, asked if there was enough planned screening between the housing unit and Sand Hill Road.
 - iii. Carrie Macfarlane asked if the screening was sufficient between the proposed housing unit and neighboring property. A privacy fence will be installed on this side.
 - iv. Essex CTC Recommendations to DRB:

We, the conservation and trails committee for the town of Essex, have the following recommendations for the proposed development at 235 River Road: 1. Efforts be made to preserve existing natural screening on the sand hill road side. 2. Allow space for a potential future sidewalk or bike lane River Road/117.

Motion: Steve Dowd moved to make the recommendations to the DRB. Seconded by Carrie Macfarlane. Passed 8-0-0.

e. 123 Old Colchester Road

- i. Committee members discussed location of the warehouse buildings, blasting of ledges, VAST trail, and a pedestrian trail within the property boundary.
- ii. Essex CTC Recommendations to DRB:

We, the town of Essex conservation and trails committee, have the following recommendations for the proposed development at 123 Old Colchester road: 1. Efforts be made to keep as much of the connectivity and utility of the existing VAST and pedestrian trails and relocate if necessary. 2. Replace Chanticleer Pear tree (invasive) with something more native. Red oak

would be preferred. 3. Increase the total number of trees. Currently there are 6, we recommend 12. 4. Efforts be made to minimize the environmental impact of blasting.

Motion: Duane Millar Barlow motioned to make the recommendations to the DRB. Passed 8-0-0.

c. Status Update and Potential Action on Forest Management Planning and Tree Nursery

- iii. Harlan discussed and summarized a memo sent in the meeting packet with reference to forest management plans and tree nursery project. Everything from treescape management plan (replacement of town owned trees due to emerald ash borer/ash die off) to actual Tree Farm management plan and proposed Tree Nursery at Tree Farm property with Essex CTE Program.
- iv. Ken suggested that an alternative to the Tree Nursery project at the Tree Farm would be for the Essex CTC to apply for funds to replace trees on town owned properties on an annual basis.
- v. Harlan asked the Essex CTC to consider how we would like to proceed with the Tree Nursery project given complexity of the project logistics, location, future management plans, and number of parties that would need to be involved in the project (Town Public Works, Parks & Recreation, CTE, etc.).
- vi. Essex CTC will need to consider next steps for the tree replacement project. Steve will be involved in this per the work plan.
- vii. Duane suggested Essex CTC close the loop on the Tree Nursery project discussion with other nearby towns. Ken will follow-up on this.
- viii. Committee members asked questions about specific forest management plans, town revenue from tree extraction, and school board property (upper Saxon Hill property).
- ix. Project updates: Indian Brook dam maintenance update, Trail signage updates.

d. Consider Advice to Selectboard for Dog Ordinance

- x. Lengthy discussion on Draft Dog Ordinance from the Selectboard.
- xi. Essex CTC members will enter the discovery phase to collect data from police and may survey the public.

e. Arbor Day Celebration

- xii. Steve shared that Erin Bessey, teacher at Essex High School will have her students join the tree planting ceremony at the Tree Farm.
- xiii. No memorial bench for Chuck Vile, former Essex Tree Warden at the ceremony on May 1. Cost of bench with plaque would be roughly \$3,500. We would need to apply to Town of Essex to purchase the bench, not enough time.
- xiv. Bino will contact the Vile Family and ask them to attend the ceremony. Bino and Duane will dig the hole on Thursday, April 30. Sarah and Ken will pick up the tree from Horsford on Thursday, April 30.

f. Tree Warden Vacancy

- xv. Reminder of the tree warden vacancy.

g. Indian Clean-Up Day

- xvi. Reminder of spring clean-up at Indian Brook on May 16 from Noon until 2pm.

h. Work Plan

- xvii. Review CTC Work Plan and send Ken updates, and suggestions for next meeting.

7. Adjourn

Motion: Motion to adjourn made by Bino Cummings. Seconded by Steve Dowd.
Approved 8-0.

April 14th meeting adjourned at 8:17 pm

Meeting recording: https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=kO4jiFE_Upc

Next Regular Meeting scheduled for May 12, 2026 at 6pm.