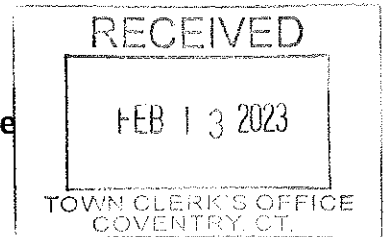


Town of Coventry
Ad-hoc Protected Spaces Stewardship Committee
Special Meeting January 31, 2023



Call To Order: The quarterly meeting began at 7:05 pm.

Attending: Vern Beausoleil, Eric Thomas; Town Land Use Staff Mindy Gosselin. **Absent:** Nan Kyer. Chairman E. Thomas opened the meeting and noted there are 2 Committee member vacancies.

Past Minutes Review: A review of past meeting minutes were placed on hold until the next meeting.

Old Business:

- Discussed recent trail work: Trail crew work was conducted along trails and access points at Laidlaw, Rolling Woods/Windy Hill, Riverview, and Williams. Discussion was held about trail amenity installations, a re-opening a trail connector between Laidlaw Park and Rolling Woods/Windy Hill trail, and grant documentation and reporting. Hours are being recorded for annual reporting purposes and to assist with in-kind match resources for successful grant awards.
- Occasional messages are received at Committee's email address (openspacestewardship@coventryct.org) reporting trail observations and conditions needing attention. Recent reports are downed trees following windy storm events that are followed up by Committee members and DPW staff.
- New Year's Day Fresh Air Walk @ Williams Preserve: 10 attendees enjoyed seasonally mild weather and general natural history talking points along the 1.5-hour walk. Trail conditions were good.

New Business:

- There is no current grant application being pursued for completing the IWA permit-approved bridging work at Rolling Woods/Windy Hill trail.
- There is no update from the local Boy Scout troop on the proposed stream crossing bridge project at Williams Preserve. M. Gosselin has provided a bridge construction vendor quote for a pre-fabricated aluminum bridge.

Creaser Park Building:

- Committee tools and materials storage at Creaser Park has recently been updated with transfer of all materials to another rehabbed park building, due to pending demolition of former storage building. Land Use Office will supply E. Thomas will security door access key. E. Thomas is providing a new oil-filled radiator unit for space heating use in the new building during work party events.
- The town's short bed truck available for running local errands and moving materials to trail/project sites is down for unexpected maintenance and hopefully will be available through Parks Department by spring time.

Communications:

- The 2023 Calendar meeting schedule was approved and submitted to the Town Clerk's office; dates are 1/31, 4/25, 7/25, and 10/25, at 7:00pm at Town hall.

- A public summit was held as a follow up to the 4-Town Regional Action Plan for Economic Vitality. It was hosted by newly branded Connecticut's Countryside on January 30, 2023 at Patriots Park Lodge. E. Thomas attended for the Committee; there were a good 70+ people from across the four towns in attendance. The information gained from the break-out sessions will assist in establishing priorities, new opportunities, and the scope of the regional work plan for the coming months. Participants were asked to stay tuned for follow up with soon about ways to contribute to the work being done. Materials are being added to the individual Town web pages dedicated to Connecticut's Countryside including the video from the Summit, the regional brochure which is nearing completion, as well as other important resources. Recreational and public open space areas and trails are being highlighted and promoted in a regional fashion – something our Protected Spaces Stewardship Committee and Conservation Commission can work on. The four towns working together under a newly branded campaign are Bolton, Coventry, Mansfield and Tolland.
- The Town Land Use staff are developing a few grant proposals involving public open space trail development. The Committee reviewed conceptual trail plans for the 18-acre William Hunt Preserve (South St/Woodbridge Rd). This is a section of the Nathan Hale Greenway along town-owned property transferred by the CT Department of Transportation as open space. The preliminarily flagged trail loop is nearly 1 mile long. The recreational trail grant application is for the design and construction of a low impact, multi-use recreational trail that will provide for public access to recreational fishing along the Skungamaug River. Construction will include a series of wooden bridges and boardwalks and some gravel walkway area. Trail head (parking) and interpretive signage will be provided and installed. The Committee has been asked to provide a letter of support for the 2023 DEEP Recreational Trail grant application. A letter will be drafted to share for feedback before submitting to town staff. The Town is also soliciting public comment on the draft application with details provided on the Town website; comments need to be submitted by February 13, 2023.
- In related trail news, the regional Hop River State Park Trail is benefitting from an energetic Hop River Trail Alliance that includes representation from the town of Coventry. The Alliance plans to submit a DEEP Recreational Trail grant for a uniform trail marker and signage project along the 20.5-mile-long trail (Bolton to Willimantic). Details are provided on the Coventry town website. Comments must be submitted to the Hop River Alliance by email by **February 14, 2023**.
- Town of Coventry departments are planning a number of events around Earth Day (April 22nd), partly to tie in to the Connecticut's Countryside regional marketing efforts. The Committee may be asked to offer or otherwise participate in one or more public events.
- Drafting of the Williams Preserve Management Plan continues through the Conservation Commission.
- Drafting of the South River Road Preserve Management Plan continues through the Conservation Commission. A Preserve sign installation is planned in the coming weeks and a possible springtime public event with walk may occur in June. Committee trail crew work may be requested to prepare the site, including the riverside trail, during late winter.
- Town Council Recognition of Board/Commission Volunteers: Committee members received Council letter of thanks and small tokens of appreciation (pocket notebook/memo pad).
- M. Gosselin reported she is developing a Conservation Commission budget request for 2023-24 that incorporates project and related funding needs for that Commission and its committees including Protected Spaces Stewardship and also Coventry Lake Advisory and Monitoring. This will include trail signage for infilling at Williams Preserve and the new South River Road Preserve, similar to what has been recently installed at Laidlaw Park and at Rolling Woods/Windy Hill trails.

Sexual Harassment Training:

- State of Connecticut-mandated training for all town board/commission members - Sexual Harassment. Information has been shared with all Committee members, who can use the online module at their scheduled convenience. Completion certification notice must be sent to Mindy Gosselin or the Town Clerk by March 31, 2023. Previously completed training with certification may be an allowable substitute if done in the last 2 years and certificate provided to town staff.

The next scheduled meeting is on April 25, 2023. Agenda items should be sent to E. Thomas by April 15, 2023.

Adjournment: Meeting adjourned at 8:30 pm.

Eric D. Thomas

Submitted by Eric Thomas

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