



Naugatuck River Greenway Steering Committee

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

Meeting Notes

Wednesday May 12th, 2021, 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.

Kim Bradley was introduced as the Connecticut Trail Finder/ Trail Census coordinator at UConn Extension. She presented the Connecticut Trail Finder website that is currently under development. The CT Trail Finder is a new state funded website that will provide authoritative information about trails and trail networks of all types to the public. It is based on, and will be very similar in form and function to the [Maine Trail Finder](#) and [VT/NH Trail Finder](#). Unlike crowd sourced information on various trails apps, all data and information on CT Trail Finder will be sourced from and approved by local trail managers. The website is set to be released in early June in conjunction with national trails day and will have between 25 and 80 trails represented at kickoff. While not included at launch, the website will also eventually feature an events calendar and “trailside services” featuring local businesses and services that may cater to or serve trail users and their needs.

Aaron Budris said that NVCOG staff is working with Kim and her team to prioritize region trails and help get as many as possible, including the open sections of NRG trail, included on the website at launch. NVCOG has already mapped open sections of NRG Trail (and many other trails in the region) and included them as part of the NVCOG [Regional Trail Map](#), and has a lot of the information that would be included in a Trail Finder entry, so it should not be a heavy lift at all for trail managers. What is needed, however, is a local contact to help us pull additional information together, and ultimately approve data and information being added. We will also need a “Trail Manager” contact that will be included in the trail entry. This might be the town parks department, public works, trails committee, or whoever inquiries from the public would be directed to. Aaron will reach out to towns with open sections of trail to assist.

Aaron gave an update on the [CT Trail Census](#), stating that 2020 data has been added to the website along with a 2020 Trail Count Report and a 2020 Trail Survey Report. The QR Code survey received 1300 - 1400 responses statewide. Jack suggested sharing this information with community leaders and state officials.

Aaron reminded the group that in March, they endorsed the [NRG Trail Project Priorities](#) document. The report was then presented to the NVCOG Board and [published on the NVCOG website](#). Mark Nielsen said there is no need for a formal endorsement from the Board, but that the general tone was positive and supportive. Jack felt it was important to publicize reports to demonstrate the progress and impacts this long-term project is making. Mark added that the sentiment that trails are a luxury is shifting as communities become aware that trails provide economic and quality of life benefits.

Ansonia Project Update: No Ansonia reps were present, but Jack said construction had begun on the Ansonia Riverwalk sections 3&4 project, developing a parallel trail section on the east bank of the River, adjacent to downtown. Mark added that the Town is looking to relocate Route 334 to make a more direct connection from Downtown Ansonia to Route 8, and that would include consideration of a trail section. The Town applied for federal funds to “fill pedestrian gaps” in the downtown 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.”

Waterbury Phase I: Judy Mancini reported that the project was rebid, and the engineer has almost completed his review of the three lowest bidders. DOT will also review bids. The timeline is looking like June for a notice to proceed. The trail is 2.5 miles, from Platts Mill Road to Eagle Street, and will include a park with amenities and lighting at the corner of South Main and Platts Mill Road. Jack said this is significant because it will represent about 5% of the trail.

Watertown/ Thomaston: Paul Bunevich has been trying to physically locate Waterbury's water supply mains that is located in close proximity of about half of the 2.4-mile trail route between Frost Bridge and Branch Brook. His results so far have been very positive. He still has 3 test pits to complete, and he will report back on those. Additionally, his GIS tech staff are currently gathering data to create a layer that will tie in with his survey. This can then be overlaid with State data to give the grading and contours of the whole trail, which will be useful for presentation/permitting purposes. Tony Ciriello (of SLR, formerly Milone and MacBroom, who is working as an engineering consultant to the town of Watertown) added that he had a recent meeting with Rob Langenauer Superintendent of the Waterbury Bureau of Water, the Watertown Town Manager and NVCOG staff to touch base on the plans for the Watertown/Thomaston trail. The Water Department was in favor of the project (assuming certain construction protections are in place), as the greenway trail will make it easier to access the water main in the future should they need to for inspections. Mark commented that NVCOG is looking to schedule a site walk in the future with the Office of Rails and the Local Roads Division of ConnDOT.

Naugatuck/Waterbury (site walk March 25): Vincent Siefert shared that about a month ago, a well-attended site visit was held with 8-10 participants to look at the connection between Naugatuck's completed section and Waterbury's Phase I that will begin construction this year. Connecting those two sections of trail will result in a 5–6-mile continuous length of trail. There will need to be a river-crossing to connect Naugatuck's trail on the west side of the river with Waterbury's trail on the east bank. One option is a 250-foot prefab footbridge connecting to the canoe launch on Platts Mill Road. The second option would be to keep the trail on the west side between the river and rail up to Bristol Street, and perform a "grade separation" with the railroad, accomplished with retaining walls and fencing. Bikes and pedestrians would then cross the river on the existing Bristol Street Bridge. A team is working on drawing up some plans and getting cost estimates of each option. Vincent shared that he would come back to the steering committee with more details on both options. Jack was excited, as 5-6 miles would constitute about 10% of the greenway.

Oxford Route 67 Alternative Transportation Plan: Aaron introduced Casey Hardin, Project Manager from TranSystems that has been working on this project. Route 67 acts as Oxford's major thoroughfare, but it does not have the typical New England "main street" with pedestrian access. The Route 67 Alternative Transportation Plan is underway looking at ways to connect the NRG in Seymour with the Larkin Bridle Trail with a multiuse trail along the Little River and Route 67, as well as provide transit opportunities in the corridor. A draft final report will be issued soon. Casey added that Route 67 parallels the Little River, which is a managed trout stream with fishing sites. There is a desire to make these nature-based recreation opportunities more available to the public with trails. Oxford also has been awarded a Community Connectivity Grant, and the town is set to begin constructing one piece of trail along Route 67 near Town Hall. Casey explained that the draft report will detail 8 implementable segments of trail. One challenge is that the sinuous pattern of the Little River could require several 40-50 ft prefab footbridges that would run parallel to the road bridges, traversing the River. The northern terminus would be the parking area for Larkin Trail off Route 88. The trail would connect the Oxford Center and the Little River Nature Preserve and Quarry Walk. The southern terminus would be at the existing sidewalk at Oxford/Seymour line. Wayfinding and pocket parks will be provided along this rural trail. An interactive GIS-based StoryMap will be available to for residents to virtually navigate the trail. Jack mentioned that this will serve Oxford's population boom well.

Other – Shelton Canals: Paul Grimmer said that downtown Shelton and Canal Street in the 80s and 90s used to be very run down with abandoned mill buildings. Veterans Memorial Park (VMP), which replaced a large

industrial complex, was an extremely crucial investment that the City of Shelton made – it now gets up to 150,000 visitors a year in a location that nobody wanted to go 20 years ago. He discussed the one-mile section of Shelton River Walk trail that follows the Housatonic River and runs adjacent to Veterans Park. New development along Canal Street is required to keep a right-of-way to facilitate trail development along the river so that the current, limited Housatonic Riverwalk will someday span from Commodore Bridge to the Shelton Canals. Paul explained that the current state of the canal is poor, and it is overgrown and riddled with trash. Silt has accumulated such that the canal can be walked across, where it used to be swimmable. They are calling their new undertaking the Shelton Canal Locks Park and Riverwalk, which would involve environmental restoration of the habitat and historic preservation of the canal locks. The plan also calls for providing public access to the river for fishing, kayak launching, etc. NVCOG will make a StoryMap as they did for Kinneytown Dam. The hope is to begin making marked progress in May. Paul said the most important aspect is the direct connection to the Housatonic River. Improvements to the Derby-Shelton Bridge, which are currently underway, will provide a direct bike/ped connection between the NRG and the Shelton Riverwalk. Jack said that while this is not a proper part of the NRG, he is encouraged to see progress on this “spur” of the NRG.

Aaron reported that he had not heard anything new about **funding opportunities**. There has been no state bond funds issued for the Recreational Trails Program. DOT was still in their review process for the Federal Transportation Alternatives Set-aside program. The top ranked project in the Waterbury Urbanized Area was the Steel Brook Greenway section in Watertown, and the second was the Naugatuck-Waterbury NRG section. Funding for second or third ranked projects would likely depend on funding levels of a new federal transportation bill. Jack expressed that he would like the projects to be “shovel ready” so that they are at the front of the line when the funding becomes available.

[Trails Day](#) events will be held on June 5 and 6. There are events in towns throughout the region, but not on any NRG Trail sections. The pandemic has limited in-person events, but the Steering Committee has co-hosted events in the past and should consider doing so in the future.

The pressure leveraged by NVCOG, the Naugatuck River Revival Group, and Save the Sound is starting to pay off regarding fish passage issues at **Kinneytown Dam**. Letters have been filed by FWS and FERC to compel the new dam owners, HydroLand, to restore fish passage by certain deadlines. Over the next few weeks, Fish and Wildlife will be conducting an engineering study of the dam that will inform future fixes. Annemarie Drugonis thanked Kevin Zak and NRG for the work they had done on this. Kevin speculated that the engineering report that was due to FERC by June 15 could be the “nail in the coffin” for Kinneytown Dam. He also expressed that the new dam owners “don’t really seem to know what they’re doing.” HydroLand would not allow any “outsiders” to be present on Friday when FWS visited to start their survey. Kevin assured the group that every effort is being made to stay on top of the issues at Kinneytown. Annemarie Drugonis and her Blight Officer have been getting complaints about the area along the Kinneytown Dam on the Seymour side that is filled with trash. The Town will send a letter asking the property owners to clean up the area. More information about the issues at Kinneytown Dam [HERE](#). Pertaining to the new fixes on the Tingue Dam Bypass upstream of Kinneytown, Seymour has given permission for DEEP to use a municipal parking lot to store their equipment through December. Kevin and Annmarie established that no one has received drawings of the Tingue Dam bypass improvements yet.

NVCOG is holding a [discount sale of Backyard Composters and Rain Barrels](#). They can be ordered on the webstore and the items can be picked up on June 19th. In Southbury and Cheshire. The intent is to divert some of the waste that would otherwise end up in the municipal waste stream, and conserve drinking water through rainwater harvesting for outdoor uses.

Next meeting August 11th.

Naugatuck River Greenway Steering Committee (present in BOLD)

Municipal Representatives

Torrington	Rista Malanca* Jeremy Leifert
Litchfield	Cleve Fuessenich
Harwinton	Suzanne Stitch Joan Kirchner
Thomaston	Stacey Sefcik
Watertown	Paul Bunevich
Waterbury	Kenny Curran Judy Mancini
Naugatuck	Jim Stewart Vincent Siefert
Beacon Falls	Liz Falzone Josh Carey
Seymour	Rory Burke
Ansonia	Sheila O'Malley
Derby	Jack Walsh*

Stakeholder Representatives

Aaron Budris – Naugatuck Valley Council of Governments
Bill Purcell – Valley Chamber
Christopher Way - US Army Corps of Engineers
Chuck Berger – Retired Watertown Town Engineer
Clifford Cooper - Litchfield Community Greenway
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

Annmarie Drugonis - First Selectwoman, Seymour
Mark Raimo – Watertown Town Manager
Anthony Ciriello – SLR
Paul Grimmer – Shelton Economic Development Corporation
Josh LeCar - NVCOG
Richard Crowther – NVCOG
Richard Donovan – NVCOG