



# Naugatuck River Greenway Steering Committee

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

## Meeting Notes

Wednesday, February 14<sup>th</sup>, 2017 – 9am

NVCOG Conference Room

49 Leavenworth Street, Waterbury

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

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

Rista announced that there have been a few steering committee membership changes. Fred Messore has taken a job in West Haven, and a new representative from Seymour is being looked for. Will Cummings resigned as chair of the Thomaston Greenway Committee, and also stepped back from his position on the NRGSC. Jeremy Leifert, who will be taking his place on the NRGSC, was present and was welcomed by the committee. Jeremy heads the Building and Land Use Department for the Town of Thomaston, and is the Town's Land Use Administrator.

Aaron Budris presented a [one page visual summary](#) of progress that was made in 2017. He explained that the idea came after giving an update on overall trail progress to the Waterbury Greenway Committee. The list of active projects is long, and the visual representation of that progress shows that there is work going on over the entire length of trail.

### Roundtable Discussion:

**Torrington:** Rista explained that the City continues work on design of the trail from downtown to Bogue Road with a consultant. They are also working with the Corps of Engineers to obtain all permits to build the trail on top of the levee system, and a [section 408 permit](#) may be necessary.

**Litchfield:** Cleve Fuessenich talked about the letters that recently went out to NRG chief elected officials along with community summaries of the NRG Economic Study. The letter explained that funding will be largely the responsibility of the municipality in which trail sections will be built, and offers assistance with explanation of the study results (see more below about the letter and municipal outreach). Cleve expressed concern about the potential cost of the project in Litchfield, questioning local support for shouldering the costs of construction, maintenance and security. Jack Walsh explained that the purpose of the municipal outreach on the results of the economic study is to promote the economic and quality of life benefits of trail development, and to build public support. In addition, the ongoing Torrington-Thomaston routing study will include ample public outreach and opportunities for public comment. Cleve said he understood, but that we should expect some pushback and opposition.

**Thomaston:** Jeremy Leifert explained that the town has discussed the inclusion of the NRG in development plans with the owner of a property on Hill Road across from USACE property at Thomaston Dam. The owner of the Plume and Atwood has expressed willingness to include the trail in the redevelopment of that property as well. That would almost allow passage from Downtown Thomaston to Thomaston Dam, with the exception of two private properties on Railroad Street Annex. The routing study is looking at this area.

*"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."*

**Watertown:** Roy Cavanaugh discussed progress on the Steele Brook Greenway. The town approved matching funds to the Recreational Trails grant that the town received to purchase and install a bridge across Steele Brook. The pre-fabricated bridge will connect downtown Oakville's sidewalk network to a trail that will run along the rail bed to French Street and the existing section of Steele Brook Greenway. The town also received a grant to remove the Heminway Pond Dam, a project that will open up a route for the Steele Brook Greenway. North of the existing section. As for the NRG, Roy explained that he did budget for drainage improvements recommended by the VHB in the Watertown Thomaston design project.

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

**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 soon. 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. Design is underway. The May meeting will be held in Ansonia featuring a tour of recent progress.

**Derby-** Jack discussed efforts to replace the split rail fencing along the Derby section of Greenway. Funding had been budgeted for new fencing, but a supplier able to provide all of the needed materials could not be found last year. There is a new Mayor and Public Works Director in town, but they have expressed the town's continued support for the trail.

**2018 Events** – There are three sections of trail that will open this Spring or early summer - in Seymour, Ansonia and Watertown, And it is possible that a section in Torrington will also open this year. The group discussed the potential for ribbon cuttings or other events to celebrate this progress. By consensus it was decided that the committee should reach out to towns to offer assistance in putting together events and making sure that decision makers and legislators are present – elevating the visibility of the NRG. Committee members should consider staffing an information table at these events. Aaron explained that the COG has a tent, NRG banner and literature that has been used at events in the past. These materials can be used by committee members if they want to set up a table at any local events – just let him know.

Rista and Jack discussed the kickoff meeting that was held for the **Torrington to Thomaston Comprehensive Routing Study** on January 19<sup>th</sup> at Thomaston town hall. The meeting was well attended with representatives from Torrington, Litchfield, and Thomaston all in attendance along with staff from the USACE, NVCOG, NHCOG, the Railroad Museum of New England (RMNE). Rob Pinckney, Manager of Transportation Services with BSC Group presented the project scope and timeline. Stakeholders discussed potential routes, property access and data acquisition, and Rob answered questions about the firm's approach. Public outreach will be key and will begin once all data has been collected and some preliminary routes are identified. UPDATE, 3/7: Existing GIS data has been collected and compiled, and field investigation is underway by BSC staff who are collecting relevant information about the potential routes by walking them with a GPS. A [press release](#) was put out by NVCOG and was picked up by the Waterbury Republican and Torrington Register Citizen. Project information will be posted on the project webpage [here](#).

Outreach for the **NRG Economic Impact Study** continues. A letter, attached, was sent out to all chief elected officials discussing the results of the economic study and presenting the community summary pamphlets (see

them [here](#)). The letter requests a meeting with the CEOs, NRGSC representatives and COG staff to discuss the results of the study and offer to present findings to town boards, councils or committees, and offer other assistance with greenway planning. Meetings had been set up in Naugatuck and Derby, and town representatives have been asked to help set up meetings in other towns. The discussions will also cover other greenway related issues, and serve as an opportunity to help shore up representation in towns that do not have regular attendance at meetings.

Rista discussed a plan to have a NRG symposium event in spring 2019 that would coincide with the 2019 legislative session and serve to promote the greenway to legislators and local decision makers. Rista and Aaron met with John Monroe, recently retired from NPS, to discuss his possibly helping organize and emcee the event. Recent budget cuts at COG may make holding an event difficult, but planning will continue, and outside funding is being investigated. COG staff continue to present findings of the study whenever possible. Mark presented the study to DOT at an RPO Coordination meeting, and Aaron will be presenting the study to the CT chapter of the American Society of Landscape Architects on Feb 22<sup>nd</sup>.

Aaron presented findings of the [Connecticut Trail Census](#) project that recently released data from 2017. The program is collecting count and survey data on 15 trails across the state, and is funded by a CT Recreational Trails grant. Count and survey data reports can be downloaded here along with all of the raw data. The NRG in Derby was the most heavily used trail of those studied with over 300,000 trips taken in 2017. Count data is presented interactively [here](#).

NVCOG received a Recreational Trails Grant to design, purchase and install interpretive and directional **signage** for the NRG as prescribed in the NRG Signage and Wayfinding Manual. One “vision” interpretive sign that will describe the NRG plans and perhaps explain the economic and quality of life benefits of trails for each open section of trail. 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 is developing a sign inventory map to help with siting and to get an accurate count of sign needs by type. 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 share the signage location map with Public Works Directors in the coming weeks to identify locations and needs.

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. A field walk by municipal stakeholders identified a preferred crossing location along Branch Brook upstream of the trolley bridge that was determined not to be cost effective to re-use. VHB surveyed the trail route and crossing location in Thomaston and is conducting preliminary design of the trail. VHB presented preliminary sketches of proposed drainage improvements along the trail in Watertown and is continuing to design critical features.

The new [www.NaugatuckRiver.net](http://www.NaugatuckRiver.net) website is up and running, and help with social media management is still needed.

A discussion about increasing participation included inviting speakers to future meetings. One idea that was discussed was asking one or several public works directors that manage existing trails to discuss maintenance issues, and real costs of upkeep. There was also discussion about additional membership from other stakeholder groups. Ideas included hospitals, insurance companies, materials suppliers (like O&G), tourism, businesses, etc.

Next Meeting: May 9th at 9 am

Location – Ansonia City Hall

## 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 Messoro - Town of Seymour

### **Jack Walsh – Derby Greenway Committee**

### **Jeremy Leifert – Town of Thomaston**

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 Zimycki – CT DOT

Rich Minnick – Beacon Falls

Rick Lynn – Northwest Hills Council of Governments

### **Rista Malanca – City of Torrington**

### **Roy Cavanaugh – Town of Watertown**

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