



# Naugatuck River Greenway Steering Committee

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

## Meeting Notes

Wednesday, August 8<sup>th</sup>, 2017 – 9am

Seymour Town Hall

1<sup>st</sup> Street, Seymour

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

Co-Chair Rista Malanca opened the meeting and introductions were made. Fred Messore welcomed the group to Seymour.

The Meeting began with a roundtable discussion. Rista explained that the roundtable was moved to the top of the meeting because it had been largely skipped over due to time constraints at the end of meetings.

**Torrington** – Rista reported that the design of a 2.5 mile section of trail stretching from downtown to Bogue Road is underway and a meeting has been set with the Army Corps of Engineers (ACOE). Much of the trail will be located on top of flood control works constructed by ACOE, and the city will be required to go through the section 408 permitting process with the District Office, regarding the alteration of federal public works projects. Jack Walsh explained that the Derby trail only required design review from the Corps. It was discussed that management of levees and floodwalls has been tightened since the Derby trail was built. Rista also explained that the Sue Grossman trail is being extended toward Winsted, along a previously designed route, and is being designed toward Torrington with a Responsible Growth/ TOD grant.

**Watertown** – Paul Bunevitch, Watertown’s town engineer, discussed the Steele Brook Greenway. The town received a Rec Trails grant to purchase and install a bridge over Steele Brook along Main Street in Oakville. The bridge will allow access to the greenway from the sidewalk network in Oakville to the Steele Brook Greenway, and will provide an off-road bike/ped route from Oakville to Watertown. The town went out to bid, and the low bidder was still higher than the grant amount. The town will be requesting additional funding to cover the remainder. Paul also described a plan to remove the Heminway Pond Dam and rehabilitate the silted in former pond.

The **Watertown Thomaston Recreational Trails** project is also underway. The original project scope includes design of critical elements in Watertown, and design and construction of a section in Thomaston connecting a trailhead on Old Waterbury Road near the dog pound to the future crossing of Branch Brook, either at the trolley bridge or at a new crossing location. The town of Watertown conducted a separate engineering study on the existing trolley bridge, concluding that there are likely serious structural issues that would make rehabilitation and reuse impractical. VHB will instead study alternative crossing locations and structure types to be constructed in future phases. NVCOG developed base map data for the project area and provided it to VHB. Environmental sub-consultant BL Companies have been conducting field work including wetland delineation. The project team had a meeting with representatives of the Naugatuck Railroad and the New England Rail Museum with encouraging results. Project partners allayed safety fears held by the rail operators, and it was agreed that the trail and historic scenic rail line and museum will be mutually beneficial.

**Waterbury** is currently designing Phase I and a new construction start date of Spring 2019 has been set.

*“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.”*

**Naugatuck** – Mark Nielsen explained that Naugatuck has proposed funding a section of greenway from Maple Street to Breen Field using Local Transportation Capital Improvement Program funds. LOTCIP is a state program administered through the COGs. Naugatuck is seeking permission from the NVCOG board to add the NRG project to the program. If accepted construction will likely not be until 2020-21.

**Seymour** – Fred Messore and Bryan Nesteriak discussed early plans to extend Seymour’s trail north along Franklin Street, then between the Metro North ROW and the River. A discussion was had regarding routing between Beacon Falls and Seymour, and how these tentative plans fit into the overall routing plan. With the exception of downtown Seymour, there is no established routing between Ansonia at Pershing Drive and Toby’s Pond in Beacon Falls. This section presents problems due to the close proximity of the Rail and Route 8 to the River, and the probable need for several river crossings of any off road route. Tony San Angelo, formerly of Beacon Falls, and now serving on the Oxford Main Street Committee, inquired about earmark funding that had been appropriated to study a road connection between route 42 and 67 to include a trail. Preliminary study found no need for such a road, and the unexpended funds may still be available. Mark Nielsen said that NVCOG staff would look into it.

**Ansonia**- Mark Nielsen briefly discussed Ansonia’s current project in design to bridge the Metro North ROW to Pershing Drive from the current northern trail terminus. Construction is expected in 2018. Ansonia also was awarded FAST Act Transportation Alternative Block Grant funds to construct several sections of their downtown greenway plan including sidewalk improvements along Pershing Drive and Bridge Street connecting the NRG to downtown, a section of trail along the levee on the east bank of the river, and a “Lighthouse Park” adjacent to the trail.

**Derby/Shelton** – Mark discussed the Derby-Shelton Bridge project for which a kickoff meeting was to be held on August 22<sup>nd</sup>. The project is fully funded, and will redesign the deck of the bridge to include a pedestrian promenade and street furniture. Changes will allow for a safe bike/ped friendly connection between the NRG and Shelton Greenway.

A conversation on **membership** was tabled due to time constraints, but will remain a standing agenda topic.

Aaron Budris discussed progress on the outreach associated with the **NRG Economic Study**. The report has been presented to the NVCOG board and the Regional Planning Commission and was presented to the Northwest Hills Council of Governments (NHCOG) meeting on June 8<sup>th</sup>. Aaron presented final drafts of individualized pamphlets for each NRG community, summarizing the study’s findings as understandably and concisely as possible. The pamphlets summarize the overall findings and present disaggregated community benefits. The drafts can be found here: <http://www.nvcogct.org/calendar/nrg-steering-committee-meeting-16> . Comments overall were positive. There was some discussion about the appropriateness of the cover photo which depicts an active construction site. The group was split about whether that was the appropriate message to send, and Aaron said that he would try to find an alternative photo that worked. There were also some comments about the photo on the back of the pamphlet, with suggestions that they be of each town’s section for those that have open sections. Aaron said that that should be possible. The summary sheets will be presented to municipal leaders in meetings with CEOs, boards or commissions. The Co-Chairs will send out a letter to each CEO requesting a meeting to discuss the study and set up a presentation to appropriate boards or staff. NRGSC representatives will be asked to help facilitate these meetings this fall.

A discussion followed concerning broader outreach about the economic study to state officials and legislators. Rista recommended setting up a legislative subcommittee, which was received well. A meeting will be set up to discuss a legislative outreach plan sometime after Labor Day. The NRGSC goals for such outreach are to make trail development and the NRG trail specifically a priority, elevate the view of the NRGSC and the organized manner we are developing the NRG, and focus on urban trails that have the biggest economic return.

NVCOG received \$12,550 to design, purchase and install interpretive and directional signage for the NRG. Aaron presented a [DRAFT signage order form](#) that will be sent to public works directors in towns with open sections of NRG. As envisioned in the grant request, the project goals are to design and purchase interpretive panels and stands for all open sections of NRG. The current plan is to design one “vision” interpretive sign that would describe the NRG plans and perhaps explain the economic and quality of life benefits of trails. These will likely be 36”x24”, and explain to visitors that the section of trail they are on is part of a larger 44 mile vision. The project will also purchase signage that will direct people to open sections of trail. The street signs will include the NRG logo and directional arrows pointing to trailheads to raise the visibility of the trails in communities that already have sections open. NVCOG will assist in the siting of signs and will develop a sign inventory and map, but installation and permitting will be the responsibility of the municipality. Aaron will be contacting public works directors in the coming weeks.

The **Thomaston-Torrington Comprehensive Routing Study**, funded under a 2016 OPM Responsible Growth/ TOD grant, is getting ready to kick off. NVCOG has refined the scope of work with input from the project communities, and will be negotiating fees. It is expected that the project will be underway this fall and should take approximately 18 months to complete. The scope includes a lot of public and stakeholder engagement, objective scoring and ranking of trail segments and consensus building to determine one preferred route. The study will include conceptual design and construction cost estimates that will be critical for future funding requests.

Aaron briefly discussed the website. He is working with Jared Sloan who recreated the website using an open source content management system, WordPress, which should allow for easier website maintenance. The plan is to switch the site over to the WordPress version and host it at NVCOG. The site is currently hosted by Pomfret Technologies and uses an obscure content management system that is not very user friendly. There is a dwindling reserve of funds for website management and maintenance that will run out soon. Switching the site to WordPress and hosting it at NVCOG will present far less overhead going forward. Aaron will work with Jared and Pomfret to make the necessary changes. The new site will include social media feeds that will allow steering committee members to post current events and news. The changes should be complete by November.

Tony San Angelo asked if towns not on the NRG, but with plans to connect trails to it, would be considered for membership on the committee. He explained that Oxford is currently planning bicycle and pedestrian facilities and trails paralleling Route 67 that would connect to Seymour and the NRG. Rista answered that the committee would like to include other towns in discussions and they are certainly welcome to attend meetings, but was not sure they should be formal members of the committee. She said that it would be a good future agenda item to discuss with the committee at large as it discusses future membership issues.

Fred Messore explained that Construction is underway and nearing completion in **Seymour** by LaRosa Earth LLC on a [section of trail](#) that will connect bank Street to the Paul Pawlak, Sr. Bypass Channel and Park at Tingue Dam with a trail between Route 8 and the Naugatuck River. The trail was being paved on the day of the meeting, and Fred led a tour of the construction site following the meeting. Photos from the tour can be viewed [HERE](#).

**Next Meeting: August 9<sup>th</sup> at 9 am**

**Location - TBD**

# Naugatuck River Greenway Steering Committee

Present in **bold**

## **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 – Former Watertown Town Engineer - Retired

Clifford Cooper - Litchfield Community Greenway

Cleve Fuessenich – Litchfield

Dave Faber – Connecticut Outdoors, LLC/ Naugatuck Valley Outdoors Club

Dominic Sorrentino – Beacon Falls

## **Fred Messore - Town of Seymour**

Ingrid Manning – formerly of CT Community Foundation

Jack Walsh – Derby Greenway Committee

Jim MacBroom – Milone and MacBroom

Jim O'Rourke - Waterbury Y

Jim Stewart - Naugatuck Borough Engineer

Joan Kirchner - Harwinton Conservation Commission

Jolene Podgorski - Watertown DPW

Josh Carey – Connecticut Community Foundation

Kathy McNamara - City of Waterbury

Kenny Curran – Waterbury Greenway Committee

## **Kevin Zak – Naugatuck River Revival Group**

Laura Wildman – Princeton Hydro

Laurie Giannotti - CT DEEP Greenways

Liz Falzone- Beacon Falls

## **Mark Nielsen – Naugatuck Valley Council of Governments**

Melanie Zimyeski – CT DOT

Rich Minnick – Beacon Falls

## **Rista Malanca - Torrington**

Roy Cavanaugh, Watertown Public Works Director

Sal Porzio – City of Waterbury

## **Savannah Judge - Housatonic Valley Association**

Sheila O'Malley – City of Ansonia

Susan Peterson - CT DEEP Watershed Program

Suzanne Stitch – Town of Harwinton

Vicki Barnes - Watertown - Steele Brook Rangers

Will Cummings – Thomaston Trail Committee

## **Also Present**

**Rick Dunne, NVCOG Executive Director**

**Paul Bunevich, Watertown Town Engineer**

**Tony San Angelo, Oxford Main Street Committee**

**Bryan Nesteriak, Seymour Town Engineer**