



# Naugatuck River Greenway Steering Committee

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

## Meeting Notes

Wednesday December 9<sup>th</sup>, 2020, 9am

Via Zoom

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

Co-Chair Jack Walsh started the meeting, and introductions were made. Good attendance was noted.

Vincent Seifert introduced himself as the new representative to the committee for Naugatuck, having been appointed by Mayor Hess.

Judy Mancini reported that the City of Waterbury went out to bid earlier this fall for construction of **Waterbury Phase I** (Eagle Street to Bristol Street), and received 20 responses. The City is currently working with DOT and FHWA to review responses and begin the selection process. Construction is expected to begin in the spring.

Aaron Budris explained that he would be presenting the [NRG Thomaston to Torrington Routing Study](#) to the Northwest Hills Council of Governments the following day. The final report was endorsed by the NRGSC and NVCOG in April. (UPDATE – the NHCOG Unanimously endorsed the report on 12/10/2020)

Aaron explained that the Town of Watertown had surveyed the future trail route between Branch Brook and Frost Bridge Road. The Town Engineer is working to identify critical areas where the water main is close to or under the proposed trail route in order to come up with a plan to protect the water main during construction to appease DOT concerns. Mark Nielsen added that the Thomaston section is fully designed, and ready for construction, and contingent on funding approval for the Watertown section to create a “logical termini”.  
*(Background: Thomaston applied to the Local Transportation Capital improvement Program (LoTCIP) to fund Construction of the trailhead, trail and bridge at a cost of approximately \$600,000. Watertown applied for LoTCIP funding to construct the adjacent section of trail to Frost Bridge Road. At a meeting with DOT in February, the department expressed concern about constructing the trail in Watertown since it will be near a City of Waterbury Drinking water supply main for much of the route, and disturbance of the City’s main would be a major issue. Watertown has committed to a geotechnical engineering review of the route to appease the department’s concerns.)*

Jack Walsh introduced the **NRG Priorities Update**. Aaron Budris demonstrated a new [interactive map](#) that includes overhauled route section and segment data, and a [spreadsheet](#) detailing section status and other information. He explained that it should include the most up to date information available, and asked the group to send any additional or more up to date information available.

Jack discussed the purpose of regional priorities, and explained the criteria that was used for the 2015 prioritization in the [2015 NRG Priorities document](#):

- A trail section that connects two complete or soon to be complete sections of NRG Trail, or;
- A trail section that connects a complete or soon to be complete section of NRG trail with an important destination or population center, or;
- A section that requires little investment or effort to complete (low-hanging fruit)

*“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.”*

Rista Malanca explained that these criteria are very important. A list of priority sections may be relevant as a snapshot in time, but things change, and as sections are completed, priorities will change. Well thought out and stated criteria will allow for the priorities to be easily updated. She asked attendees to carefully consider these criteria and make suggestions. Good criteria will make it easier to point out priorities when funding comes up.

Aaron explained that the one criterion that was not spelled out, but was assumed, was that a project has local support to be listed as a priority, and suggested adding that as a stated criterion.

Aaron then walked the group through the seven sections that staff had identified as meeting the above stated criteria:

**TORR-2** (East Main Street/ Franklin to East Albert Street) – Connecting completed trail to Downtown Torrington.

**LITC/HARW-3** (Campville Hill Road to Wildcat Hill Road) – Shared roadway concept presented in Thomaston to Torrington Routing Study can be completed with very little investment on a very low volume low speed section of Valley Road. Denise Raap asked for clarification about the road segment in question, stating that there was a high-volume/speed section of Campville Road in Litchfield. Aaron clarified that the roadway in question is Valley Road in Harwinton.

**WTTN-1** (Branch Brook Road to Frost Bridge Road) – Connecting to trail designed in Thomaston. Was previously seen as low hanging fruit.

**WTBY-3** (West Main Street to Eagle Street) – Connecting Downtown to section under construction. Judy Mancini added that the City is currently looking at that section, and will be having meetings to look at it.

**NAUG-1** (Naugatuck River Access Park to Pulaski Bridge) – Connecting completed section in Naugatuck to Waterbury Phase I under construction. Jim Stewart explained that he thought Naugatuck, Waterbury and NVCOG need to get together to discuss the connection at the city line. He does not think that a bridge over the river south of Bristol Street is feasible, and would like to explore ways to get to Bristol Street. Mark Nielsen explained that the Borough did submit an application to the TA program that included the bridge, and it has not been eliminated from consideration, but plans could be changed to include whatever consensus the two municipalities come up with as to how to make the connection. Kevin Zak added that there is not much room for a trail between the river and rail south of Bristol Street.

**BEAC-3** (Route 42 to Toby's Pond) – Connects completed section in Beacon Falls to trails at Toby's Pond. Aaron discussed concept plans to continue the road diet that was completed in downtown south along route 42 to Riverbend Park. Gerald Smith explained that that concept presents some issues, and would prefer that options be left open as to how the connecting is made to Toby's Pond including on the west side of the river. HE said that he would be putting together a group to look at the issue in town. He did not object to including it as a priority, but was apprehensive about the route on 42. Aaron explained that this would be spelled out in the narrative.

**SEYM-1/BEAC-5** (Toby's Pond to Bank Street) – Connects Toby's Pond to completed section in Seymour

Jack Walsh called for a motion to approve the priorities as presented. On a motion by Kevin Zak, seconded by Rista Malanca, the priorities were approved unanimously.

Mark Nielsen discussed the Transportation Alternatives (TA) Federal Aid Program. Typically, TA funding is used for non-motorized transportation related projects, and the funding can be used for design and construction of

multiuse trails or sidewalks. While a new federal transportation bill has not been passed, CT DOT is anticipating that the TA set-aside program will continue in future legislation and has assumed that the program will essentially remain the same as specified in the current FAST Act. CT DOT is currently reviewing proposals submitted in May 2019, including projects in Thomaston, Beacon Falls/ Seymour and Naugatuck on the Naugatuck River Greenway Trail, and proposals from Watertown on the Steele Brook Greenway and in Oxford for bike/ped improvements along Route 67. Draft language that was passed out of the senate Environment and Public Works Committee included an approximately 40% increase in funding to the TA program, and also gives more control to small MPOs with urbanized areas with population under 200,000 (like Waterbury UA). There is still a long way to go before a bill is passed, but this is a bipartisan proposal and may indicate good things in the future. If the changes remain NVCOG would have more control over project selection, and there would be more funding available to complete larger projects or more projects.

Mark also briefly discussed the [Congestion Mitigation and Air Quality \(CMAQ\)](#) program, which can potentially be used for bike/ped projects, although they do not usually score very highly. a portion of CMAQ funding is suballocated to the regions, so NVCOG will likely be Soliciting for projects soon. Not a high probability of getting bike/ped projects funded, it is possible, and should be kept in mind.

Jack Walsh discussed changes in use on trails due to Covid-19 and mentioned that the [CT Trail Census](#) had documented sharp increases in trail use since lockdown orders were put in place in March.

Kevin Zak discussed the lack of fish passage at the Kinneytown Dam Fish Ladder. Kevin shared a [video](#) showing evidence of large numbers of various species of fish below the dam unable to access restored habitat upstream of the dam, and even becoming stranded and dying in pools below the dam. The Federal Energy Regulatory Commission (FERC), which oversees the dam, has recently opened a docket in response to a Fish and Wildlife letter laying out the lack of adequate fish passage. A coalition of concerned organizations including the Naugatuck River Revival Group, Save the Sound, and NVCOG is forming to ensure that fish passage is restored. For more information, you can explore the issue in the **Naugatuck River Restoration Coalition's** [Storymap](#).

A schedule of meetings for 2021 was agreed upon (Feb. 10, May 12, August 11, November 10)

**Next Regular Meeting: February 10, 2020 at 9:00 am**  
**Location – TBD (Likely Virtual)**

# Naugatuck River Greenway Steering Committee

## **Municipal Representatives**

<b>Torrington</b>	<b>Rista Malanca*</b> Jeremy Leifert
<b>Litchfield</b>	<b>Cleve Fuessenich</b>
<b>Harwinton</b>	Suzanne Stitch Joan Kirchner
<b>Thomaston</b>	<b>Stacey Sefcik</b>
<b>Watertown</b>	<b>Roy Cavanaugh</b>
<b>Waterbury</b>	Kenny Curran <b>Judy Mancini</b>
<b>Naugatuck</b>	<b>Jim Stewart</b> <b>Vincent Siefert</b>
<b>Beacon Falls</b>	Liz Falzone Josh Carey
<b>Seymour</b>	Rory Burke
<b>Ansonia</b>	Sheila O'Malley
<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  
**Jennifer Reilly** – CT DOT  
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**  
**Denise Raap** – Litchfield First Selectman  
**Ed Mone** - Thomaston First Selectman  
**Gerard Smith** - Beacon Falls First Selectman  
**Annamarie Drugonis** – Seymour First Selectman  
**Janell Mullen** – NHCOG  
**Kerry McAndrew** – Beacon Falls  
**Richard Crowther** – NVCOG

