



# Naugatuck River Greenway Steering Committee

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

## Meeting Notes

Wednesday September 13<sup>th</sup>, 2023, 9am Via Zoom

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

Mr. Walsh started the meeting, and introductions were made.

### NRG Trail Regional Priorities Update

In 2015, the NRGSC developed a priorities document that laid out all the projected trail sections with context. The goal was to add more weight to funding requests and guide the future of NRG development. That document was last updated in 2021. With upcoming funding opportunities, and recent progress on previously identified priorities, Mr. Budris thought it would be a good idea to update the document, and presented a [draft update](#).

The document identifies sections that are complete, active (funded for design and construction), and regional priorities. "Priorities" refers to a section that: connects two completed sections, connects a completed section with an important destination or population center, or requires little investment/effort. Seven priorities were identified in 2021. Two of those, Waterbury and Watertown's, have been funded in the two years since that update. Torrington, Harwinton, Naugatuck, Beacon Falls, and Seymour/Beacon Falls have remaining priorities.

During this 2023 update, Mr. Budris would like the Committee to consider: are the prioritization criteria still valid? Is the information we have on each section accurate? Should other projects beyond the trail sections themselves be considered, such as signage?

There was some discussion as to whether any trail sections remain that could be considered to need little investment/effort. Everyone acknowledges that those opportunities are dwindling, but it is still worth keeping "low hanging fruit" on the priority list. The Committee agreed to keep the priority criteria from last time.

Mr. Budris went through the priorities he is proposing for this 2023 update. He welcomed comments, saying he would put together a revised draft for discussion at the November meeting.

- **Torrington, TORR-2:** Between Franklin (downtown) and Albert Street (Senior Center). This is partially complete. Ms. Malanca confirmed that it should still be a priority, and Mr. Budris said he would reach out to update the details.
- **Harwinton/Litchfield, LITC/HARW-3:** Between Campville Road and Wildcat Hill Road. It was identified as low-hanging fruit, with recommendations to put up some signage and add parking to the existing infrastructure. With no reps from Harwinton or Litchfield on the call today, Mr. Budris moved on. It appears that no action has been taken by Harwinton to further this priority.
- **Thomaston, THOM-3:** Between Watertown Road and Old Waterbury Road Trailhead. THOM-3 has some design funding through DEEP Recreational Trails, but lacks construction funding. NVCOG is recommending that it become a new regional priority, given that it now connects two "active" pieces. Ms. Sefcik strongly agreed. Mr. Nielsen pointed out that the cost estimate for one of the sections is likely no longer accurate, as it was from 2019. There has also been a lot of activity in Thomaston on the non-priority sections.
  - Mr. Siefert asked how many priorities we are aiming for. Mr. Budris said there were 7 last time, and he didn't want to include anything the towns are not serious about pursuing. There is not necessarily a limit. Mr. Siefert didn't want too many priorities spreading the resources thin.

*"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."*

- **Watertown:** No proposed priorities. They are on track to receive LOTCIP funding for their Branch Brook to Frost Bridge corridor. Mr. Bunevich added that Watertown is putting out an RFP for this section of trail.
- **Waterbury, WTBY-3a:** Between Washington Road and 313 Mill Street. This section would wind through a disadvantaged portion of the City to a newly-created park. Although it had not previously been listed in the document, Mr. Budris added it in this draft and sought feedback from City representatives. Mr. Porzio explained that right now the City's focus is on the RAISE grant. Mr. Budris said he would like to consult with Ms. Mancini and other City staff.
- **Naugatuck, NAUG-1:** Between Waterbury Line and Pulaski Bridge. Mr. Budris stated this was a previous priority and he feels it should continue to be. Mr. Stewart pointed out that Mayor Hess has a rail project in the works that may need to go through an area that has been routed for the NRG. Ms. Malanca wondered if NAUG-4 should also be a priority due to the planned development, and Mr. Stewart suggested that it wouldn't make much sense since it does not actually connect all the way to Beacon Falls. Mr. Siefert added that he prefers NAUG-1 over NAUG-4 because it would connect with a very active skate park in Waterbury. He noted the estimate will likely be much greater than \$3mil. Mr. Stewart also mentioned the pedestrian bridge in the middle of that proposed trail is an ongoing obstacle, so maybe it would make more sense to fund trail design first and take care of the bridge later. Several Committee members pointed out that in order to receive funding, the DOT looks for "logical termini," which would be absent without the bridge.
- **Beacon Falls, BEAC-5 and BEAC-5:** BEAC-2 would continue the road diet that has already been started from Route 42 to Toby's Pond. BEAC-5 follows the rail and the River from Toby's Pond to the Seymour Line in downtown Seymour. Since no stakeholders from Beacon Falls were present, Mr. Budris said he would reach out to them offline.
- **Seymour, SEYM-1:** Between Beacon Falls Line and Bank Street. Mr. Sirowich contributed that the Town has requested funding for this section in the most recent round of the Community Investment Fund, noting that it is definitely a priority for Seymour. Mr. Budris added that further trail options will open up in Seymour as the Kinneytown Dam removal progresses. Ms. Ekstrom added that \$3mil had been secured through Rosa DeLauro's office to build a road "from Route 42 to 313 Route 67," out of an estimated \$20mil that is needed.
- **Ansonia, ANSO-1:** Between Seymour Line and Bridge Street. Mr. Sirowich recommended that this be added as a regional priority, given that the whole of Ansonia is almost done.
- **Derby, DERB-1:** At Division Street. Some design has been completed for a path underneath Division Street, as it is a dangerous crossing. Mr. Budris is recommending it as a regional priority, especially because of the recent pedestrian fatality on that street. Mr. Walsh confirmed that this particular crossing has been a concern of Derby's from the start. He believed that the floodway was an issue for going under the bridge. Mr. Nielsen contributed that a Safe Streets For All grant might be the way to fund the design, as part of safety improvements for Division Street as a whole. The other issue is who would build and maintain the under-bridge crossing because it is on a town line. Mr. Nielsen and Mr. Walsh agreed that it should be a priority, given that it is currently one of the most dangerous sections of the Greenway.

Having gone through all the priorities, Mr. Budris asked if there are any other regional efforts that should be included in the priorities document, such as signage or studies. Mr. Walsh mentioned a prior study that had been done on economic impacts of the NRG, but Mr. Nielsen replied that it was rather expensive. Mr. Nielsen instead recommended updating cost estimates associated with these trail sections.

Ms. Malanca mentioned the routing study for Torrington through Harwinton and Litchfield, wondering if those should be moved into the design phase. Mr. Budris said the CEOs from those towns were visited right after the study, but given that no action has been taken since then, engaging those towns further should occur before prioritizing design. Ms. Malanca pointed out that if it is not our priority, the Army Corps will not make it theirs.

Mr. Nielsen mentioned that the negativity surrounding the NRG Trail routing on federal land at Thomaston Dam<sup>1</sup> overshadowed those who would benefit from the NRG expansion. It was recommended that the Corps be invited (they are already on the invites) to these NRGSC meetings. Ms. Burch added that the dirt biking community has been invited to Thomaston's greenway committee meetings, and they have actually been quite receptive. The Committee agreed that this sort of engagement with the dirt bikers would reduce miscommunications and increase the likelihood of the project getting off the ground.

Mr. Budris encouraged all Committee members to review the [draft updated priorities document](#) and [map](#) that was distributed, and respond with any changes. He reviewed how to use the GIS tool that displays the status of each section. He asked members to confirm that the information is accurate, and stated he will update it with feedback that has been received today, and present a final draft prior to the next meeting in November.

### **CT DEEP Recreational Trails Program**

Kim Bradley, DEEP Recreational Trails Coordinator, shared that many grants were funded during the most recent round. She gave updates on the status of each one:

- **Torrington:** Grant contract has been completed and executed.
- **Naugatuck:** Grant contract has been completed and executed.
- **Watertown:** Grant is with the Town, undergoing review and signatures.
- **Waterbury:** Grant is with the City, undergoing review and signatures.
- **Thomaston:** Grant is still with DEEP's team for legal review. The next step is that it will be sent to the Town for review.
- **Ansonia:** Grant is still with DEEP's team for legal review. The next step is that it will be sent to the City for review.

Ms. Bradley reminded everyone not to expend any funds until a contract is executed.

The next round of funding is paused until the Bond Commission releases the \$10mil for this program. The Commission generally cancels meetings during the summer, so the matter is expected to be discussed at the September 29<sup>th</sup> meeting. Once those funds are released, DEEP will release an RFP. Ms. Bradley predicts the RFP will go live in October or November.

The Greenways Council is organizing the Connecticut Trails Symposium in Torrington, October 10<sup>th</sup> through 13<sup>th</sup>. Ms. Bradley commended Ms. Malanca for her planning.

Ms. Sefcik has been unable to reach Ms. Bradley. Ms. Bradley encouraged anyone to call her on her cell at 203-915-5201.

Mr. Stewart wondered if DEEP has a guidance document on putting together an RFP for trail design. Ms. Bradley confirmed that there are no requirements from DEEP in terms of whether contractor selection is quality based or anything like that. DEEP does not need to review the RFP or contract, but they are happy to take a look for assistance.

Mr. Porzio said he will follow up on the status of Waterbury's grant, and provide new contact info if necessary.

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<sup>1</sup> Opposition from the dirt biking community.

Mr. Budris inquired if DEEP or the Greenways Council had discussed how the \$10mil would be spent – specifically, whether construction projects might be considered this time around as opposed to just planning and design. Ms. Bradley responded that it had not been discussed, but DEEP is anticipating that those requests would be coming in. She encouraged applicants to apply for construction, given that DEEP is empowered by statute to fund that type of project.

### **Project/ Funding Updates**

**Waterbury RAISE:** Covered earlier.

**Derby/Shelton Bridge:** Mr. Walsh noted the completion date is projected to be next April, if not later, due to utilities issues. Mr. Budris confirmed Spring 2024. There may be complementary work on Canal Street in Shelton.

**Derby Route 34:** Mr. Walsh shared that there is a tremendous amount of construction underway. About one year from completion.

**O’Sullivan’s Island:** This project has had its ribbon-cutting and is officially open. It is completed. Mr. Budris added that a vendor is renting bikes, scooters, kayaks, and paddleboards, called “Scoot & Paddle,” at this site.

**Kinneytown Dam:** NVCOG has released an RFQ for engineering and design of sewer siphon relocation. Save the Sound, a project partner, is working on an engineering RFQ for dam removal. We are making progress, despite a number of complications. Mr. Budris offered to give a more detailed update in the future.

### **Funding Submissions and Opportunities**

**Community Investment Fund 2030:** There are rounds every six months with this program. It opens mid-October and closes in December. It can cover capital improvement programs ranging from brownfields to clean energy, including trails. There is a lot of money available, and it has already funded several trails projects. Ansonia

**DEEP Recreational Trails:** Covered earlier.

**RAISE:** A funding round may launch this winter. It is designed for large-scale projects that are un-fundable through other sources. Waterbury received a large grant through RAISE for the WATER Phase II project that will construct a section of NRG Trail into downtown. It requires a 20% non-federal share, Mr. Nielsen noted, which can be difficult for a town to come up with when projects are in the multimillions. NVCOG is available to assist with project applications, as long as they have considered where the municipal share will come from. Mr. Nielsen added that multi-town applications are encouraged, as long as a lead agency is identified.

**Transportation Alternatives:** Mr. Nielsen pointed out that the priorities identified in 2018 are still consuming the program. He does not anticipate a new round of solicitations until 2025 or 26. The 20% non-federal share also makes these grants less attractive.

### **Events and Public Outreach**

**CT Trails Symposium:** Ms. Malanca explained that the Symposium will take place Friday, October 13th at Five Points Arts Center, with the event connected to the birthplace of John Brown. The week leading up to the Symposium is filled with activities – World Trail Film Festival, mobile clinics, bridge and rigging demonstrations, wagon rides along trails, Urban Hikers (from Cincinnati) presentation, professional development opportunities,

and more. The expenses are higher than previous years, so they are looking for event sponsors. Registration will open very soon!

Torrington Ribbon Cutting for a section of the NRG opening.

**Potential for an NRG event in 2024:** Mr. Walsh recounted that a previous event took place in 2012 that was highly successful. It was a 40 mile bike ride. John Monroe from the National Parks Service helped organize and attended the event. Mr. Budris wanted to put a bug in everyone's ear about organizing something like that again. Mr. Porzio mentioned that he could work with his colleagues at the YMCA who might be interested in helping with this.

### **Adjournment**

**The meeting was adjourned at approximately 10:35 a.m. Next Meeting November 8<sup>th</sup>, 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**  
                    **Amanda Burch**  
Watertown     **Paul Bunevich**  
Waterbury     Kenny Curran  
                    Judy Mancini  
Naugatuck     **Jim Stewart**  
                    **Vincent Seifert**  
Beacon Falls   Liz Falzone  
                    Josh Carey  
Seymour       **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  
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

**Christine O'Neill – NVCOG**  
**Emely Ricci – NVCOG**  
**Ricardo Rodriguez – NVCOG**  
**Molly Johnson - NVCOG**  
**Drew Baklik - NVCOG**  
**Heidy Coronel – NVCOG**  
**Rich Donovan - NVCOG**  
**James Kulpa, VHB**  
**Sal Porzio – City of Waterbury**  
**Karen Cook – Oxford**  
**Anthony Lagana – Thomaston**  
**Jan Mizeski – Naugatuck**  
**Patrick Haynes – Haynes Development**  
**Kathy Ekstrom – Haynes Development**