



# Naugatuck River Greenway Steering Committee

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

## Meeting Notes

Wednesday, November 14<sup>th</sup>, 2018 – 9am

Cheshire Town Hall, Room 207

84 South Main Street, Cheshire,

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

Co-Chair Jack Walsh opened the meeting, and introductions were made. Jack introduced George Neowatne, Cheshire Public Works Director and Jerry Sitko, Cheshire's Economic Development Coordinator, and thanked them for hosting the meeting.

George Neowatne gave a presentation about the newest section of Farmington Canal Heritage Trail (FCHT) built in Cheshire. The larger FCHT is an 84 mile multiuse trail from New Haven to Northampton, MA, following the route of the historic Farmington Canal, and later the Canal Railroad. The completion of the trail in CT has been a priority of CT DOT recently, and the state funded the closure of gaps in Cheshire and is working to design and build sections of trail from Lazy Lane in Southington north through Plainville to meet the Existing trail at Northwest Drive in Northern Plainville. From there the trail runs uninterrupted to the MA border in Suffield.

In Cheshire, a section of trail from West Main Street to the Southington town line was completed last year, featuring a trailhead parking area and comfort station at Jarvis Street. A “HAWK” signalized pedestrian crossing was also installed to safely cross West Main Street (Route 68). A gap of just under a mile between West Main and Cornwall Avenue remained until this year. This section was difficult, mainly because part of the original Canal and Rail ROW is in private hands, and the logical place for the trail is currently an active loading dock for Dalton Enterprises. This required the trail to be routed off of the original rail bed around the active property and through a forested wetland. Two elevated concrete “boardwalk” sections had to be designed and built to minimize environmental impact, resulting in an inflated \$4.4 million cost for under a mile of trail. Also included in the finished trail are a parking area, trailhead and comfort stations at Railroad Ave just south of the intersection of West Main Street/ Route 70. George acknowledged that while the town fully supported the project, it moved forward when it did because the CT DOT has made completion of the FCHT a priority, and provided the majority of funding to make it a reality. He said that some of the community opposition to the project – mainly related to safety and the effectiveness of the HAWK system have ended up being non-issues.

Discussion following George’s presentation focused mainly on maintenance and lessons learned. The two new sections of trail were built to 12’ wide with a soft shoulder after experience with the original 10’ wide trail section and user preference for a wider trail. Cheshire also experienced extensive root heaving on their original trail section, and that experience informed the design of the new sections with appropriate clear zones and use of root blocking barriers. George explained that the town budgets around \$35,000 annually for regular maintenance which is conducted by the Parks department. In Cheshire, the Parks department is housed within Public Works. One section of trail is cleared during the winter, but not the entire trail – leaving opportunity for skiing and other winter sports. Regular maintenance consists of tree management and leaf removal in the fall. As far as maintenance is concerned, the trail is treated just like other parks in town. Trail users regularly report issues and the parks department responds accordingly. The two sets of comfort stations are composting toilets, and require regular checks and replenishment of supplies, but seem to be working well. Doggie bags are posted

*“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.”*

and provided by the town at a cost of over \$7,000 across all town parks, but they seem to work, with few issues concerning animal waste on the trail.

Jerry Sitko discussed how the trail fits into the ongoing revitalization of the West Main Street corridor. Several efforts have already begun to transform the area. The town envisions the area as a “commercial village” and recently invested \$1 million in a streetscape project along West Main that included lighting improvements and a sidewalk and retaining wall along the north side of the street that connects to the town’s other commercial center along route 10. These improvements and the trail’s completion have encouraged private investment, with several businesses making improvements to their properties. The 1850 Ball and Socket factory building (<https://www.ballandsocket.org/about-vision>), adjacent to the trail, is being renovated as a multipurpose arts center funded with state grants and loans including a \$750,000 Brownfields Remediation Grant.

Cheshire is looking to capitalize on the increased foot traffic brought to the area because of the trail. The town is working to acquire a property adjacent to the newly built trailhead parking lot in order to expand trail parking. The town hopes that trail visitors will visit the trail and stay to patronize businesses in the district. Bike Cheshire, a new volunteer organization is working to institute a bikeshare system, and is working with Hartford Healthcare on programming.

Aaron Budris reviewed progress on the **Torrington-Thomaston Routing Study**. BSC is nearing completion of field work, and has been meeting with stakeholders and were to meet shortly with the Naugatuck Railroad and the US Army Corps of Engineers to walk critical sections along the RR ROW and on Corps Property and to discuss options for those areas. A stakeholder meeting will be held on November 29<sup>th</sup> at Northwest Hills COG with the intent of reviewing all of the potential route segments that BSC has mapped, and the scoring matrix that has been developed to assess and compare those segments. After that meeting, routes will be compiled from those segments, and those routes will be presented to the public in several community specific public workshops, probably in January.

Mark Nielsen discussed the **Watertown-Thomaston Recreational Trails** project. 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. The plan includes two parking areas along York (Old Waterbury) road to accommodate 13 vehicles with additional parking available along the road shoulders. A 10 foot wide stone dust trail will extend 1100 feet from the parking area following along the northern edge of the WPC facility property, turning south parallel to Branch Brook, then turning toward the river at the preferred crossing location. NVCOG has been working with Thomaston to submit a Local Transportation Capital Improvement Program (LoTCIP) application, and if successful, it would be used to construct the trail and purchase and install the bridge over Branch Brook. DEEP has agreed to allow the funds originally intended to construct the trail portion in Thomaston to be repurposed to instead design the bridge and conduct permitting. The hope is to be able to get the bridge and trail built at the same time to avoid the construction of a dead-end trail awaiting the bridge. The application has been submitted, and Thomaston is awaiting approval by DOT. If all falls into place, construction could happen in 2019.

Aaron discussed progress and news regarding the **NRG Signage Procurement Project** that is being funded with a DEEP Rec Trails grant. A [DRAFT interpretive sign](#) was presented, and a full size mock-up was shown. Comments and critiques were requested. This “NRG vision” sign with base will be purchased for open sections of trail, and it is designed to give some background on the Naugatuck River and to introduce trail users to the idea of a connected 44-mile NRG Trail. The signs will be purchased for installation in the spring.

The Signage Procurement project was also intended to purchase trailhead wayfinding signage to direct potential trail users to trailheads, and to help promote the NRG. Aaron explained that he has been working since the grant was received to get confirmation from CT DOT that the designs meet DOT standards and would be allowed

along state routes. Sign designs were submitted for review, originally to the DOT district office with no response, then to DOT headquarters. The intent was to ensure that designs would be acceptable to DOT for placement within state ROW on state roads. Town public works would be responsible for installing the signs, and would need an encroachment permit to install signs along state roads, and NVCOG wanted to make sure that that process would go smoothly. Aaron finally received a response in May. The CTDOT traffic division discussed the issue and ruled that wayfinding signage for linear trails will not be permitted within state ROW along state roads. They further stated that linear trails would likely not be considered for the Tourism Signage Program. Aaron explained that most of the sign locations that had been identified were on state roads, and without those directional signs, wayfinding to trailheads would not work. The issue was presented to the Connecticut Greenways Council, with a DOT representative present, and the council asked DOT to reconsider their decision. DOT is currently discussing the issue internally, and have indicated that a decision would be forthcoming on the issue.

Aaron explained that NVCOG has until May to expend the grant money. If wayfinding signage was ruled out at this point, an alternate use of the funds should be suggested and run by DEEP. He suggested the possibility of purchasing trailhead entrance signage or possibly signage for open spaces along the river to indicate that they are part of the NRG, even if not hosting part of the NRG trail.

Jack Walsh explained that **NRG Economic Study** outreach is still ongoing. He and Aaron will be joining Laura Brown in presenting a program on Trails and Downtowns at the CT Main Street Center on 11/16, and the economic study will be discussed. Jack discussed the potential for legislative outreach now that election season is over. There was some discussion about the importance of building legislative support, and volunteers to help lead an effort to hold an event are needed.

There are no ribbon cuttings or events planned, but Watertown just received ownership from DOT of the section of trail at the Bus Maintenance Facility on Frost Bridge Road, although it is unclear if there will be an official opening or not.

Aaron briefed the group on NRG-related Recreational Trails Grant Proposals that were submitted at the end of October. Ansonia submitted a proposal for a routing study for the NRG to the Seymour Town Line. Thomaston submitted for the design of a trail in the southern part of town connecting to the trailhead being constructed on Old Waterbury Road. NVCOG submitted on behalf of the City of Waterbury for engineering and environmental work on the section of NRG from Eagle Street to West Main Street known as Phase I Extension. Tangentially related to the NRG, UConn submitted a proposal for the expansion of the CT Trail Census, of which Derby is a participating community and NVCOG is a partner. This grant round will be very competitive with demand far exceeding the \$3million available.

Jack presented the meeting schedule for 2019: February 13, May 8, August 14, November 13.

#### **Roundtable**

**Ansonia** – Bill Luneski explained that a Public information meeting was held on November 8<sup>th</sup> for segments 3 and 4 of the City's [Riverwalk Design Plan](#), being funded by a Transportation Alternatives Block Grant. He also explained that he is working to get the recent expansion of the NRG recognized by trail visitor guides.

A few committee members visited the new Cheshire FCHT trail following the meeting. Photos [HERE](#).

**Next Regular Meeting: February 13 at 9 am  
Location – TBD**

# Naugatuck River Greenway Steering Committee

\*Indicates Co-Chair - Present in **BOLD**

## Municipal Representatives

<b>Torrington</b>	Rista Malanca*
<b>Litchfield</b>	Cleve Fuessenich
<b>Harwinton</b>	Suzanne Stinch <b>Joan Kirchner</b>
<b>Thomaston</b>	Jeremy Leifert
<b>Watertown</b>	Roy Cavanaugh
Waterbury	Kenny Curran Sal Porzio
Naugatuck	Jim Stewart
Beacon Falls	Liz Falzone Josh Carey
Seymour	Rory Burke
<b>Ansonia</b>	Sheila O'Malley <b>Bill Luneski</b>
<b>Derby</b>	<b>Jack Walsh*</b>

## Stakeholder Representatives

### **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 – Retired Watertown Town Engineer  
Clifford Cooper - Litchfield Community Greenway

### **Courteny Morehouse – Housatonic Valley Association**

Dave Faber –Naugatuck Valley Outdoors Club  
Jim MacBroom – Milone and MacBroom  
Jim O'Rourke - Waterbury Y  
Jolene Podgorski - Watertown DPW

Josh Carey – Connecticut Community Foundation  
Kevin Zak – Naugatuck River Revival Group

Laurie Giannotti - CT DEEP Greenways

### **Mark Nielsen – Naugatuck Valley Council of Governments**

Melanie Zimyeski – CT DOT  
Rick Lynn – Northwest Hills Council of Governments

### **Steve Casey – Railroad Museum of New England**

### **Susan Peterson - CT DEEP Watershed Program**

Vicki Barnes - Watertown - Steele Brook Rangers

## Also Present:

**George Neowatne, Town of Cheshire**

**Jerry Sitko, Town of Cheshire**

**Laura Brown, UConn Extension/CT Trail Census**