



## Meeting Notes

Wednesday, March 11, 2015 - 9 to 10:30

Valley United Way

54 Grove Street, Shelton

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

Co-Chair **Jack Wash** opened the meeting and introductions were made.

**Laura Brown**, Community & Economic Development Educator at UCONN Extension, discussed how trails and place making relate to economic development and can improve the economic well-being and quality of life for a community. Laura is a certified economic developer (CEcD), and is new to UCONN; formerly working at the University of Wisconsin Extension on asset based regional development. Her presentation slides can be found here: <http://nvcoct.org/sites/default/files/EDPlacemakingTrails%203-11-15.pdf> .

- The region is currently shifting from the old manufacturing and agriculture driven economy to a new service and technology based economy. In this new economy, businesses will choose to locate based on access to talent, and attracting talent with quality physical environments and cultural amenities will drive investment and development.
- Laura gave an overview of economic impact studies, explaining that you can study the economic impact of anything, but the quality of your data and assumptions are critical. Direct, indirect, and induced spending as well as property values are estimated based on figures gathered from other similar situations and rely on good comparable data. Other benefits are more difficult to quantify, such as attracting businesses and employees, improved mobility, health benefits and ecological services.
- UCONN Extension may be able to assist with the NRG Economic Impact Study, especially with the development and implementation of trail user surveys and for data collection, and can be a valuable resource to help guide the project. Assistance from Extension may be able to reduce the project cost as well.
- The importance of relevant user information was stressed. National data will not necessarily reflect the behavior of local trail users. Every effort should be made to collect trail user information from similar trails in the region. It was suggested that this would be a great opportunity to do a statewide trail user survey on trails across the state, the data from which would increase reliability of our economic study.

The status of the **NRG Economic Impact Study** was discussed.

- Additional funding sources are being explored to add to the \$25,000 we have received from the Connecticut Community Foundation and Valley Community Foundation. We have asked Northwest Hills COG to submit an application to the Community Foundation of NW CT, and private grant opportunities are being looked into.
- The plan is for NVCOG staff and NRG volunteers to conduct trail counts and surveys this spring, and to do as much of the data collection and analysis as possible, leaving only the high level economic analysis to be done by a consultant, and paid for by the grants received. NVCOG is developing a work program so that planning staff will be able to work on the project in FY16 using transportation planning funds.
- **Next Steps:**
  - Establish UCONN Extension's role in the project, and determine what assistance is available.
  - Contact groups involved with other trails statewide to discuss a more comprehensive survey and trail count initiative.
  - Form a study subcommittee.

**Sheila O'Malley**, Economic Development Coordinator in Ansonia, discussed the Naugatuck Valley Corridor Comprehensive Economic Development Strategy (CEDS), which covers 18 municipalities in Waterbury area and the lower valley. The report can be found here: [http://www.sheltonedcorp.org/regional\\_dev.html](http://www.sheltonedcorp.org/regional_dev.html)

- Required by the US Department of Commerce Economic Development Administration (EDA), the CEDS allows the region to qualify for EDA assistance. The region is recognized as an Economic Development District (EDD). Survey work is conducted in order to rate and rank community priorities, and to be able to direct economic development funding to the where it will have the most community benefit.
- The current CEDS, updated in 2014 includes the Greenway and bike and pedestrian trails as a priority. The NRG Steering Committee is well represented, with several members also serving on the advisory committee.
- Sheila also discussed the next planned section of Ansonia River Walk. Final designs have been drafted to extend the trail north from where it currently dead ends to Pershing Street. The section crosses the existing rail line via a pedestrian bridge. The city is currently awaiting permits, and the project is a priority.
- Ansonia is also looking at connecting the downtown to the train station with a bike/ pedestrian path.

**Mark Nielsen** discussed the importance of ranking and prioritizing trail sections. Mark made the recommendation that the NRG be considered as one project with many segments. This would allow local funding that exceeds match percentages to be used as match where it may be needed on other segments.

- NVCOG will be creating an up to date inventory of trail sections including current design or construction status. In consultation with the steering committee, a ranking system will be developed to rank each section's priority. As part of the ALTA routing study in former CNV towns, trail sections were ranked by importance, ease of construction, potential permit issues, difficulty of ROW issues, etc. This project will extend ranking and prioritization to all sections of 44 mile length of trail.
- With agreed upon priorities we can proceed with design and construction in an organized way, and program funds to where they will have the most immediate benefit. By presenting a unified front, greenway sections will be more likely to be funded, and it will help avoid several municipalities requesting applying for the same pool of money.
- Future funding sources were also discussed including the FHWA Transportation Alternatives Program, The state Recreational Trails Program (which will have another solicitation round soon), and the CT Local Transportation Capital Improvement Program (LOTICIP).
- Kate Rattan recommended submitting comments or testimony on the Governor's Transportation Budget Bill ([HB 6840](#)) which includes funding for trails, when it comes up for public hearing.

**John Monroe** discussed the potential for publication of a **Naugatuck River Paddle Guide** similar to this one for the Willimantic River John helped publish for the Last Green Valley:

<http://thelastgreenvalley.org/wp-content/uploads/2014/10/WilliPaddle2013web.pdf>

- Knowledge about paddling the Naugatuck is not widely held, and information is not readily available, so publishing what kayakers know about the river could be really helpful to get people out on the river safely.
- Most of the background information from other guides can be reused, so the main coast would be in designing and publishing the guide. John will work on getting an estimate from a graphic designer.

**Ingrid Manning** discussed Paddle Day 2015

- A date has not yet been set, but Ingrid has discussed the idea with Dave Faber, who organized previous paddle days. Past events have been a lot of fun, and Ingrid encouraged participation by the committee members this year.

**John Monroe** gave an update on the **NRG Uniform Trail Signage & Wayfinding Project**. John Monroe and NVCOG have received, and will be administering a \$15,000 grant through the National Recreational Trails Program for the project.

- John is currently developing an RFP for a signage designer, and developing a reporting system to record volunteer hours for the local match for the grant. John reported that the project should be completed by the fall.

**Chuck Berger** gave an update of the Watertown/ Thomaston DEEP Recreational Trails Grant, which is still pending as a result of required wildlife and archaeological reviews, and reported that they are "almost there". The grant is for the design of the Watertown section and construction of a 2000' section of trail in Thomaston from the

Watertown border to the vicinity of the Thomaston water pollution control facility.

- Chuck explained that the routing of the Watertown section will be changed to avoid an archaeologically sensitive area. Sticking to a more disturbed route should avoid any additional archaeological concerns, and has been reviewed by the state Archaeologist.
- A preliminary review of the National Diversity Data Base (NDDDB) indicated the possibility of 7 endangered, threatened or special concern species in the vicinity of the trail. DEEP has requested that a wildlife survey be done before it will release the grant money. Since the grant money will only be used for design on the Watertown section, the town requested that the survey be held off until after the design and before construction. The state has agreed to allow grant money to be used for a wildlife survey so that the design can proceed.

**Kevin Zak** discussed the **Waterbury Greenway Phase I** delays.

- An archaeological survey in the vicinity of the park which will be constructed at the corner of South Main and Platts Mill Rd. uncovered some prehistoric artifacts, and further investigation by an archaeologist will be necessary before construction can begin so that it does not impact a cultural resource.
- CT DOT will also be replacing a crib wall that will hold up a section of the trail along S Main St. The wall is nearing the end of its useful life, and will be replaced before construction of the greenway.
- Construction of Phase I is not likely to start until 2016

**Sam Dziekan** gave an overview of the new NaugatuckRiver.net. The new website is now live at <http://www.naugatuckriver.net/> , although the web designer is still working on the site's blog and news feature.

- If you have any recommendations for the new site let Sam know.
- There is a need to make the website self-sustaining which would involve long-term sponsorships and possibly advertising. The maintenance and update of the website has been facilitated through grants from the Connecticut Community Foundation over the last few years, but will not be available going forward. Ingrid has sent out solicitation letters to potential sponsors.
- The internal website maintenance will be minimized by giving several stakeholders the ability to post information and update the calendar.

**John Monroe** discussed the **Torrington Walks!** Design Charrette held on 1/21.

- The program was held in the City Hall in Torrington, and was attended by 40+ people. The Mayor, City officials, Torrington residents, State and Federal government officials, local business owners and other stakeholders were in attendance, and offered ideas on all aspects of the future of Torrington's bike and pedestrian network. Landscape architects from Milone and MacBroom were on hand to turn ideas into conceptual drawings, and to offer suggestions. The city will be compiling the information gathered, and it will be passed on to the committee.
- Attendees noted the enthusiasm of attendees and the abundance of good ideas that were presented.

**Kevin Zak** discussed the Towantic Power Plant proposed for Oxford which is currently being considered by the CT Siting Council. The plant would run on Natural Gas and Oil when necessary, and would be located adjacent to the Waterbury Oxford Airport.

- The plant would be cooled using water from the Heritage Water Company (from the Pomperaug aquifer) and would discharge wastewater through the Naugatuck Treatment Plant into the Naugatuck River. The plant has come up against community opposition.
- More details can be found, and comments can be made at: <http://www.ct.gov/csc/site/default.asp>, Docket # 192B

**Next Meeting: May 13<sup>th</sup> – Details to Follow**

# Naugatuck River Greenway Steering Committee

Present in **bold**.

## **Aaron Budris – Naugatuck Valley Council of Governments**

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**

## **\*Chair\* 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 – Naugatuck Valley Council of Governments**

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**

## **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:

**Kevin Tedesco – CT DOT**

**Laura Brown - UCONN Extension**

**Mark Lewis - CT DEEP Brownfields Coordinator**

**Rick Dunne - NVCOG**