



Naugatuck River Greenway Steering Committee

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

Meeting Notes

Wednesday, November 8th, 2017 – 9am

Watertown Municipal Center

61 Echo Lake Road, Watertown

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

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

Roy Cavanaugh welcomed the group to Watertown and discussed progress on the Steele Brook Greenway and NRG in Watertown. He also discussed efforts underway to remove the Heminway Pond Dam, a project that will open up a route for the Steele Brook Greenway.

Ingrid Manning was presented with a framed photograph of the NRG that included the NRGSC mission statement and an NRG confidence marker, in recognition of her years of service with the NRGSC and as co-chair. Jack explained that Ingrid's vision and hard work was critical to the progress that is ongoing on the NRG. Ingrid recently stepped down from her co-chair seat in order to dedicate time to other endeavors, including with the Flanders Nature Center and Land Trust and the Lake Quassapaug Association. Thank You Ingrid!

The Meeting began with a roundtable discussion. Jack explained that the roundtable has been moved to the top of the meeting because it had been largely skipped over due to time constraints at the end of meetings.

Torrington – is working on design of the trail from downtown to Bogue Road with a consultant.

Watertown – Roy Cavanaugh, Watertown's Public Works Director, discussed several ongoing projects. The town received a Rec Trails grant to purchase and install a bridge over Steele Brook along Main Street in Oakville. The bridge will allow access to the greenway from the sidewalk network in Oakville to the Steele Brook Greenway, and will provide an off-road bike/ped route from Oakville to Watertown. The town went out to bid, and the low bidder was higher than the grant amount. The town will be requesting additional funding to cover the remainder. Roy described a plan to remove the Heminway Pond Dam and rehabilitate the silted in former pond. This open up another stretch of real estate along the brook for the Steele Brook Greenway north of its current terminus.

Roy also discussed that State Bicycle Route 5 follows Route 63 and passes through Watertown, but the state has done little to mark the route or address safety issues. The town will be working with DOT to make the route more visible and safer for riders.

Waterbury's consultant NV5 is currently designing Phase I from the Naugatuck Line to Eagle Street and a new construction start date of spring 2019 has been set. The project is fully funded for construction.

Naugatuck – Mark Nielsen explained that Naugatuck has proposed funding a section of greenway from Maple Street to Breen Field using Local Transportation Capital Improvement Program funds. LOTCIP is a state program administered through the COGs. The NVCOG board voted to add to add the NRG project to the program, and the Borough is preparing a full submission to DOT. Construction will likely start until 2020-21 (estimated).

"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."

Seymour – Fred Messoro reported that the first phase of the NRG in Seymour is just about complete, and the town is waiting on new lighting for underneath the route 8 overpass. The NRGSC toured the trail while it was under construction in August (photos [here](#)). Fred also discussed early plans to extend Seymour’s trail north along Franklin Street, then between the Metro North ROW and the River. With the exception of downtown Seymour, there is no established routing between Ansonia at Pershing Drive and Toby’s Pond in Beacon Falls. This section presents problems due to the close proximity of the Rail and Route 8 to the River, and the probable need for several river crossings of any off road route

Ansonia- Jack Walsh reported that Ansonia’s current project to build a bridge over the Metro North ROW to Pershing Drive from the current northern trail terminus is underway. Both abutments are in place, and a prefabricated bridge will be put in place this winter. Mark Nielsen reported that Ansonia was also awarded FAST Act Transportation Alternative Block Grant funds to construct several sections of their downtown greenway plan including sidewalk improvements along Pershing Drive and Bridge Street connecting the NRG to downtown, a section of trail along the levee on the east bank of the river, and a “Lighthouse Park” adjacent to the trail.

Derby- Jack Walsh explained that the split rail fencing along the trail in Derby is well past its useful life. The City has approved funding to replace it with pressure treated fencing that should last longer than the original one did, but they were unable to find a supplier that could provide all of the materials. They hope to find a supplier and install the fence in 2018. Jack said that the approval of the town to set aside funding for the project in such a fiscally difficult time demonstrates the popularity of the trail and the public will to maintain it.

Derby/Shelton – Mark discussed the Derby-Shelton Bridge. The project is fully funded, and will design and reconstruct the deck of the bridge to include a pedestrian promenade and street furniture. Changes will allow for a safe bike/ped friendly connection between the NRG and Shelton Greenway, and tie in with the reconstruction and widening of Main Street in Derby.

Aaron Budris discussed the **Thomaston-Torrington Comprehensive Routing Study**, which is ready to commence. NVCOG refined the scope of work with input from the project communities and has come to an agreement on fee with consultant BSG Group. The original fee proposal was well beyond the available grant funding that NVCOG received through a CT OPM Responsible Growth and Transit Oriented Development Program grant. NVCOG was able to negotiate the fee down substantially, and also agreed to take on some of the data collection and compilation aspects of the study in house. Aaron provided copies of the scope, which 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. It is expected that the project will be underway in November, and will take approximately 12 months to complete. The hope is that one firm route can be agreed upon by all stakeholders so that communities can be prepared for future funding availability.

There was some concern voiced by attendees from Litchfield about having a trail forced on a community, and especially for the financial burden that would result from ongoing upkeep and monitoring/ policing once the trail is built. Mark and Jack explained that whether or not a trail is built in a community is up to the municipality itself, since at least part of the funding for construction will have to be procured locally. Further, the purpose of routing studies is to gauge community support, and there will be numerous times and ways for community members to voice concerns and guide the discussion in the Torrington-Thomaston routing process.

Mark Nielsen discussed progress on the outreach associated with the **NRG Economic Study**. The report was recently presented at the CT Trails Symposium held at Goodwin College, and was well received. It has also recently been presented to the Thomaston Finance Committee and was presented to the Waterbury Greenway Committee.

Aaron presented final copies of individualized pamphlets for each NRG community, summarizing the study's findings as understandably and concisely as possible. The trifold pamphlets summarize the overall findings and present disaggregated community benefits. Comments received at the previous NRGSC meeting were incorporated into the final pamphlets including inclusion of a new cover photo, and town specific photos inside the pamphlet. The pamphlets can be found here: <http://nvcogct.org/content/naugatuck-river-greenway-economic-impact-study> The summary sheets will be presented to municipal leaders in meetings with CEOs, boards or commissions. The Co-Chairs will send out a letter to each CEO requesting a meeting to discuss the study and set up a presentation to appropriate boards or staff. NRGSC representatives will be asked to help facilitate these meetings. Community specific presentations will be prepared

The co-chairs met with NVCOG staff recently to discuss broader outreach about the economic study and the NRG in general to state officials and legislators. The NRGSC goals for such outreach are to support the funding of trail projects, and to make the NRG trail a priority, elevate the view of the NRGSC and the organized manner the NRG is being developed. In order to coincide with the next state budget round, and to reach the largest number of decision makers, a conference in Spring 2019 was proposed. The details will be filled in in the coming months, but the conference would be held in a venue along the NRG route, and invitees would include legislators, agency representatives and others, and would focus on successes and plans for the NRG, and the potential economic benefit of building the trail. Thoughts on venues and speakers are welcome!

NVCOG received \$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. 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 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 and will develop a sign inventory and map, but installation and permitting will be the responsibility of the municipality. NVCOG Staff have been trying to coordinate with the DOT district office concerning design and siting, just to make sure that the proposed signs will be acceptable to be installed on DOT ROW, but with little progress so far. Staff will be reaching out to Public Works Directors in the coming months.

NVCOG is also working on a grant funded project collecting data statewide on multiuse trails, including on the NRG in Derby. The [CT Trail Census](#) project is finishing up its first year of data collection and will be releasing all of the collected data publically. Aaron demonstrated a website that is in design that presents the data interactively and noted that of the 15 sites being monitored, the NRG in Derby has seen the highest number of uses so far.

The **Watertown Thomaston Recreational Trails** project is also underway. The 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 may make rehabilitation and reuse impractical. VHB is studying 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, and VHB has finished survey work. Environmental sub-consultant BL Companies concluded field work including wetland delineation and a habitat study that was submitted and accepted by DEEP. The project team recently had a meeting with DOT Office of Rails to discuss safety concerns and design standards when working in close proximity to the rail line. NVCOG has requested ROW maps for the rail and route 8.

The new www.NaugatuckRiver.net website is live. NVCOG has taken over hosting, and the new site takes advantage of a free open source content management system, wordpress, that relieves the steering committee (through HVA) of the annual hosting and software maintenance fees that were problematic with the previous site. The site will also be much easier to update than its predecessor. It will use social media feeds to update current events, news and a calendar, and NVCOG is looking for anyone willing to provide content via Facebook – Contact Aaron.

A conversation on **membership** was tabled due to time constraints, but will remain a standing agenda topic.

The meeting schedule for 2018 will remain quarterly:

Feb 14, May 9, Aug 8, Nov 14

Peter Tavino gave a demonstration of aerial drone videography services that his company *Connecticut Drone Video* offers. He showed HD video taken along the river in Seymour, Torrington and Litchfield. Videos can be viewed on his website: <http://www.connecticutdronevideo.com/>

Following the meeting, Katherine Barnhart, an engineer overseeing construction of the Watertown Bus Maintenance Facility for DOT, led a tour of the trail and trailhead built as part of that project. Photos of the tour can be found here: <https://www.flickr.com/photos/123856448@N05/albums/72157690813468646>

Next Meeting: February 14th 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

Courteny Morehouse – Housatonic Valley Association

Dave Faber – Connecticut Outdoors, LLC/ Naugatuck Valley Outdoors Club

Dominic Sorrentino – Beacon Falls

Fred Messore - Town of Seymour

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

Rick Lynn – Northwest Hills Council of Governments

Rista Malanca - Torrington

Sal Porzio – City of Waterbury

Sheila O'Malley – City of Ansonia

Steve Casey – Railroad Museum of New England

Susan Peterson - CT DEEP Watershed Program

Suzanne Stitch – Town of Harwinton

Vicki Barnes - Watertown - Steele Brook Rangers

Will Cummings – Thomaston Trail Committee

Also Present

Ingrid Manning – Former NRGSC Co-Chair

Roy Cavanaugh – Town of Watertown

Mark Massoud – Town of Watertown

Thomas Roman – Litchfield EDC

Peter Tavino PEPC – Connecticut Drone Video

John L. Cox - Litchfield