



Naugatuck River Greenway Steering Committee

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

Meeting Notes

Wednesday May 11th, 2022, 9am Via Zoom & in person at NVCOG Offices, 49 Leavenworth Street, Waterbury
See last page for attendance and a roster of steering committee members

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

NRG Trail Operations, Management, and Maintenance (OM&M) Discussion

Aaron Budris introduced the draft [NRG Trail Operations, Maintenance and Management Guide](#), the purpose of which is to provide information to municipalities as they develop and manage sections of NRG Trail, and to help create a uniform feel along the entire NRG Trail as individual sections are connected. The guide provides information about design considerations and amenities, including a visual design guide photo-documenting existing features like benches, bike racks, comfort stations, trash receptacles, etc. on existing sections of NRG Trail and other nearby multiuse trails. The guide also presents information about best practices for short and long-term maintenance needs of multiuse trails, and a discussion about rules and regulations and their enforcement. In presenting the draft guide, Aaron highlighted a few topics that emerged as important at the previous meeting including bridges, winter maintenance, and e-bikes.

Aaron asked for feedback and comments that will be incorporated into the final document. He stressed that nothing in this guide is intended to be binding– these are all recommendations and suggestions. He displayed a slide draft proposed rules for discussion. Several members commented in favor of both the rules and the overall draft guide. The guide will be revised with input from the NRGSC and other stakeholders and will be formatted and presented to the group at the next NRG Steering Committee meeting in August for endorsement.

Project Updates

Waterbury Phase I: Judy Mancini reported that Waterbury is 77% to substantial completion on this project. It should be mostly done by the end of the year, with a few electrical components holding up the opening to the public. This is a 2.1-mile phase.

Ansonia Riverwalk: Jack Walsh reported that the trail on the east bank of the Naugatuck River adjacent to downtown Ansonia is now open, although a “grand opening” had yet to be held. The new side has benches, canopies, and railings. The trail is supposed to feature a “lighthouse” feature which is not built yet. Aaron Budris shared that when paired with sidewalks on Division Street and Bridge Street, the new trail and existing trail on the west bank of the river creates a 2-mile loop trail. You can view it on CT Trailfinder [HERE](#).

Ansonia Routing Study: Joshua Eannotti shared that the city is holding stakeholder meetings. He hopes for a public information meeting in mid-June. The proposed routes would include on-road connections as close to the river as possible. There are also conversations with Seymour regarding which side of the river they’d like to be on. Everything is still preliminary. The NRGSC will be informed prior to public meetings.

Derby/Shelton Bridge: Jack Walsh explained that this reconstruction project started over a year ago with complex utility work. Mr. Nielsen stated that most of the utility work is completed, and they will be moving to the opposite side of the bridge soon. The final piece will be the landscaping for the slip ramp along Canal Street. The finished bridge will connect the NRG Trail to the Shelton Riverwalk.

“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.”

[Derby Route 34](#): Construction has commenced along Main Street. Mark Nielsen said the first step was bringing in fill that will support the roadway to the south – and there will be a lot of fill needed. As redevelopment takes place in Derby, there is conversation about linking the Greenway to the train station. Jack Walsh noted that Derby received a large grant for reconstructing their train station, which is still several years out. This will make Derby very well situated for transit-oriented development.

[Thomaston-Watertown](#): Paul Bunevich shared that they did not receive a DEEP Rec Trails grant for which they applied. Tony Ciriello shared that Watertown is looking for other funding sources. He asked Mr. Budris if there was any information if there will be further funds from DEEP. Mr. Budris replied it is a little too early to tell, but that there was \$6m for the Recreational Trail Program in the state budget, and a Bond Commission meeting in July could result in more funding. The Thomaston-Watertown project appeared to be next in line.

Waterbury RAISE Grant Application

Mark Nielsen explained that RAISE is a competitive federal aid program with \$1.5 billion available nationwide. Waterbury, NVCOG, and the Waterbury Development Corporation submitted for this grant which included extending the NRG Trail from Eagle Street to West Main Street about 2 miles into Downtown. RAISE has a longer timeline to allow design work to occur. This grant program emphasizes equity and assisting underserved communities, for which this project checks a lot of the boxes. It was submitted in April and the response should come in August. At least one RAISE grant will be awarded per state. Mark felt the biggest competitor would be New Haven. Aaron Budris said that this section of the Greenway is the most complex out of the NRG, due to the number of private properties and brownfields. It will really require substantial funding like the RAISE grant.

Funding Opportunities

[Congressionally Directed Spending \(CDS\)](#): NVCOG submitted or assisted municipalities in submitting several applications for congressionally directed spending (previously referred to as “earmarks”). These included two NRG projects: Design of the Watertown section between Frost Bridge Road and Branch Brook, and for design and construction of the section of NRG connecting the existing section of trail in Naugatuck to the piece under construction in Waterbury. Mark Nielsen said that the design of the Watertown section was identified as the number one priority for the region when NVCOG submitted their CDS requests, and that the Naugatuck project was also ranked highly. Mark shared that Senator Murphy’s office seemed to have a positive reaction to these projects. Aaron Budris shared that NVCOG also submitted for design and construction of a multiuse trail along Route 67 in Oxford between Town Hall and Quarry Walk, building on the trail section constructed last year under the Community Connectivity program. While Oxford’s Route 67/ Little River Trail is not located along the NRG it will eventually connect to the NRG Trail and to the Larkin Bridle Trail. Learn more about the proposed trail [HERE](#).

[Bipartisan Infrastructure Law](#): Mark Nielsen said that guidance for the Transportation Alternatives program came out in March, noting that funding increased 45% for TA. The new bill stated that small urban areas can apply for funds directly rather than having to go through the State. Moreover, the State can no longer flex 50% of TA money to other areas as easily.

[DECD Communities Challenge](#): Mark Nielsen said there is a second round will be announced around midsummer. It may not be the best program for some trail projects, and that DECD projects that will promote downtown infill Development, and some trail projects could fit. Aaron Budris said anyone who is interested in applying should reach out for COG support and assistance.

[ARPA](#): No updates, but COG staff reminded everyone that the funds are flexible and can be used for recreational trails.

[CT DEEP Recreational Trails Grant](#): \$6 million was included in the state budget passed at the end of the legislative session. It will only be available if the Bonds Commission releases it. Aaron encouraged the Steering Committee to start thinking what they would like to apply for if/when a new round of funding is announced.

[CT DEEP Community Connectivity](#): Anna Bergeron from DOT explained that the department is hoping to announce a fourth round of this competitive grant program with future release of state bond funds. Notification will go directly to the towns, but NVCOG will also reach out once it is announced to see if they can support the towns. It was noted that this program will not award new money to towns if they still have an active project funded under a previous round.

Public Outreach/Events

Aaron shared that NVCOG attended the Ansonia Earth Day event and Woodbury Earth Day, where staff spoke to many community members about the NRG. He reminded everyone that NVCOG is available to table at public events to spread the word about the trail and has materials that can be used to help promote the trail and inform the public.

Other Business

[Kinneytown Dam](#): Kevin Zak explained that little progress had been made to improve fish passage at Kinneytown Dam, and that the Dam owner, Hydroland, is still out of compliance with its license exemption and has not met deadlines for actions required by FERC and resource agencies in various filings on the FERC docket. Additionally, The FERC office of Dam Safety (separate from the fish passage and compliance sections of FERC) recently identified the dam as a “Significant Hazard Potential Dam” requiring the owner to conduct additional engineering study and develop an Emergency Action Plan. Several fish passage seasons have been lost to negligence and inaction at Kinneytown Dam and the 2022 season looks like it may be lost as well. Aaron Budris summarized that there has been virtually no fish passage for a long time and no energy produced at the facility in almost 2 years. The Naugatuck River Restoration Coalition (NVCOG, The Naugatuck River Revival Group and Save the Sound) has requested that FERC step up enforcement actions against Hydroland.

[NVision 2022](#): A regional conference hosted by NVCOG been scheduled for the September 13th from 8am to 2pm at the Palace Theater in Waterbury. There will be a short video documentary presented about multiuse trails. Aaron said that NVCOG will provide a table for the NRGSC to share information about the NRG Trail and asked for volunteers to help staff that table. Details will be discussed in August.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:15 a.m. Next Meeting Wednesday, August 10, 2022.

Note: Following the meeting, attendees were given a tour of the Waterbury Phase I project that is currently under construction. Thank you to Judy Mancini and Thomas Balskus who arranged the tour. Photos can be viewed [HERE](#).

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 Seifert
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
Anna Bergeron – CT DOT
Bill Purcell – Valley Chamber
Bob Gregorski - Trout Unlimited
Chuck Berger – Retired Watertown Town Engineer
Clifford Cooper - Litchfield Community Greenway
Dave Faber –Naugatuck Valley Outdoors Club
Janell Mullen – Northwest Hills Council of Governments
Jim MacBroom – Milone and MacBroom
Jim O'Rourke - Waterbury Y
John Ceretta - Railroad Museum of New England
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
Matthew Coleman – US Army Corps of Engineers
Melanie Zimyeski – CT DOT
Mike Jastremski – Housatonic Valley Association
Robert Phillips - 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

Richard Dziekan - City of Derby
Christine O'Neill – NVCOG
Richard Crowther – NVCOG
Richard Donovan – NVCOG
Tony Ciriello – SLR/ Town of Watertown
Josh Eannotti - VHB/ City of Ansonia
Helen Leung – Town of Oxford
Marc McCarthy – Litchfield Greenway