



Naugatuck River Greenway Steering Committee

Torrington • Harwinton • Litchfield • Thomaston • Watertown • Waterbury • Naugatuck • Beacon Falls • Seymour • Ansonia • Derby

Meeting Notes

Wednesday, July 13th, 2016 - 9 to 10:30

NVCOG Conference Room

49 Leavenworth Street, Waterbury, CT

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

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

The meeting began with a discussion about organizational changes.

Chuck announced that he will be retiring from the Town of Watertown at the End of September. Jack Walsh is also retiring from United Way this year. Both have agreed to stay on in the role of Co-Chairs alongside Ingrid Manning at least until the Economic Study is completed and the results have been presented. If there is anyone that would be interested in being a chair or co-chair in the future, please let them know.

A large part of the discussion focused on attendance and participation. Attendance has waned over the past year, and the co-chairs asked how that trend could be reversed. Meeting times and locations were discussed. It was proposed that fewer meetings might make more sense and might improve attendance. It was also suggested that the Economic Study "roadshow", where the findings of the economic study will be presented to all 11 municipalities, will drive more interest and be a good opportunity to recruit new members that represent towns. Meeting time was another topic of discussion, with an earlier start time than 9am generally preferred by those in attendance. The NVCOG office is central and convenient, but other locations should also be used especially to highlight progress in towns along the route. It was proposed to have 2 of the meetings at NVCOG and 2 in other locations each year.

It was decided by consensus to change the meeting schedule to quarterly beginning after the next meeting in November. A schedule of February, May, August and December was proposed, with the potential for special meetings when there is a need. The schedule will be discussed and finalized at the November meeting. It was also decided to move the November meeting up to 8:30 am.

A new draft of the **NRG Signage and Wayfinding Manual** was presented. The draft took into account comments made since project manager Mike Doherty presented a previous draft in July. The current draft has been developed through several rounds of comments that NVCOG has provided, and includes the new logo and colors approved by the signage subcommittee. Once the draft is finalized, NVCOG will be authoring an introduction and the manual will be presented to the towns. Several issues were pointed out by the committee, and were forwarded on to the consultant. There is potential for funding in the next round of DEEP Recreational Trails program funding to request funds to purchase trail markers or other signs. Rista Malanca discussed the sign mock-up that Milone & Macbroom is preparing as part of the project.

UPDATE - The most recent "Final" draft of the signage manual and Torrington mock-up can be found [here](#).

*"The Naugatuck River from Torrington to Derby is rich with history, stunning scenery and wildlife. Just as the river built and shaped our towns and cities, the Naugatuck River Greenway will be a driving force for the next century and beyond.
Our mission is to harness the vitality and protect the health of the river for economic development and quality of life for all."*

A new draft of the NRG **Economic Impact Study** was reviewed. Mark Nielsen briefly discussed the issues that are in the process of being resolved. While the results show a very large economic impact of building the NRG, the CCEA report does not always explain in detail how those figures were arrived at. NVCOG has been working closely with CCEA to better explain the calculations used to conduct the analysis so that we can be sure that we can present and defend the material. NVCOG will be reformatting and publishing the report once final changes are made, and will be developing short summaries for each town that details the economic benefits for each section of trail. There was discussion about how detailed the summaries could be. Mark explained that the finest resolution that the REMI analysis could be run at is at the county level. Local figures for that part of the analysis will need to be a disaggregation of the county figures. There were comments from committee members that the cleanup of the river should be included in the report somehow, and that it should also include funding sources as well. Mark explained that both of those things were possible and explained that there will also be a section about brownfields since they will figure prominently both as an obstacle to construction of some sections, but also as a potential source of funding for redevelopment. It was also suggested that the report be sent to the Connecticut Greenways Council and other trail groups once complete.

Aaron Budris discussed the **Connecticut Trail Census**, a Recreational Trails funded project that is being conducted in partnership between NVCOG, the Connecticut Greenways Council, DEEP and UConn Extension. The program will build on the data collection techniques used to collect trail user information for the NRG Economic Study, expanding data collection statewide. 12 trails will be chosen to take part in the program, will have infrared trail counters installed on their trails and will organize volunteers to conduct intercept surveys next spring and fall. More information can be found here: http://clear.uconn.edu/projects/ct_trail_census/index.htm. Aaron encouraged representatives to submit applications for open sections of NRG and other nearby trails.

The contracts with DEEP for the OPM funded **Thomaston-Torrington Routing Study** and the **Torrington/Winchester Sue Grossman Trail** extension and design projects have not yet been finalized, but should be soon.

The consultant for the **Watertown/ Thomaston Recreational Trails Project** have been very slow to develop an agreed upon scope, although a scope has finally been agreed upon. NVCOG is currently negotiating hours and fees, and hope to reach a final agreement soon.

Mark Nielsen discussed the FAST act **Fixing America's Surface Transportation (FAST) Act Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP)** federal funding opportunity that had recently been announced. The FAST Act is a five year spending bill that authorizes \$305 Billion through FY 2020 for highway, highway and motor vehicle safety, public transportation, motor carrier safety, hazardous materials safety, rail, and research, technology, and statistics programs. It includes a set aside of \$835-\$850m annually for the **Transportation Alternatives Program (TAP)** for which bicycle and pedestrian projects are eligible. Half of each state's portion of FAST TA funds is being allocated by urban area population for local or regional priority projects, and half will be allocated to state departments of transportation to be used on projects statewide. The local portion is being allocated by DOT and by MPOs with urban area populations of over 200,000. Large urban areas are being allocated funds and MPOs (COGs) will be able to solicit and choose projects to fund directly. There are four urbanized areas in the NVCOG region, meaning that we will be have four small pots of money to apply to for project funding. The Waterbury Urbanized area is completely within the NVCOG region, but since it has a population of just under 200,000, DOT will be allocating funds to be shared with the Danbury urbanized area, and DOT will be making final project selection. For projects in the Hartford, New Haven or Stamford/Bridgeport urbanized areas, we will be working with adjacent COGs to submit projects. Mark explained that the TA program is less than ideal because it does not provide enough funding to complete even a single complex project that are typical of the NRG. The already small pot of funds will also have to be shared, and NVCOG will not have the ability to choose priority projects to be funded. More information about the FAST Act TA allocation can be found in [this letter](#) that was sent to NVCOG from CTDOT.

UPDATE- NVOG sent a solicitation to all 19 towns (and to the NRGSC), and received 6 project proposals (Ansonia, Beacon Falls, Cheshire, Middlebury, Oxford and Plymouth). NVCOG is currently refining the applications and coordinating with adjacent COGs to submit projects to DOT by the December deadline.

Rista Malanca discussed the **DEEP Recreational Trails Program**. There is currently a solicitation for projects out with a deadline of December 15th. The state opted out of the federal rec trails program last year in favor of using state bond funds which was intended to reduce the red tape, speed up the process, and provide more funding than the federal program. Unfortunately the 2017 funding has been swept due to state budget woes. There is currently leftover funds from 2016 that will be allocated during this open round. Rista explained that there is still a chance to get the funding reinstated, urging all members to write letters to the governor and their state reps highlighting the program's importance to local trail development. There was discussion about authoring a letter from the NRGSC. Some present expressed apprehension for political reasons and the issue was tabled. NRG communities are encouraged to submit applications.

Rista also announced the Connecticut Greenway Council's Trail Symposium on October 20th at Middlesex Community College.

A website update was tabled for next meeting due to time.

Next Meeting: November 9th at 8:30am
NVCOG Conference Room, 49 Leavenworth St. Waterbury

Naugatuck River Greenway Steering Committee

Present in **bold**

Aaron Budris – Naugatuck Valley Council of Governments

Bill Purcell – Valley Chamber

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 – Connecticut Outdoors, LLC/ Naugatuck Valley Outdoors Club

Dominic Sorrentino – Beacon Falls

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

Joan Kirchner - Harwinton Conservation Commission

Jolene Podgorski - Watertown DPW

Josh Carey – Connecticut Community Foundation

Kathy McNamara - City of Waterbury

Kevin Tedesco - CT DOT Bicycle/Pedestrian Coordinator

Kevin Zak – Naugatuck River Revival Group

Laura Wildman – Princeton Hydro

Laurie Giannotti - CT DEEP Greenways

Liz Falzone- Beacon Falls

Mike Jastremski - Housatonic Valley Association

Mark Nielsen – Naugatuck Valley Council of Governments

Rich Minnick – Beacon Falls

Rista Malanca - Torrington

Sal Porzio – City of Waterbury

Sheila O'Malley – City of Ansonia

Susan Peterson - CT DEEP Watershed Management Program

Suzanne Stitch – Town of Harwinton

Vicki Barnes - Watertown - Steele Brook Rangers

Vincent Gualtieri - US Army Corps of Engineers

Will Cummings – Thomaston Trail Committee

Also in Attendance:

Laura Brown – Uconn

Savannah Judge – Housatonic Valley Association