

1 Essex Conservation and Trails Committee (CTC)

2 Regular Meeting Minutes

3 81 Main St. Essex Jct., VT 05452

4 May 12, 2026

5 *Draft meeting minutes prepared by Erin De Vries, submitted on May 15, 2026*

6 **Attendees:**

7 **Members present:** Ken Signorello (Chair), Erin De Vries (Clerk), Duane Millar Barlow,
8 Paul Davis, Morgan Kirk, Carrie Macfarlane, Sarah Salatino

9 **Staff Present:** Hans Nedde

10 **1. Call to Order**

11 Chair Ken Signorello called the meeting to order at 6:02 PM.

12 **2. Agenda Additions/Changes**

13 Added two agenda items: 1) report out on the Environmental Leadership Course from Morgan
14 Kirk; 2) discuss the naming process for town trails.

15 **3. Approve Agenda**

16 **Motion:** Duane Millar Barlow moved to approve the agenda as amended. Erin De Vries
17 seconded. Approved 7-0.

18 **4. Approve Minutes**

19 **Action Item:** The minutes from the April 14, 2026 meeting were presented for approval. There
20 were three changes made to those meeting minutes which include: 1) Lines 7 and 12 change
21 Signerello to Signorello and 2) swap March 10, 2026 YouTube link of the Essex CTC meeting
22 meeting to April 14, 2026 YouTube link.

23 **Motion:** Carrie Macfarlane moved to make those changes to April 14, 2026 meeting minutes.
24 Seconded by Paul Davis. Passed 7-0.

25 **5. Public to be Heard**

26 Cheryl Van Epps was online to listen and provide information as it arose.

27 **6. Business Items**

28 **a. Advise DRB on Development Applications**

29 1 David Drive LLC - reviewed and no recommendations.

30
31 S&R Properties LLC - 83B Jericho Road - reviewed and no recommendations.

32 **b. Conservation & Trails Committee Work Plan Review**

33 Reviewed and updated Essex CTC Work Plan (2024 version). The committee reviewed various
34 ongoing work plan projects including state current use and town open space programs, town
35 forest management plans, pollinator gardens, land acquisition, and trail mapping efforts. The
36 meeting also covered ongoing and potential work plan projects such as the Keystone trail
37 project, tree management plans, and potential public outreach on water quality programs.

38
39 Cheryl Van Epps shared that staff from the Winooski Natural Resources Conservation District
40 will conduct an assessment of her property to inform her of the stormwater and stream wise
41 activities she could do on her property. She requested that the WNRCD staff give a presentation
42 to her neighbors and offered this as an idea for the Essex CTC to consider.

43
44 Action Items for future meetings or as part of the Essex CTC Work Plan:

- 45 • Ken: Check in on the revised Essex CTC mission statement with the Select Board and
- 46 report back; if no progress, suggest an alternative statutory route;
- 47 • Ken and Erin: Seek grants for boat access to Winooski, including Lake Champlain Basin
- 48 Program land acquisition and easement grants, and explore options for the HOA parcel;
- 49 • Erin and Morgan: Contact the appropriate parties (WNRCD) to arrange a public outreach
- 50 meeting on stormwater runoff and related programs, coordinating with Cheryl
- 51 • Hans: Provide monthly updates to the committee on the Keystone Trail project and
- 52 general trail updates, including the Trails Caretaker Program;
- 53 • Sarah: Start work on updating the landscaping ordinances in FY27, with Duane as a
- 54 helper.
- 55 • Committee (volunteers needed): Use BioFinder skills to assist with identifying land
- 56 conservation targets, particularly landlocked parcels.

57
58 For the June meeting, Ken (and Erin) will update the Essex CTC Work Plan to be approved by
59 the Committee and sent to the Selectboard. This work plan will run through FY26 and continue
60 through to FY27.

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62
63 **c. Advice Requested by Planning Commission on RPD-I Zoning District**

64 The committee discussed a request from the Planning Commission to review and rate potential
65 new uses for the Resource Preservation and Development Industrial (RPDI) district. The
66 Committee discussed potential changes to the uses allowed in the RPDI focusing on a request
67 from the landowner to modify regulations. The Committee reviewed a map showing the 40%
68 portion available for development and the 60% owned by the town for recreation, along with
69 current buffer management issues. The discussion included examining a matrix of proposed use

changes, with the group tasked to provide rankings or comments on the highlighted uses for the Planning Commission.

The Committee raised concerns about the subjective nature of the current rating categories, particularly regarding what constitutes "desirable" jobs and "impact" on natural areas. The committee debated whether to provide input on the ratings or recommend against expanding uses without additional concessions from the landowner. They ultimately decided to request more time to review the proposal and suggested revising the rating system to be more objective, potentially using a 1-3 scale with specific impact definitions. The Committee agreed to draft a memo to the Planning Commission requesting additional time and highlighting the need for less subjective categories.

Motion: Duane Millar Barlow moved to send a memo to the Planning Commission requesting more time, objective categories, and information about concessions for RPD use changes. Seconded by Paul Davis. Motion passed 7-0.

d. Consider Advice to Selectboard on Dog Ordinance

The Committee discussed Indian Brook dog ordinance and enforcement. The committee decided to recommend better public education about existing leash requirements rather than changing the ordinance.

Next Step: Committee (Morgan Kirk leads): Advise Parks and Recreation on better communication/education for dog handling at Indian Brook;

e. Recap Arbor Day Celebration/Review logging volunteer hours

Sarah Salatino and Ken Signorello discussed Arbor Day Celebration at Tree Farm and mentioned logging volunteer hours with Paul Davis for Arbor Day recordkeeping.

Next Step: Committee Members send volunteer hours for the Arbor Day celebration and other related Arbor Day activities to Paul Davis.

f. Reminder - Tree Warden Vacancy <https://www.vlct.org/resource/tree-law-faqs>

Reminder of Tree Warden Vacancy

g. Reminder - Indian Brook Clean Up Date/Time

May 16, 2026 from Noon to 2pm at Indian Brook. Please bring gloves and loppers if you have them. Tools and water will be provided.

h. Planning Commission Meeting/DRB Meeting Updates

No discussion.

i. Report out on Environmental Leadership course

106 Morgan shared insights from environmental leadership training she attended, which inspired her
107 renewed commitment to the committee's work.

108 **j. Discuss town trail naming process**

109 The committee discussed the necessity to name town trails. Hans noted that the Forest Dale
110 trail map is complete and before it goes live he would like to name the various trails and add the
111 names to the map. The Committee agreed to schedule a separate meeting to further discuss
112 trail naming conventions.

113 **Next Steps:** Hans to send the Forest Dale trail map with placeholder names to interested
114 committee members for the trail naming process. Committee (volunteers needed) to form a
115 group to work on naming trails for the Forest Dale Natural Area, using a non-political scope
116 (e.g., tree names) and involving public input.

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118 **7. Adjourn**

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120 **Motion:** Motion to adjourn made by Erin De Vries. Seconded by Duane Millar Barlow. Approved
121 7-0.

122 April 14th meeting adjourned at 8:34 pm

123 **Meeting recording:** <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=h9yOY2FI0RE>

124 **Next Regular Meeting scheduled for June 9, 2026 at 6pm.**