



Naugatuck River Greenway Steering Committee

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

Meeting Notes

Wednesday November 9th, 2022, 9am Via Zoom

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

Rista Malanca started the meeting, and introductions were made.

Update from Kim Bradley, CT DEEP Trails & Greenways Coordinator

Ms. Bradley introduced herself as the new Trails & Greenways Coordinator at CT DEEP. She will be stepping into Lori Giannotti's shoes as the main contact for DEEP's annual Recreational Trails Grant. Her role is to review and advise on recreational resource management and trail use, design, and maintenance; liaise with various bike/ped/trails groups; and administer state and federal grants associated with trails and greenways

The CT Recreational Trails Program has a historic \$9 million available in the current round. The request for applications is expected to launch November 30th and will be due March 1st. Grant funds may be used for:

- Planning, design, and construction of new trails
- Maintenance and restoration of existing trails
- Accessibility upgrades to trails
- Purchase and lease of trail-related equipment
- Acquisition of land or easements for trails
- Operation of educational programs related to trails

The updated application now includes grant scoring criteria as a way to increase transparency. A webinar about this grant will be available in December. Ms. Bradley displayed the updated grant application for a more granular review of the document.

Ms. Bradley also noted that the CT Trails Learning Community holds meetings every 4th Wednesday of the month, to connect volunteers and trails managers to network, discuss trails topics, and learn from each other's experiences.

Emergency Response Locating on Trail

Mr. Budris explained that Waterbury had contacted him wondering about the best way to ensure first responders can locate someone in distress along the trail. After some research, Mr. Budris learned there is no standard best practice. Some trails mark areas by the nearest intersection, others use a placard with a geocode. Waterbury has decided to move forward with a mile marker system, where a sign will display "WTBY 0.0" every tenth of a mile. Mr. Byron mocked up two versions of NRG logo with the mileage markers incorporated. Mr. Budris expressed that this could be easily implemented on other sections of the greenway, though there are challenges associated with the piecemeal way the trail is being built. He invited stakeholders to contact him if they would like more information.

Ms. Malanca reminded the participants that the NRG logo had been developed several years ago as part of a branding exercise, and she enjoyed seeing the logo incorporated in this way.

"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."

Project/ Funding Updates

Waterbury Phase I: Mr. Budris spoke on behalf of Judi Mancini, noting that the project reached substantial completion in October. It is open to the public, though there are a few outstanding items. November 30th is the contract completion date, but it is likely that the formal opening will occur in the spring.

Waterbury Phase II (RAISE grant): Mr. Nielsen shared that the project team had a recent meeting to discuss the environmental assessment for the brownfields work, which is the first phase of the project. This is a complex phase with multiple steps. The city is in discussion with the Federal Highway Administration. It is unlikely that there will be shovels in the ground within about a year, but the city is very excited to get started.

Ansonia Riverwalk Segments 3&4: Mr. Budris reported that these segments are complete, though he does not know of the city having held an official opening. He has not heard any updates about the Ansonia Routing Study.

Derby/Shelton Bridge: Mr. Walsh noted that one of the new lanes has been opened. Mr. Nielsen added that UI is currently working on utility relocation.

Derby Route 34: Construction is underway. Mr. Walsh put a link in the chat of a drone video overlooking this portion of the trail.

Torrington Riverfront Apartments: Ms. Malanca shared that a ribbon cutting was held for the apartments in October. This former brownfield site is now a mixed-use, mixed-affordability development. The developer built a portion of the trail as part of the project, connecting the approximately 1,000 feet of trail that the City had built previously. Elected official sang the praises of incorporating the trail with these apartments to achieve multiple benefits.

Mr. Walsh asked about the grant Derby recently received for Transit-Oriented Development. Mr. Nielsen said that he did not have an update, as the Federal Highway Administration is likely still putting together the agreement. It is funded through the RAISE grant. Mr. Walsh commented that it is a relatively large grant – Mr. Nielsen noted it was about \$12 million and will be managed by the State. the project will cover a complete renovation of the Derby rail station including a new platform, canopy, an improved shelter, dedicated bus space, and more. There will also be better bike connections to the downtown area. The City is committed to creating a bike/ped connection through the South Main Street area, which will be continued by this TOD grant.

Mr. Ciriello expressed a desire to meet with Waterbury to discuss how their section of trail will connect with Watertown. He thanked Ms. Bradley for her update.

Mr. Sirowich asked if there were any planning studies for Seymour, specifically to connect with Ansonia. Seymour is waiting to hear back on a Connecticut Community Challenge grant which would further their section of the greenway trail. Mr. Nielsen noted that it is a complicated issue that is ten years in the making, but there is nothing planned at present. The DOT is reluctant to commit to relocating the station until Haynes puts a shovel in the ground, and Haynes is reluctant to get started before the relocation is confirmed.

Mr. Nielsen asked Ms. Bradley if applications from the last round of Rec Trails Grants that did not get funded would be considered for this round as well, or if they should resubmit. Mr. Nielsen stressed that they would really like to put together a good design that addresses DOT's concerns about the water-main near the Watertown section. He stated that the Watertown application should be a priority. Ms. Bradley said that they would need to resubmit, though the application will be very similar to the last round.

Mr. Seifert noted that Pennrose, a developer that worked in Torrington, is in contract negotiations with Naugatuck for a TOD project. Mr. Seifert and Mr. Stewart are working with the Board of Burgesses to ensure that the greenway is advanced as part of this development.

Funding Submissions and Opportunities

Ms. Malanca stated that at last week's CCM conference, Commissioner Katie Dykes (DEEP) and Commissioner Joseph Giuliatti (DOT) stressed that municipalities should reach out to Ms. Bradley to direct them to the appropriate funding source, rather than trying to navigate all the opportunities on their own.

DEEP Recreation Trails: Mr. Budris noted that with four months until the deadline, it is an ideal time for towns to start brainstorming projects they are interested in. NVCOG can help if given adequate lead time. He also invited stakeholders to share ideas for regional applications (such as signage) that would benefit the entire trail and could be submitted through the COG. Mr. Nielsen contributed that the COG can also help with the increased focus on equity by providing data and mapping. Mr. Budris referred to the priorities list that was developed last year.

Mr. Budris asked if there would still be an unofficial cap of around \$300,000 – \$400,000 given the increase in funding. Ms. Bradley indicated that they would likely see the same funding range, but it is worth a discussion for larger projects, especially if they advance statewide goals. She encouraged Mr. Budris to reach out offline.

Ms. Malanca also mentioned the following opportunities:

- Congressional Directed Spending
- Transportation Alternatives:
- DECD CT Communities Challenge – Round 2 (this round is now closed)
- Community Investment Fund 2030 (eligible towns: Ansonia, Beacon Falls, Derby, Naugatuck, Thomaston, Torrington, Waterbury)
- RAISE

Mr. Nielsen mentioned that NVCOG had submitted several trails projects under Congressionally Directed Spending, but none made the cut. He hopes to revamp those applications for a potential second round of CDS funding. He also expressed that NVCOG has had a hard time getting funding through the Transportation Alternatives program. He is pushing to have the funding go through the regions rather than the state, as is done with LOTCIP. As for RAISE, Mr. Nielsen encouraged the towns to group together to submit multi-town applications (such as the Watertown/Waterbury project).

Public Outreach

Mr. Budris shared that NVCOG has been spreading the word about the Greenway at Ansonia Fall Fest, Ansonia Earth Day, and the regional NVision 2022 conference. He shared that residents seem to be really engaged and excited about the greenway at these events. He encouraged stakeholders to let NVCOG know about events that they could table at.

Other

Mr. Budris shared that NVCOG has applied for two, \$15 million grants to take ownership of the dam and remove it. The idea would be for the Connecticut Brownfield Land Bank to take title of the property during the remediation and deconstruction, and then return the land to Ansonia and Seymour. If this plan is executed, there will be opportunities to route the Greenway through the area. If full funding is awarded, extending the Greenway would be one of the activities. Mr. Budris wants to keep the Greenway and river access for residents as a key deliverable of the Kinneytown redevelopment plans.

Ms. Malanca reviewed the 2023 meeting dates of February 8, May 10, August 9, and November 8. She asked how participants felt about virtual meetings vs. meetings at the trails themselves. Mr. Walsh agreed that it is inspiring to see progress on the trails. Mr. Bunevich also enjoyed the walk in Waterbury this past year and would like to see more meetings of that nature. Mr. Budris said attendance has been better since the meetings went virtual, so he suggested at least having a hybrid option.

Mr. Budris concluded by showing the updates he has made to the Naugatuck River Greenway webpage on the NVCOG site. It now includes the Trail Design and Management guide and Project Priorities.

The meeting was adjourned at 10:12 a.m. Next Meeting Wednesday, February 8, 2023.

Naugatuck River Greenway Steering Committee (present in BOLD)

Municipal Representatives

Torrington	Rista Malanca* Jeremy Leifert
Litchfield	Cleve Fuessenich
Harwinton	Kerri Stolle 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 Brian Sirowich
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
Kim Bradley – CT DEEP
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

Ken Byron – NVCOG
Christine O'Neill – NVCOG
Josh Lecar – NVCOG
Katie Schlick – NVCOG
Tony Ciriello – SLR Consulting, Watertown
Lissa Jennings – Thomaston