



Meeting Notes

Thursday, June 25, 2015 - 9 to 10:30

Watertown Town Office Building

Heminway Park Road, Watertown

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

Co-Chair **Ingrid Manning** opened the meeting and introductions were made.

A discussion of four **Recreational Trails Grant Applications** from NRG municipalities began the meeting. Ingrid proposed that the Committee come up with some general guidelines for deciding which projects support letters will be written for. It was agreed upon that projects that benefit more than one town, are for longer sections of trail, are ready to implement, have the best chance at approval, and are part of the NRG should receive more weight.

The following projects were presented:

- **City of Torrington/ Torrington Trails Network:** Trail Design and Construction of a [section of the NRG](#) :
 - Trail sections starting at the Franklin Street parking lot and extending south along the USACE Flood Control Levee approximately 2.6 miles (including along existing sidewalks). The section of trail will be part of the NRG, and will bring the trail into downtown Torrington.
 - Full Class A survey and engineered cross sections of the trail and impacts to the levees to submit for required USACE approval.
 - Construction of a short paved section of trail behind the Senior Center, and construction of crushed gravel surface trail along the USACE levee.
 - Trail amenities (signage, fencing, furniture, etc).
 - Will tie in with .5 mile section of trail the city is constructing as a temporary access road during construction of Bouge Road Bridge.
- **Town of Watertown** – Work on [Steele Brook Greenway](#), and a bridge over Steele Brook:
 - Widening of sidewalk along route 73 (Main Street) to 10' and ADA compliant.
 - New 10' wide ADA Compliant prefabricated steel pedestrian bridge over Steele Brook leading to the Steele Brook Greenway at Unico Fields. The bridge will use existing abutments from an abandoned and removed rail bridge, and will be designed to reflect the original rail bridge.
 - Benches and information kiosk at the bridge.
- **City of Waterbury:** Trail Improvements in [Fulton Park](#):
 - Requesting funds for the reconstruction of 2,800 linear feet of the total 2.6 miles of paved bituminous walking trails in the National Register of Historic Places Olmstead-Designed Park.
 - Will complement recent city investments in the park including restoration of historic structures, and private investment in invasive plant removal.
- **Naugatuck Valley Council of Governments** - submitting on behalf of **The Connecticut Greenways Council (CGC)** – Connecticut Statewide Multiuse Trail User Study.
 - This is an expanded survey of trail users that was originally envisioned as part of the NRG Economic Impact Study. NVCOG and the CGC will be Partnering with UConn College of Agriculture, Health and Natural Resources Department of Extension (Extension), and the UConn Connecticut Center for Economic Analysis (CCEA) to develop and implement a study to count and survey trail users on multiuse trails across the state.
 - Counts will be done using infrared trail counting devices, and intercept surveys will be administered on several multiuse trails statewide using volunteers and trail user groups. Additional online “dropbox” surveys may also be implemented.

- Grant request is for costs associated with purchasing equipment, developing the study and methodology, administering the survey, analyzing the results, and report writing/ dissemination.
- The results will be incorporated into parts of the economic impact study that NVCOG and the Steering Committee will be conducting for the NRG, and will provide a much fuller set of data than would have been possible with a more localized study.
- Results will fill a gap in multiuse trail user data in CT, and will help trail administrators demonstrate a need for trail infrastructure when applying for funding, and design and construct trails that are the most beneficial to users and the communities they are located in.

There was some discussion about which projects best met the guidelines discussed earlier, focusing mainly on which projects were directly linked to the NRG, and had the most regional impact. On a **Motion** by Chuck Berger and seconded by Jack Walsh it was unanimously approved by the committee to submit support letters for the City of Torrington/Torrington Trails Network application and for the NVCOG/ Connecticut Greenways Council application.

- Support letters were drafted and submitted. Copies are attached to the end of these notes.

The **NRG Economic Impact Study** was discussed by Laura Brown and Aaron Budris.

- The Northwest Hills Council of Governments announced that they have been awarded \$5,000 for the project from the [Community Foundation of Northwest Connecticut](#). This brings the total project funding to \$30,000 when added to funding received from the [Valley Community Foundation](#) (VCF) and the [Connecticut Community Foundation](#) (CCF). NVCOG is still waiting to hear about an application submitted to the [Bank of America's Katharine Matthies Foundation](#) to help fund the project.
- With prompting from DEEP and DOT, the user survey that was originally proposed as part of the economic study will be expanded into the Statewide Multiuse Trail User Study that is discussed above. While this may cause some delays in conducting the economic impact study, Aaron explained that he thinks this is ultimately a good thing. It will provide much better information to inform the economic study than we would have been able to collect on our own. By removing the survey work from the project, it will also allow us to perform a more in depth analysis by allowing more of the Community Foundation grants to be used for analysis.
- Laura explained that she has been in discussions with Fred Carstensen at UConn's Connecticut Center for Economic Analysis to perform the economic analysis. The CCEA does a lot of work with community organizations, and may be able to provide the most cost effective means to conduct an in depth analysis with the budget we have to work with.
- While parts of the NRG Economic Impact Study will have to wait on user data, portions can be conducted in the meantime. The property value impact assessment, brownfields inventory, trail counts, and project development will all move forward. Getting a Memorandum of Understanding put in place with UConn is the next step.
- Laura introduced John McDonald, a student at UConn Waterbury, and intern at Extension who is performing a literature review on similar projects and his work will be important to the project development.

Trail Counts were conducted on the **Derby** section of Greenway during May and June, and Aaron presented preliminary findings which confirmed that the Derby Greenway is heavily used. Total trail uses for a four week period (adjusted to account for undercounts due to people walking side by side) was 32,960 uses near Division Street, and 16,390 uses on the south section of trail along the Housatonic River. Using the National Bike Pedestrian Documentation Project extrapolation method, we estimated total annual uses at 310,254 near Division Street and 154,299 along the Housatonic. A full report and use breakdown is forthcoming, and will be made publically available on the website. Trail counters are now deployed in Naugatuck, and will be set up on other regional trails in the coming months.

Aaron gave an update on the **Uniform Signage and Wayfinding Project** being administered by NVCOG funded by a \$15,000 grant through the National Recreational Trails Program.

- Project cost estimates for the development of a signage design guide have been received from four consultants. NVCOG is currently in discussions to finalize an agreement with one or possibly two of the consultants to perform aspects of the project.

- Consultant estimates were higher than originally expected, so NVCOG will be requesting additional funds from the Recreational Trails Program to be able to complete the original scope of work, otherwise the original project scope may need to be amended.

Chuck Berger and **Will Cummings** gave an update of the **Watertown/ Thomaston DEEP Recreational Trails Grant**.

- The towns have satisfied all of the requirements that DEEP set forth, and DEEP will be formalizing a contract soon. Since this is a multi-town project, NVCOG has agreed to act as the fiduciary agency, and will be waiving administrative fees. Work done by NVCOG staff will be applied toward the in-kind match.

Aaron Budris discussed the **Waterbury Greenway Phase I** delays.

- The phase II archaeological survey in the vicinity of the park which will be constructed at the corner of South Main and Platts Mill Rd. uncovered additional prehistoric artifacts. It will be recommended that the archaeological deposits be preserved in place for future study. This may limit the amount and type of trail and trail feature development that will be allowed in the area of the finds. Typically sites can be capped, and limited development can take place without impacting archaeological context. Regional Native American Tribes will also perform a review of the site. DOT is waiting on final approval by SHPO before beginning ROW negotiations and allowing the city to proceed with final design.
- CT DOT has of yet not officially replied to requests to replace 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 there is concern that if the trail is built before the wall is replaced, the section adjacent to the wall will have to be dug up and replaced during construction. The City requested that DOT expedite replacement to avoid the cost of building the trail twice. Without cooperation to date, the City may choose to go forward with design and construction without the wall being replaced.
- Construction of Phase I is now not likely to start until 2017

The NRG hosted the [16th Annual CT Greenway Awards & National Trails Day Celebration](#) at Torrington UCONN on June 5th, providing some great exposure for the NRG. DOT Commissioner James Redeker was on hand to receive an award, and expressed his commitment to developing bike and pedestrian facilities. The Torrington Trails Network was also awarded for their commitment to trail development, and later led a tour of the John Brown Trail which they recently completed. Photos from the event can be found [here](#).

Several municipalities along the NRG held **trails weekend** events, and Chuck Berger and Will Cummings discussed the event in Watertown and Thomaston that was well attended. The walk traversed a trail that will connect the NRG to Black Rock State Park, and ended at the trolley bridge that will carry the NRG over Branch Brook. Photos of the event are posted [here](#).

Aaron explained an issue that has recently come up concerning letters of support requested of the NRG Steering Committee between regular meetings. Since the Committee only meets every other month, support requests do not always have an opportunity to be heard or considered by the entire group. Solutions include giving the co-chairs authority to decide support on behalf of the group, writing letters as support only from the co-chairs when the entire group has not reviewed them (current practice), or finding a way to allow for e-mail or online votes for approval. The issue was tabled for further discussion at next meeting.

Next Meeting: September 9th, Location TBD– 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

***Chair* 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

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

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:

Laura Brown - UCONN Extension

John McDonald – Uconn Extension

Ruth Mulcahy – Watertown Land Use Administrator



July 1, 2015

Laurie Giannotti
Trails and Greenways Program Coordinator
Department of Energy and Environmental Protection
79 Elm Street
Hartford, CT 06106-5127

Subject: Support for the City of Torrington and Northwest Connecticut YMCA-Torrington Trails Network's Recreational Trails Program Grant Application.

Dear Ms. Giannotti:

At its regular meeting on June 25, 2015, The Naugatuck River Greenway (NRG) Steering Committee, voted unanimously to support the Northwest Connecticut YMCA – Torrington Trails Network and the City of Torrington in their efforts to obtain a Recreational Trails Program grant from the CT Department of Energy and Environmental Protection. The requested funding would allow Torrington, in partnership with the Torrington Trails Network, to plan, develop and construct over 2 miles of trail along the Naugatuck River that would connect to the city's downtown. We are writing this letter in strong support of the project which will serve as the northern terminus of the NRG, and will provide numerous benefits to residents of Torrington and the surrounding Naugatuck Valley area.

The NRG trail is a planned 44-mile multipurpose trail following the Naugatuck River from Torrington to Derby. When complete, the Greenway will link 11 municipalities, reclaim the Naugatuck River for recreation, provide an alternate mode of transportation, drive tourism and economic development, and improve the quality of life of residents. Several sections of the greenway have been completed and are open to the public, and funding of the proposed section of trail in Torrington is an important next step in its completion. Having worked with the City of Torrington and the Torrington Trails Network, the NRG Steering Committee has seen the result of their hard work and commitment to revitalizing the downtown and reconnecting Torrington to the Naugatuck River which was historically the city's lifeblood.

As a key part of the revitalization of Torrington's downtown, the trail being proposed will improve the quality of life of residents, and will be a draw to visitors. The trail will provide an alternate form of transportation and provide recreational access to the Naugatuck River. It will make Torrington a more enjoyable place to visit, live, work and play. A revitalized downtown will also be a true destination and fitting terminus for the Naugatuck River Greenway. It is for these reasons that the Naugatuck River Greenway Steering Committee strongly supports the project. We hope that DEEP will show their support as well by granting the City of Torrington and the Torrington Trails Network their request for funds under the National Recreational Trails Program.

Sincerely,
NRGSC Co-Chairs:

Ingrid Manning

Chuck Berger

Jack Walsh



July 1, 2015

Laurie Giannotti
Trails and Greenways Program Coordinator
Department of Energy and Environmental Protection
79 Elm Street
Hartford, CT 06106-5127

Subject: Support for the Naugatuck Valley Council of Governments application for a National Recreational Trails Program Grant to Fund a Statewide Multiuse Trail User Study.

Dear Ms. Giannotti:

At its regular meeting on June 25, 2015, The Naugatuck River Greenway (NRG) Steering Committee voted unanimously to support the Naugatuck Valley Council of Governments (NVCOG) National Recreational Trails Program grant request to the CT Department of Energy and Environmental Protection (DEEP) on behalf of the Connecticut Greenways Council. The requested funding would allow the Connecticut Greenways Council, in partnership with the University of Connecticut (UConn) and NVCOG, to conduct a Statewide Multiuse Trail User Study. We are writing this letter in strong support of this project which will provide much needed information about the Connecticut's multiuse trail users, and will allow trail planners and administrators to better serve the needs of Connecticut's residents and visitors.

Consisting of representatives from all 11 municipalities along the Naugatuck River, along with regional, state and federal representatives, the NRG Steering Committee serves to promote, support and help guide the development of the NRG. A common and universal complaint we have heard from municipalities and trail groups that are trying to fund and build multiuse trails is about the lack of trail user data in Connecticut. This type of information is crucial when applying for funding in order to demonstrate the need for and benefit of multiuse trail and greenway projects. The lack of good trail user data also makes it difficult for trail administrators to plan, design and construct or maintain trail facilities to best meet the needs of users.

The Statewide Multiuse Trail User Study being proposed will fill the current gap in data about the state's multiuse trail users. Using trail user counts and surveys, the project will identify who is using multipurpose trails and how they are being used. It will look at the amenities and features along trails that users find important and will also look at local spending by trail users. The answers to all of these current unknowns will help trail administrators in the future better meet the needs of the public, will help municipalities and trail groups make better informed requests for funding, and will help allocate funding to trail investments that will have the most benefit. We hope that DEEP will join us in our support for this project by approving the funding requested for this much needed Statewide Multiuse Trail User Study.

Sincerely,
NRGSC Co-Chairs:

Ingrid Manning

Chuck Berger

Jack Walsh