



## Meeting Notes

Wednesday, November 19, 2014 - 9 to 10:30

Warner Theater Atrium

68 Main Street

Torrington, CT

See last page for attendance and a roster of steering committee members.

Co-Chair **Chuck Berger** opened the meeting and introductions were made.

**Sam Gold** gave an overview of the COG consolidation currently underway.

- Sam announced that he will be leaving COGCNV to take the Executive Director position at the Lower Connecticut River Council of Governments in Essex, CT, and that this will be his last NRG meeting. Sam has worked tirelessly on greenway issues, was instrumental in getting this committee off the ground and institutionalized, in managing the routing studies, and in championing the NRG cause over the last decade. His knowledge and skills will be greatly missed, but he said that he will be happy to assist in the future, just pick up the phone. Aaron has his number and will not be shy about using it!
  - Sam was honored by COGCNV at a dinner last week. Among those speaking were Susan Peterson who spoke about Sam's commitment to environmental and greenway issues, and John Monroe who presented Sam with a "Conservation Hero" award from the National Park Service.
- The NVCOG Executive Director search is coming to a close, and the Director of the new 19-municipality COG should be chosen in the next couple weeks. The new COG will remain in the COGCNV office, but will be expanding into the empty office space to occupy the entire 3<sup>rd</sup> floor. The plans include a larger conference room and additional office space for a larger staff.
- While a lot is still up in the air about the new organization, the COG support to the NRG Steering Committee and greenway planning in general is expected to continue.

**Mayor Elinor Carbone** introduced the pedestrian improvements being worked on in **Torrington**, and along with Torrington staff, led a discussion about downtown development and how it relates to trail development.

- The Mayor stated that one of her priorities is to recapture the Naugatuck River and improve the pedestrian network in downtown. The city has been successful in obtaining EPA money to begin cleanup at two brownfield sites along the river, and hopes that the site will be a trailhead on the NRG. She also discussed incorporating the city's sidewalks into the Torrington trails network, creating pedestrian access outside of downtown. Aging sidewalks impede pedestrian access, and the city is working to address theirs. Since Main St. is a state road, they are working with DOT to make it more pedestrian friendly.

Torrington **Director of Economic Development Erin Wilson** gave a presentation about the **Riverfront Recapture** project currently underway on Franklin St. and Franklin Dr.

- The city recently completed phase I of remediation at the city-owned 2 acre parcel at 100 Franklin St. Beginning production in 1885, the Torrington Company manufactured an array of metal products on the property, leaving behind a legacy of industrial contamination. The city used a \$670,000 EPA revolving loan along with a city match to begin remediation on the site. Approximately 1/3 of the property has been remediated and capped with a 45 space parking lot. The city has received an additional \$1 million state grant to continue the efforts, and the city plans to remediate the remainder of the property and begin planning development on it. The remediation report for 100 Franklin St. can be found [here](#).
- The City has been awarded \$100,000 state grant to support the remediation of the adjacent 7 acre parcel at 100 Franklin Drive. An abandoned industrial building currently stands on the privately owned "Nidek" site,

but it is slated to be torn down next year. The 7 acre parcel sits at the confluence of the East and West Branch of the Naugatuck River.

- The City worked closely with and has established a good working relationship with Mark Lewis, Brownfields Coordinator, and Kevin Sullivan, Supervising Environmental Analyst, both with CT DEEP
- The City is looking into work/ live space for the arts community or other mixed use development for the adjacent parcels, as well as using the properties to connect downtown to the River and providing NRG access.

**Mayor Carbone** explained that Torrington was chosen as a “Come Home to Downtown” Pilot Community by the Connecticut Housing Finance Authority (CHFA).

- The program is designed to assist communities in assessing downtown properties for redevelopment. It aims to strengthen communities by creating specific strategies to redevelop vacant or underutilized buildings into a mix of uses and housing choices, and includes walkability assessments. Torrington’s reports can be found [here](#).
- The city wants to encourage people to spend more time downtown, and is interested in bringing more mixed use residential/ commercial development into the city. The addition of a hotel (national chain), additional business and manufacturing, and more residential units will revitalize the downtown.
- Kathy McNamara explained that Waterbury was also a Come Home to Downtown community (see reports [here](#)). In order to take advantage of the recommendations presented by the study, they hired a consultant to do a more in depth economic study that looked at specifics costs of redevelopment vs costs of leaving buildings as is. The resulting report was used to lobby for funding which has been received from the state to begin redevelopment of the Howland Hughes and Lombard buildings among others.

Torrington **City Planner Martin Connor** discussed the City’s coordination with the US Army Corps of Engineers.

- The City owns and is charged with maintaining the floodwalls and dikes built by the USACE following the flood of 1955. These works can be used for trails, but all modifications and plans must be approved by the Corps.
- This Steering committee has played a role in the City’s coordination with USACE. Committee members Chris Way and Vin Gualtieri have been helpful in facilitating meetings with the Corps district office. Seeing the trail in Derby and Ansonia (built on Corps dikes) gave the city an idea of the type of trail development that is possible on their own USACE built infrastructure.
- Martin explained that the key to the NRG in Torrington is looking at the big picture: sewer easements, USACE infrastructure, and the street and sidewalk network.

Torrington will be holding a **greenway design charrette** on **January 22<sup>nd</sup>**. Stakeholders will be brought together to share their vision of the greenway in Torrington, and help the city work toward a Greenway Master Plan.

- Landscape architects and a GIS specialist will be on hand to help with visualization.
- Representatives from all NRG towns are encouraged to attend. More information will follow as the date approaches.

**Local artist Danielle Mailer** presented a mural that she is currently working on that will overlook the Naugatuck River and downtown from the exterior back wall of Staples.

- The mural, still under design, will depict three colorfully painted trout, each approximately 40 feet long and 16 feet tall. The trout will be made out of Diebond, a durable plastic coated aluminum used in signage. The fish will be created in a studio in 4x8ft pieces, painted by Mailer and a team of interns and then delivered to the site and attached to the wall in sections, puzzle style. Examples of Danielle’s work can be seen at her website: <http://www.daniellemailer.com/>.
- Fund raising was discussed, as the trout mural is only partially funded. The committee was asked for a **letter of support** which will be used for future fundraising.
- Kathy McNamara discussed Waterbury’s trout mural on South Main Street, and suggested some possible funding sources, including using the Mayor’s office to request donations. Kathy also discussed the possibility of submitting a grant in the future for public art along the entire length of the river.

**John Monroe** announced that the **uniform signage grant** has been approved, and he should have more to report in January.

**Ingrid Manning** gave an overview of the **NRG Economic Impact Study**

- In order to give municipalities more leverage when applying for grants or when bonding for funds to construct greenway sections, an Economic Impact Study of the entire NRG has been proposed. The study will provide information specific to each municipality about:
  - Potential trail usage and visitor spending
  - Property value impacts near the NRG
  - Development and redevelopment possibilities
  - Possible tie-ins with brownfield remediation
  - Health/ quality of life impacts
  - How municipalities can capitalize on the greenway's construction
    - Specific features that will draw visitors
    - Marketing strategies
    - Nearby amenities
- The idea is to quantify the potential economic benefits of constructing the greenway, and enable municipalities to argue for the construction of the greenway in economic terms. With the results of this study in hand, municipalities should be in a stronger position to receive funding. The cost of such a study is estimated at \$60,000.
- On behalf of the NRG Steering Committee, the COGCV submitted grant requests totaling \$35,000 to the three Community Foundations that serve the greenway towns. The requests were endorsed by the new 19 member NVCOG. If the grants are received, the balance of the project cost would be requested from NVCOG planning funds, and additional grant opportunities would also be explored.
- A consultant would be hired to conduct the study, with technical support provided by NVCOG staff, and the study would be completed in 2015.

**Ingrid** also discussed **the NaugatuckRiver.net website**.

- The web update is still underway. A website review meeting is scheduled for Dec. 3 at 10am at the COGCV offices. If anyone would like to assist with the review, they are welcome to attend.
- Future funding of the website was also discussed. The CCF grant that the site currently operates under ends this year, and a more sustainable funding source needs to be found. Sponsorships and advertising were both discussed, but both really depend on having an attractive, useful site that has visitors being driven to it.

**Rista Malanca** was nominated to be the **NRG representative to the CT Greenway Council**.

- There are currently two vacancies on the council, one to be appointed by the Governor's office and one appointed by the President pro tempore of the Senate. We will have to work to get an official appointment, but are welcome to participate on an unofficial basis until that can be arranged. The next CT Greenway Council Meeting is on Jan 12<sup>th</sup>.

**The 60<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Flood of 1955** is approaching (August 18<sup>th</sup>).

- Commemoration of the flood was discussed, and it was agreed that it is a good opportunity to gain some publicity for the greenway.

The **meeting schedule for 2015** was discussed, and the current schedule will be maintained: the second Wednesday every other month (third Wednesday in Nov. due to Veteran's day).

- **2015 Schedule: 1/14, 3/11, 5/13, 7/8, 9/9, 11/18**

**Next Meeting: Jan 14th, NVCOG Conference Room.**

- Details will follow.

# **Naugatuck River Greenway Steering Committee**

Present in **bold**.

## **Aaron Budris - Council of Governments of the Central Naugatuck Valley**

Bill Purcell - Valley Chamber of Commerce

Bob Gregorski - Naugatuck River Watershed Association & Trout Unlimited

Christopher Way - US Army Corps of Engineers

## **Chuck Berger - Watertown Town Engineer**

Clifford Cooper - Litchfield Community Greenway

Dave Faber - CT Outdoors (outfitter in Watertown)

## **Elaine LaBella - Housatonic Valley Association Land Protection Director**

Fred Messore - Town of Seymour

## **Ingrid Manning – formerly of CT Community Foundation**

Jack Walsh - Valley United Way

Jim MacBroom – Milone and MacBroom

Jim O'Rourke - Waterbury Y

Jim Stewart - Naugatuck Borough Engineer

Jim Whitney - Western CT Convention & Visitors Bureau

## **Joan Kirchner - Harwinton Conservation Commission**

## **Jolene Podgorski - Watertown DPW**

## **John Monroe – National Park Service: Rivers & Trails Program**

Josh Carey – Connecticut Community Foundation

## **Kate Rattan - CT DOT Bicycle/Pedestrian Coordinator**

## **Kathy McNamara - City of Waterbury**

Kevin Zak – Naugatuck River Revival Group & Housatonic Valley Association

Laura Wildman – Princeton Hydro

Laurie Giannotti - CT DEEP Greenways

Liz Falzone - Beacon Falls – Citizens for Tomorrow's Downtown

Mark Jewell – VHB, Inc (CT DOT)

Maura Martin - Thomaston Trails Committee

Mark Nielsen – Valley COG

Mike Jastremski – Housatonic Valley Association

Peter Kisselburgh – Thomaston Trails Committee

Ray Leite - Digital Arts Program at Naugatuck Valley Community College

Rich Minnick – Beacon Falls

Richard Knoll – TEAM Inc. (Community Action agency in Ansonia)

## **Rista Malanca - Torrington**

Sam Dziekan - Housatonic Valley Association

## **Sam Gold - Council of Governments of the Central Naugatuck Valley**

Sheila O'Malley – City of Ansonia

## **Susan Peterson - CT DEEP Watershed Management Program**

## **Vicki Barnes - Watertown - Steele Brook Rangers**

Vincent Gualtieri - US Army Corps of Engineers

Vinnie Scarlata – Ansonia Economic Development Commission

## **Will Cummings – Thomaston Trail Committee**

Also Present:

**Martin Connor – City Planner, City of Torrington**

**Elinor Carbone – Mayor, City of Torrington**

**Mark Linehan – Torrington Trails Network**

**Erin Wilson – Director of Economic Development, City of Torrington**

**Danielle Mailer – Torrington Artist**