



Naugatuck River Greenway Steering Committee

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

Meeting Notes

Wednesday, February 8th, 2016 – 9am

NVCOG Conference Room

49 Leavenworth Street, Waterbury, CT

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

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

Phillip Zaprzalka, Marketing and Operations Manager at D'Aniello's Amity Bike in Woodbridge introduced himself. Phil is a Naugatuck Resident and cyclist, and expressed interest in participating in the NRGSC and greenway planning. The committee recognized that there is currently no representation at meetings on behalf of bike / outdoor sports industry, and welcomed Phil's participation.

Aaron Budris presented changes that had been made to the **NRG Economic Study** report in response to comments made following the presentation at the special meeting in January. Most of the comments highlighted in the special meeting notes (<http://nvcoct.org/calendar/nrg-steering-committee-special-meeting>) have been addressed, including the main issues concerning clarity and additional explanation about REMI. Additional information, along with citations, about business impacts of existing trails was added, along with information about tactics businesses have used to capitalize on trail users. A section was also added discussing some of the funding techniques that have been used to construct trails in the region (Middlebury, Naugatuck NRG, Pequonnock Trail). Aaron explained that the edits are being incorporated into the final formatted report that will be posted soon. Jack Walsh recommended endorsing the report so that the outreach could start as soon as possible. On a motion by Ingrid Manning, seconded by Kevin Zak, the committee voted unanimously to endorse the report.

The next step for the Economic Study is public and municipal outreach. Short summary “pamphlets” are being developed for the entire trail and for each municipality. Once those are complete, meetings will be set up in each town to present the findings. There was discussion about how best to coordinate this. It was determined that it would be best to first reach out to chief elected officials in each town and potentially set up a one on one meeting to present findings and discuss the best forum to present it to town boards, committees and staff. The initial meeting would include the town representative and a Co-Chair from the NRGSC and a NVCOG staff person to make the presentation. Aaron offered to make a first draft of a letter that will be sent by the co-chairs to CEOs explaining the project and requesting an audience.

It was also suggested that there should be outreach made to state legislators. Rista explained that the CT Greenways Council was trying to put together a legislative breakfast and had previously expressed interest in including a presentation on the NRG. If that did not come together, Ingrid offered to reach out to Joan Hartly to reserve a room in Hartford on the behalf of the NRGSC. Rick Dunne explained that if the committee did make a presentation about the NRG, there should be a specific request made, either for the funding of a program or specific project. (UPDATE: the CGC breakfast does not look like it will be happening, and one legislator indicated that a meeting this session may be difficult to set up.)

“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.”

The **NRG Unified Signage and Wayfinding Design Manual** is complete and has been published on the NVCOG Naugatuck River Greenway Signage Program webpage (<http://www.nvcogct.org/content/naugatuck-river-greenway-signage-program>). There was a balance of approximately \$450 remaining in the grant allowance after Milone and MacBroom were paid for their services, and it was used to purchase 300 confidence marker signs, samples of which were passed out. The markers follow guidance set forth in the manual, and are available to be installed on open sections of trail. The NRG Signage Recreational Trails grant will now be closed out with DEEP.

Aaron announced that **NVCOG received a 2017 Recreational Trails grant** award for \$12,550 to design, purchase and install interpretive and directional signage for the NRG. As envisioned in the grant request, the project goals are to design and purchase interpretive panels and stands for all open sections of NRG. This may be a panel that explains the vision and benefits of the NRG, or some other common theme that the committee can discuss once the project is underway. The grant would also be used to purchase directional signage to help trail users find trailheads on open sections of trail, and will also help raise the visibility of the NRG. NVCOG staff will work with parks and public works officials locally to assess sign needs and placement. The 2017 rec trails round was funded with unexpended funds from the 2016 round after the \$5m bonding was swept for the second year of the new state Recreational Trails program. Rista Malanca, who is on the Connecticut Greenways Council encouraged all in attendance to send letters to the Governor asking to reinstate the funding for the Recreational Trails Program. The NVCOG Co-Chairs sent just such a letter last month.

A contract has been signed with VHB to conduct the planning and engineering work on the **Watertown Thomaston Recreational Trails** project. A project kickoff meeting was planned for February 9, but was postponed to February 24 due to snow. The town of Watertown has agreed to assess the trolley bridge separately. The project will design critical elements in Watertown, and design and construct a section in Thomaston connecting a trailhead on Old Waterbury Road near the dog pound to the future crossing of Branch Brook, either at the trolley bridge or at a new crossing location.

Aaron gave a quick update of the **CT Trail Census** project that NVCOG is working on in partnership with UConn and the Connecticut Greenways Council. The project is applying the data collection techniques that were designed and implemented during the NRG Economic Study to trails statewide. There are currently 12 IR counters installed on trails across the state, including one on the NRG in Derby. The first month of count data showed that Derby was the busiest trail among them from mid-December to mid-January. Derby is one of the few trails that is plowed in the winter, which may have contributed to that finding. The counters will be kept up year round and intercept surveys will be conducted in the spring and fall. More information: http://clear.uconn.edu/projects/ct_trail_census/index.htm

An RFQ has been posted to solicit firms to provide planning services to conduct a **routing study for the NRG between Torrington and Thomaston**. NVCOG, in partnership with the Northwest Hills COG received an \$110,000 grant through the CT Office of Policy and Management (OPM) Smart Growth and Transportation Oriented Development program. The RFQ is posted here: <http://nvcogct.org/content/vendors>.

Ingrid discussed the NaugatuckRiver.net website. There is a dwindling reserve of funding to support the upkeep of the website, and action needs to be taken to keep the site active. The site is currently hosted by Pomfret Technologies, and is being managed on a part time basis by Jared Sloan. Jared indicated that the Content Management System is somewhat obscure and not very user friendly. He suggested transferring the website content into an open source CMS, WordPress, and created a mockup that Ingrid presented to the committee. The transfer would keep the overall feel and layout of the current site, but would enable more people to make updates, and would avoid some of the annual fees that the website currently incurs. It would also allow for more features to be included on the site such as social media feeds. There was a discussion about the best way to keep the site current, and there was a general consensus that social media is probably the best option. If several committee members had the ability to post articles to the committee's Facebook account, a feed on the website

would act as a current events or news page. A more active social media presence would also help drive users to the site and help raise awareness of the NRG. Jared will continue developing the wordpress site. NVCOG is investigating hosting options and may be able to host it along with the NVCOG site for much less than the current cost. A Subcommittee will oversee website changes and social media implementation. Rista, Jack and Phil Zaprzalka volunteered.

Seymour Phase I Bid and Alternates were accepted and awarded by CTDOT and they are in the process of executing the Agreement with the Low Bid Contractor, LaRosa Earth LLC. Construction is due to start in April.

Torrington is currently out to bid for survey and design work for their Rec Trails funded trail NRG trail from Bogue Road to Franklin Street. They expect to begin construction in Spring 2018.

Next Meeting: May 10th at 9 am

Location TBD – Any Volunteers to Host??

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

Chuck Berger – Former Watertown Town Engineer - Retired

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 – Derby Greenway Committee

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

Kenny Curran – Waterbury Greenway Committee

Kevin Zak – Naugatuck River Revival Group

Laura Wildman – Princeton Hydro

Laurie Giannotti - CT DEEP Greenways

Liz Falzone- Beacon Falls

Mark Nielsen – Naugatuck Valley Council of Governments

Melanie Zimyeski – CT DOT

Rich Minnick – Beacon Falls

Rista Malanca - Torrington

Sal Porzio – City of Waterbury

Savannah Judge - Housatonic Valley Association

Sheila O'Malley – City of Ansonia

Susan Peterson - CT DEEP Watershed Program

Suzanne Stitch – Town of Harwinton

Vicki Barnes - Watertown - Steele Brook Rangers

Will Cummings – Thomaston Trail Committee

Also Present

Phillip Zaprzalka - D'Aniello's Amity Bike

Paul Bunevich, Watertown Town Engineer