

Town of Coventry
Protected Spaces Stewardship Committee
Tuesday January 27, 2026 @7:00pm
Regular Meeting Minutes

Call To Order by Chair E. Thomas at 7:04 pm. Attending: Jeff Cappadora, Nan Kyer, Keith Miller, Eric Thomas. Absent: Vern Beausoleil (resigning). Audience of Citizens: Joe Lenoce, trail volunteer. E. Thomas assigned K. Miller to take meeting notes at this meeting.

Review of October 28, 2025 Meeting minutes. Committee voted to accept minutes as written.

E. Thomas asked for additional agenda items. N. Kyer requested to add review of draft guidelines for trail stewards coordinated by the Committee. Committee members motioned and seconded and voted to add this agenda item under New Business. Trail Steward Guidelines – review of draft document.

Financial Report. E. Thomas had asked town staff about remaining LOCIP Open Space/Trail grant funds; \$5,647 is current balance. E. Thomas asked town staff to check on some committee material and service needs for eligibility to use these particular grant funds. Town funds in the Conservation Commission budget, set at \$1,500 on 7/1/26 have an unknown FY'26-'27 account balance- E. Thomas has a message in to town staff for an update.

New Business.

Volunteer Feedback. Jeff Brozdowski sent message of offer of his certified sawyer skills (experience with trail work and sawyer work with CT Forest and Parks Association. E. Thomas to contact him with current trail needs.

Election of Officers. Discussion was held with the four current Committee members. A slate was nominated: Eric Thomas, Chair, Nan Kyer V. Chair, Keith. Miller, Secretary. Motion by K. Miller, seconded by N. Kyer, All in Favor of slate as presented. Committee discussed and support developed of a new position called Communications

Liaison*. Nomination for Jeff Cappadora by K. Miller, seconded by N. Kyer, All in Favor.

* Committee members recognized the need for better communications amongst Committee and trail volunteers, and support this new Committee position of Communications Liaison. J. Cappadora will share strategy and recommendations at next quarterly meeting.

Trail Steward Guidelines – reviewed draft. Committee accepted as written w/ addition that trail volunteers are recognized as representatives of the town of Coventry and should act accordingly during all volunteer tasks and duties.

Old Business.

Committee Trails Work/Project List updates. Committee reviewed previous project costs for forecasting Committee stewardship needs, based on developing Projects spreadsheet.

E. Thomas reported V. Beausoleil plans to resign from the Committee. He prefers to continuing volunteer trail work and will be kept on active volunteers list. E. Thomas to notify V. Beausoleil of resignation procedure and E. Thomas will send note to Town Council Steering Committee of forthcoming vacancy.

Williams Preserve. Leftover building material was relocated last month from volunteer Dan Gorka's storage area to Committee's storage at Creaser Park. Following a resident comment regarding concern over car(s) repeatedly parked at the Williams Preserve lot after hours, the Committee is requesting town departments consider posting appropriate signage to assist with enforcement. E. Thomas has reached out to Parks and Recreation and Land Use staff for action.

Creaser Park vegetation management pilot update: J. Cappadora shared a draft document of progress made to date and a framework for next step actions in 2026 and beyond. Committee was favorable for progress made and E. Thomas requested J. Cappadora share Next Steps document with Land Use office staff for feedback.

CGS Nature Trail/Footbridge. E. Thomas reported that 2

attempts for a committee site visit did not happen. With deep snowpack at this time, Committee members will individually attempt to visit trail and report back with comments. E. Thomas visited the site earlier in January and reported a possible duplication of the wood footbridge construction design used at the Williams Preserve stream crossing in 2025 could be done at this site. It is possible funding support from the current LoCIP Open Space/Trails fund account could be used, possibly with some school PTO fundraising match, TBD. E. Thomas will set up site visit with town Land Use staff for feedback on possible footbridge replacement project request made by school PTO rep; school principal is kept informed with communications.

Trail Volunteer List. Brief discussion held on current list; inactives and recently active volunteers are marked. This meeting agenda was sent out to the volunteer list with an invitation to attend and/or provide feedback.

Trail Maintenance and Project Needs/Funding. Following discussion recap from previous meetings, E. Thomas raised, and Committee concurred to submit purchase order requests for 3-5 trail benches and 2-3 message boards at prioritized trail entrance areas. E. Thomas discussed next year town budget needs with town staff to continue priority Committee work. Town Manager budget presentation (first step in town side FY '26-'27 budget development) in early March.

Discussion held on value for the identification of committee members and stewards while in the field and at Committee public programs. ID badges for all trail volunteers and identity hats/caps - embroidered *Coventry Land Steward* (?) - were discussed for field personnel identification and incentive for trail volunteers. E. Thomas to ask town staff for eligibility to use Committee funds for purchasing such items.

Discussion held on animal pollinator habitat plantings – in support of recent Town Council resolution (*Pollinator Friendly/Native Plant Resolution, 7/7/25*) and Coventry's application to the Sustainable CT certification program, some locations within Creaser Park and South River Preserve were discussed. E. Thomas encouraged

Committee members to share ideas of other town-owned properties that might benefit from restoring/planting native or naturalized plants to enhance pollinator animal habitat. This could develop into a project with local civic and/or scout group assistance and linkage to a state-regional Pollinator Pathway Network movement.

The Committee held discussion of ways to raise public awareness about the public access trails stewarded by this Committee, in cooperation with various town departments. This will be addressed, in part, with the new role of the Communications Liaison. E. Thomas will assist in developing known submission dates for town outreach publications (print, social, other platforms). The Committee Facebook account, *Coventry, CT-Conservation Community*, was discussed and review of many members listed out of region and country, to be removed from this local trails and open space-oriented private page. The page may have additional focus moving forward for trail volunteer and related open space/conservation information for public and private land managers.

Reporting Form on town website. E. Thomas reported that draft Google Form was submitted to town staff with request to post link on Committee's web page – it was denied earlier this month. E. Thomas will follow up to learn of alternative messaging options for public and trail steward reporting of trail issues. The intent in part was to include the reporting form with the trail steward guidelines document discussed earlier in this meeting.

2026 Public Walks and Paddles. E. Thomas asked Committee members for possible events to (co)lead in the coming months. Current ideas include for an early spring vernal pool evening walk, a Spring time Invasive land plant walk, likely at Creaser Park, a mid-to-late Spring paddle on portion of the Willimantic River Water Trail in partnership with the regional The Last Green Valley, Inc., and a mid-late summer mushroom/fungi walk. Scheduling will be developed before the next quarterly Committee meeting.

Protected Spaces Acquisition updates. No new updates

were provided for the Wolf or the McDougall land donation offers under review by town staff. E. Thomas mentioned the town-owned William Hunt Preserve off South Street could benefit from a committee site visit in warmer weather; roadside parking currently is impractical with snowpack. No foot trail is currently blazed but a preliminary design by town staff is on file.

Correspondence.

Plans for damaged picnic table at Mill Brook Park trail still in works with Conservation Commission and high school teacher. Question remains on funding for materials once high school design and material list is generated, and review done by town staff.

CGS PTO "Fun Run" idea shared with E. Thomas was briefly discussed with limited information. Committee members felt at this time a larger, possibly town wide event on multiple trails might not be logistically practical.

Agenda Items for Next Meeting.

- Upcoming event/program details
- Committee Google Drive set up and document sharing
- William Hunt Preserve, CGS Nature Trail site visit updates
- Spring-Summer trail volunteer projects
- Trail Mapping

E. Thomas motioned to adjourn the meeting, seconded, All In Favor. Meeting ended at 9:23 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Keith Miller, Secretary

