



Meeting Notes

Wednesday, November 18, 2015 - 9 to 10:30

Beacon Falls Fire House

35 North Main Street, Beacon Falls, CT

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

Co-Chair **Chuck Berger** opened the meeting and introductions were made. **First Selectman Chris Bielik**, Beacon Falls, welcomed everyone.

Trail Section Prioritization. Mark Nielsen presented an overview of the final draft report listing the section priorities. Mark explained that the report had been distributed to NRG Committee members for review and comment, and that revisions had been made based on comments received from the US Army Corps of Engineers. The USACE voiced concern about aligning the trail through their property on the west side of the Naugatuck River and instead suggested constructing the trail on the east side of the river through Harwinton. Mark stated that the NVCOG is considering conducting a study to determine the best alignment between Torrington and Thomaston and coordinating with the USACE. Mark explained that the report is organized in several sections. He explained that Tier 1 priorities are those sections that advance planning and/or design is underway or completed but construction funds have not been allocated. Five Tier 1 sections have been identified:

- Watertown from Frost Bridge Road to Thomaston Town Line – 2.4 mi.
- Naugatuck from Pulaski footbridge to Waterbury Town Line - 0.9 mi.
- Beacon Falls from Route 42 (existing greenway) to Toby's Pond – 1 mi.
- Torrington from Franklin Street to Bogue road – 2.6 mi.
- Waterbury Phase II from Eagle St. to Freight St. - 2.3 mi.

Susan Peterson, DEEP, brought up the planned CTDOT project to replace and rehabilitate several bridge on Route 8 and I-84 and the potential impact on the Waterbury Phase II project. She indicated that a public information meeting was scheduled for November 18th and the comment period was open until December 9th. She asked whether the NRG Committee should submit comments. Mark provided an overview of the bridge project and said that the NVCOG had suggested that the city work with CTDOT in getting the Department to agree to mitigation measures that would clean-up the nine-acre parcel along the river and west of Jackson Street and construct a section of trail through the area. The city's plan for the area is to convert the parcel into a riverfront park and align the NRG through the new park. The CTDOT's plans call for the construction of a by-pass road through the parcel. The Committee agreed to submit a comment letter supporting the idea of using the vacant parcel for the by-pass road and post-construction mitigation to include environment remediation and clean-up of the parcel, construction of a riverfront park, construction of a section of the NRG through the site and installation of a new pedestrian span across the Naugatuck River to connect the riverfront park to Riverside Street on the west side of the river. A motion was made by Rick Minnick and seconded by Fred Messoro to authorize the chairs to sign and send the comment letter.

Mark continued the summary of the priority report by explaining that the Tier 2 list of projects are those sections that require advanced planning, design and/or route determination. He also explained that the report includes a summary of completed sections and active projects to demonstrate progress in completing the entire NRG. By consensus, the NRG Committee endorsed the Naugatuck River Greenway Project Priorities report as the official ranking of trail section. Mark emphasized that the priorities are dynamic and will be changed as appropriate. He also said that NVCOG will continue to communicate and coordinate with [VHB](#), the consultant for CTDOT's [Transportation Alternatives Program](#), on advancing project priorities. The final NRG Project Priorities document can be found [HERE](#).

NRG Economic Impact Study: Mark Nielsen and Laura Brown updated the Committee on the status of the study:

- Mark said that the NVCOG has executed an agreement with UCONN's Connecticut Center for Economic Analysis (CCEA, Fred Carstensen) to perform the economic analysis. The schedule calls for the study to be completed by June 30, 2016. Because of the late start, the NVCOG has requested and received one year extensions of the community foundation grants. The NVCOG has also executed an agreement with Northwest Hills COG to assign the community foundation grant they had received to the NVCOG.
- Laura briefly updated the committee on her work completing the literature review report and initiation entering the intercept survey data. Ingrid Manning mentioned that she had some questions and comments on the literature review report. She will follow-up directly with Laura. The full updated report can be found [HERE](#).
- The intercept survey was conducted at five locations over four separate time slots at each location. Laura indicated that 386 surveys were completed. Chuck Berger thanked Aaron Budris and Max Tanguay-Colucci for setting up and organizing the surveys and thanked all the volunteers who participated in conducting the surveys.
- Mark stated that we have conducted trail count **on several sections**, including the Middlebury Greenway and Sue Grossman Trail. He said Aaron Budris is tabulating the data and is preparing a summary report of the results. The data report should be completed by the next meeting date.
- A press release was prepared and sent out. Chuck said that it had been well received and was picked-up by the Waterbury Republican American newspaper. The press release can be found [HERE](#).
- Laura discussed the next steps and said work will focus on processing the survey and count data, collecting economic data and conducting focus group meetings. She thought the focus group meetings would be held from early January to about March. She also asked for suggestions on who to involve in the focus groups. Laura informed the Committee that she has a student intern (Jessica Powell) available to assist her in conducting the focus group meetings; she will invite Jessica to attend the January meeting.

Uniform Signage and Wayfinding Project: Mark gave an update on the study. He informed the Committee that an agreement had been executed with [Milone and MacBroom](#) to develop a signage and wayfinding manual. The study is being funded by a \$15,000 Recreational Trails grant. Mark indicated that the fee negotiated with MMI will consume almost the entire grant; but he indicated that the NVCOG will request additional funds to purchase confidence markers. John Monroe gave an overview of the scope of work and the initial kick-off meeting with MMI. John reminded the Committee that a sub-committee had been formed to oversee the study, and he expects to convene a meeting of the sub-committee soon. He will reach out to members to schedule a convenient time. John also took the opportunity to inform the Committee that he will be retiring from the National Parks Service at the end of February 2016. He expects to attend the January meeting.

John was asked about his progress in developing a paddle guide for the Naugatuck River. He said he is developing it using a template created for other rivers, but needs data on the river. Rick Minnick said that paddlers were prepared to collect the river data using methods that John had suggested but that low flows this summer prevented paddlers from accessing the river.

Watertown/ Thomaston DEEP Recreational Trails Grant. Chuck Berger gave an update of the project. He said that the NVCOG had prepared and issued a Request for Proposals and that nine proposals had been received. A selection committee was formed and is reviewing the proposals.

Committee Roundtable:

Several committee members talked about their attendance at **Torrington Walks! Talk**, held on October 22nd. The consensus of those who attended was that it was a very successful and informative forum.

Chuck talked about the effort by Thomaston that produced a calendar of historic carriage houses being sold through Thomaston Savings Bank as a fundraiser.

Fred Messoré requested support from the Committee for the town of Seymour's application to CT Main Street for a

grant to install artwork along the new Seymour Greenway Trail, currently in design. He explained that the idea includes painting a mural on the Route 8 bridge abutments along the trail and install a sculpture in the circle at the start of trail near Route 67. The Committee agreed to submit a support letter.

Mark Nielsen briefed the Committee on the status of enacting a new federal transportation funding bill. He explained that the House recently passed its version of the transportation bill; the Senate had passed its version during the summer. Mark focused on the Transportation Alternatives Program. He explained that the primary difference between the two versions regarding the TAP is that the House bill retains the 50:50 split in funds between the state and regions, while the Senate bill allocates 100% of TAP funds to the regions. The House bill provides flat funding for TAP over the six years of the act, while the Senate bill provides annual increases, resulting a total higher level of funding over the life of the bill.

Kevin Tedesco discussed CTDOT's **Community Connectivity Program**, a grant program that is being designed to help communities pay to design bike and pedestrian safety improvements in problem areas. He indicated that a news release had been sent out describing the program and the intended eligible activities. **Update:** Kevin send an email to Committee members with a link to the news release. The link can be found [HERE](#).

Kevin also informed the Committee that the Department has decided to purchase bike and pedestrian travel data from the Strava data app. The data will be made available to the regions to use.

Rick Minnick made a presentation on efforts in Beacon Falls to develop a small park at the bend in the river along Nancy Avenue. The town owns most of the land and groups have created trails through the property. The plans envision expanding the trails, installing a fishing access point and creating a place for paddlers to pull-in and out of the river. Rich mention that the town is in discussions with state to acquire two parcels at the corner with Route 42. Plans ultimately call for the extension of the NRG along North Main Street to access the site.

Next Meeting: January 13th in "To Be Determined" – 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
***Chair* 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 (Phone)
Josh Carey – Connecticut Community Foundation
Kate Rattan - CT DOT Bicycle/Pedestrian Coordinator
Kathy McNamara - City of Waterbury
Kevin Tedesco - CT DOT Bicycle/Pedestrian Coordinator
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
Rista Malanca - Torrington
Sam Dziekan - Housatonic Valley Association
Sheila O'Malley – City of Ansonia
Susan Peterson - CT DEEP Watershed Management Program (Phone)
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 (Phone)
Mark Lewis– CT DEEP
Chris Bielik – First Selectman, Beacon Falls
Michael Houball – Beacon Falls
Liz Falzone – Beacon Falls
Dominick Sorrentino – Beacon Falls