



Naugatuck River Greenway Steering Committee

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

Meeting Notes

Wednesday, May 24th, 2017 – 9am

NVCOG Conference Room

49 Leavenworth Street, Waterbury, CT

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

Co-Chair Rista Malanca opened the meeting and introductions were made.

Aaron Budris discussed the ongoing effort to get the results of the **economic study** into the hands of municipal officials. The report has been presented to the NVCOG board and the Regional Planning Commission and will be presented to the Northwest Hills Council of Governments soon (it was presented at the NHCOG meeting on June 8th). NVCOG is preparing individualized information sheets for each NRG community, summarizing the study's findings as understandably and concisely as possible. A draft was presented to the committee for review showing the overall economic benefits as well as the disaggregated benefits for an individual community. Comments overall were positive, and several recommendations for improvement were suggested including:

- Better differentiate between overall and local benefits (possibly color coding).
- Develop a handout for the overall trail as well – without community breakdown – for legislative outreach.
- For the map
 - Brownfield site locations may not be appropriate
 - River should be featured more prominently

Comments will be incorporated into a final draft that will be sent to the NRGSC for approval. The information sheets will be presented to municipal leaders in meetings with CEOs, boards or commissions. NRGSC representatives are being asked to reach out to CEOs and municipal officials to set up meetings to discuss the study. Meetings will include the NRG representative, a co-chair and NRG staff to present findings. Meetings should be set up beginning in mid-June, and availability will be sent out by NVCOG staff. NHCOG staff will be invited to join meetings in Torrington, Litchfield and Harwinton. These meetings will also be used as a way to boost membership and participation in the NRGSC.

A discussion followed concerning broader outreach about the economic study to state officials and legislators. The NRGSC goals for such outreach are to make trail development and the NRG trail specifically a priority, elevate the view of the NRGSC and the organized manner we are developing the NRG, and prioritize urban trails that have the biggest economic return. The current environment in Hartford will likely prevent any meaningful legislative outreach or meetings for the time being, but there was support for setting up a conference or meetings in September. George Logan, the State Senator representing Ansonia serves on the Planning and Development Committee, and might be our best contact on the committee. Garrett Eucalido is the OPM Under Secretary overseeing the Office of Transportation Policy, and Rick Dunne agreed to set up a meeting with him to discuss how legislative funding could be distributed to towns for trail development. Rista also suggested presenting it to the Department of Economic and Community Development (DECD) which includes tourism.

NVCOG was still waiting on a contract from DEEP to begin work on the Recreational Trails funded NRG Signage Procurement project. NVCOG received \$12,550 to design, purchase and install interpretive and directional

“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.”

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. The current plan is to design one “vision” interpretive sign that would describe the NRG plans and perhaps explain the economic and quality of life benefits of trails. These will likely be approximately 36”x24”, and explain to visitors that the section of trail they are on is part of a larger 44 mile vision. The project will also purchase signage that will direct people to open sections of trail. The street signs will include the NRG logo and directional arrows pointing to trailheads to raise the visibility of the trails in communities that already have sections open. NVCOG will assist in the siting of signs, but installation will be the responsibility of the municipality. Roy Cavanaugh suggested that directly contacting public works directors would probably be the easiest way to proceed once the contract is finalized (NVCOG did receive the final contract on 6/8). NVCOG will work on the design of the interpretive sign and will begin outreach to towns about siting and ordering of directional signs.

The **Thomaston-Torrington Comprehensive Routing Study**, funded under a 2016 OPM Responsible Growth/ TOD grant, is getting ready to kick off. Seven firms responded to a request for qualifications, and a selection committee consisting of officials from Torrington, Harwinton, Litchfield and Thomaston selected four to interview. One firm was selected by consensus by the committee members following presentations and interviews, and NVCOG is currently negotiating the scope and fees for services. It is expected that the project will be underway this summer and should take approximately 18 months to complete. The initial scope includes a lot of public and stakeholder engagement, objective scoring and ranking of trail segments and consensus building to determine one preferred route. The study will include conceptual design and construction cost estimates that will be critical for future funding requests.

Torrington is underway with the survey and design of the section of NRG south from downtown. While the design is fairly straight forward with the trail following levees along the river, the work is focusing on determining property boundaries and following the the US Army Corps of Engineers (USACE) permitting process. Since the trail will require the modification of USCACE public works projects, the City will need to receive a Section 408 permit from the Corps.

The **Watertown Thomaston Recreational Trails** project is underway. The original project scope includes design of critical elements in Watertown, and design and construction of 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. The town of Watertown conducted a separate engineering study on the existing trolley bridge, concluding that there are likely serious structural issues that would make rehabilitation and reuse impractical. VHB will instead study alternative crossing locations and structure types to be constructed in future phases. NVCOG developed base map data for the project area and provided it to VHB. Environmental sub-consultant BL Companies have been conducting field work including wetland delineation.

Construction is underway in **Seymour** by LaRosa Earth LLC on a section of trail that will connect bank Street to the Paul Pawlak, Sr. Bypass Channel and Park at Tingué Dam with a trail between Route 8 and the Naugatuck River. They are currently 60 days into the planned 120 day construction project. Fred Messore reported that there have been some traffic issues resulting from required lane closures during construction, but otherwise it is going well. It was suggested that the August NRGSC meeting be held in Seymour to view what should by then be the finished project.

Ansonia is currently in design with the extension of their section of NRG. The extension will carry the trail, which currently dead ends at the metro north ROW, over the tracks to Pershing Drive and will allow access to Downtown. Construction may start as early as this year.

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 14 IR counters installed on trails across the state, including one on the NRG in Derby and one on the Sue Grossman Trail in Torrington. The first four months of count data showed that Derby was the busiest trail of those monitored through March. 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. Aaron recently presented on the project at the International Trails Symposium in Dayton Ohio, and it was well received. More information: www.cttrailcensus.uconn.edu

The committee organization and attendance was discussed. Rista announced that Ingrid Manning resigned as Co-Chair and from the committee altogether. Ingrid was recently named the chair of the Lake Quassapaug Association in Middlebury, and wanted to dedicate more of her time to that endeavor. Rista announced that if anyone was interested in the open co-chair seat, to please come forward. Attendance has not increased quite as much as hoped after moving to quarterly meetings, but a push for new members and better attendance will accompany the economic study outreach. The CO-Chairs will be having monthly meetings or conference calls with NVCOG staff to keep informed about developments. It was suggested that subcommittees or “task forces” be formed to oversee specific projects or tasks. A task force to oversee the economic study outreach would make sense and the limited nature may gain better participation. Rista and Jack both volunteered and urged others to do the same. Rista also discussed other ways to increase meeting participation including having speakers present on relevant topics or incorporating field trips or site visits to meetings.

Little progress has been made concerning the website since last meeting. Jared Sload did recreate the website using an open source content management system, WordPress, which should allow for easier website maintenance. The plan is to switch the site over to the WordPress version and host it at NVCOG. The site is currently hosted by Pomfret Technologies and uses an obscure content management system that is not very user friendly. There is a dwindling reserve of funds for website management and maintenance that will run out soon. Switching the site to WordPress and hosting it at NVCOG would allow for much less overhead going forward. Aaron will work with Jared and Pomfret to make the necessary changes. The new site will include social media feeds that will allow steering committee members to post current events and news.

Trails weekend is June 3rd and 4th including numerous trails events in the region, and the annual Greenways awards ceremony will be held on June 2nd. UPDATE – NVCOG was awarded the Connecticut Greenways Council’s 2017 Regional Achievement Award – more information here: <http://www.ct.gov/deep/cwp/view.asp?Q=593464&A=4918>:

Next Meeting: August 9th at 9 am

Location - TBD

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

Cleve Fuessenich – Litchfield

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

Roy Cavanaugh, Watertown Public Works Director

Rick Dunne, NVCOG Executive Director