



RECORD OF MEETING

Regional Planning Commission (RPC)
of the Naugatuck Valley Council of Governments (NVCOG)
NVCOG Offices, 49 Leavenworth St. Waterbury, CT
Third floor
6:30 p.m. Tuesday, April 4, 2017

Attendance: Marie Chasse, Bristol; Nancy G. Clark, Southbury (by phone); Robert Clarke, Woodbury; Leslie Creane, Derby; Gary Giordano, Bethlehem (by phone); Sue Goggin, Naugatuck; Margus Laan, Plymouth; Jeremy Leifert, Thomaston; Ken Long, Middlebury; Herman Schuler, Oxford (by phone); James Sequin, Waterbury.

Staff: Aaron Budris, Senior Regional Planner; Mark Nielsen, Planning Director; Joanna Rogalski, Regional Planner.

Public: 1 person via conference call

The meeting opened at 6:34 PM.

1. Pledge of Allegiance, Roll Call, and Public Participation

The pledge of allegiance was recited. RPC members and NVCOG staff introduced themselves. At roll call ten (10) RPC members were in attendance. At 6:45 PM, Leslie Creane joined the meeting. A quorum was obtained for this meeting. No public comment.

2. Discussion: Draft NVCOG Unified Planning Work Program – FY 2018 – 2019 – Mark Nielsen, NVCOG Planning Director

The UPWP is part of our federal transportation program starting with the new fiscal year on July 1st. This is a draft we're providing for informational purposes, as we've submitted it to ConnDOT. It covers two fiscal years: 2018-2019. Right now, even though we're covering 19 towns, this UPWP covers only the CNVMPO area. We have a separate UPWP for the four Valley towns of Shelton, Derby, Ansonia, and Seymour. It's a mechanism for allocating Metropolitan Planning funds for the region. NVCOG is the host agency for the CNVRMPO, so we develop the UPWP. One of the unique features of our region is that normally planning is conducted by Urbanized Area, but we have four Urbanized Areas (Bridgeport, New Haven, Waterbury, Hartford). We are working to combine the four Valley towns into our MPO, but that's an effort in progress. This is a transportation planning document, so it covers two years of our **transportation work and objectives:**

- Preserve and maintain highway and public transit systems
- Reduce congestion, provide safety and security, promote advanced technologies and ITS (coordinating traffic signals, etc.), promote bicycle and pedestrian safety, examine sustainability and livability issues in our small urban centers, economic development through transportation improvements, and eliminate environmental issues.

Our planning program has **six main tasks:** Data Collection, Regional Planning / Highway Program, Transit Planning including the Waterbury Transit District, Non-Motorized Planning, Program Management, and Other Technical Assistance as our catchall task. This is the budget for the next two years, including the federal funds allocated (by formula) to the region. Federal funds require a 10% match from the state and a 10% match from local government. Total budget is roughly \$1.9 million over the two years, or roughly \$975,000 each year. That does include a carryover from previous funds not expended. The draft will be posted on our website if you want to read it in full. Should be posted by the end of the week.



Discussion and Motion: Naugatuck River Greenway Economic Impact Study – Final Report – Mark Nielsen, NVCOG Planning Director

This is a planning study that was conducted through the Naugatuck River Greenway (NRG) Steering Committee, in partnership with UCONN, the CT Center for Economic Analysis (CCEA), and Northwest Hills Council of Governments (NHCOG) to perform the study. The NRG Steering Committee is made up of the eleven communities the trail is intended to go through, about 44 miles from Torrington to Derby. This study looks at the economic impacts, to examine whether investment in the trail will reward individual municipalities. It looks at usage, visitor spending, impacts on property values, and impacts of economic development, health benefits, and quality of life benefits. The study is pretty ambitious, with **five main activities**.

- (1) A literature review conducted by UConn researched similar reports and studies to summarize them as background to our study.
- (2) NVCOG conducted trail counts to determine how many people are actually using the trail. We placed counters out on the open sections of the NRG, the Middlebury Greenway, and the Sue Grossman trail.
- (3) We conducted an intercept survey where we went out to the trails and asked people to fill out the surveys to get firsthand data on how much money people actually spent, how they viewed the trails, and how they could be improved.
- (4) UConn conducted some focus group meetings to determine some best practices. Health professionals, trail administrators, and business owners were included in separate focus groups. We focused the intent on the Farmington Canal Trail because it's fairly mature and has been around a while so we could learn from them.
- (5) Finally, an economic analysis was conducted by CCEA. They analyzed direct and indirect economic impacts using three scenarios.

Trail Counts

There were some issues with the counts as the counters were infrared, which meant they sometimes lumped groups walking together into single users. They also recorded passes, not individuals, and since our trails are relatively short many users walk up and then back down, which would count them twice. We used national standards to count the annual uses: We're estimating about 540,000 hits on the counter annually, which indicates a substantial number of people using the trail. The Derby Greenway is the most heavily used portion of the trail. It has some good connections and is longer, which should explain its higher use. We're aiming for the trail to be complete by 2031, at which time we'd estimate annual visitations at roughly 2.6 million people. The survey, conducted in October using 2 hour windows. About 383 surveys were completed. The data showed that almost $\frac{3}{4}$ of people surveyed used the trail more than once a week, though most traveled to the trail by car. Mostly walkers, which makes sense due to its length. 88% were using the trail for exercise specifically. We asked how much money they had spent that day at that visit, which worked out to roughly \$14 per visitor.

Focus Group Results

From the focus groups we were trying to get a good discussion on best practices and ways to increase usage by promoting the trail. From this we found that security and safety are critical, ADA compliance and accessibility is important, maintenance is very important.

Economic Analysis

Economic analysis looked at trail construction, user spending, property values, and we also looked at consumer surplus and health benefits. A REMI model is used by economists to calculate the indirect benefits. We used three scenarios, a baseline, current trends extrapolated from current usage, and accelerated growth, which is based on the idea that there is increased value and attraction to the trail as it becomes longer and better connected. We tried to focus our



discussion on the most conservative, or baseline case. Accelerated growth benefits were so great that we thought they might be difficult to believe.

Construction Costs

Cost of construction looks to be about \$70 million, spread out over 11 communities and 44 miles in 2016 dollars. We didn't try to inflate the benefits or the construction costs into the future, so all dollars are 2016 dollars. 2016, annual spending looks to be about \$2.5 million, so we expect that to come to \$42.6 million in annual spending per year. We should break even on spending from trail visitors vs. trail expenditures by 2033, but cumulative spending is over \$300 million by 2031.

Consumer Surplus

Consumer surplus is a more difficult concept, trying to identifying the value consumers are willing to pay for a good or activity above and beyond what they actually paid for it. How they estimated that was to look at the travel costs: if someone lives far away and travels to the trail, they're willing to pay that much money to be at the trail. That surplus tends to be accounted for in property values and rent prices, etc. as people value living closer to a certain asset. There have been concerns by adjacent property owners in the past where they didn't want people walking next to trails, but that tends to turn around after a few years as the trail's benefits become more apparent.

Health Benefits - Monetized

Monetized health benefits are the real money in the analysis. The team looked at if people use the trail frequently enough to gather a health benefit, they estimated the reduction in the incidence of cardiovascular diseases, obesity, and diabetes, and monetized that. This is not cumulative as the benefit accrues over time. By 2031, that health benefit accrues to \$260 million. The group who performed this analysis are well-known and respected economic professors at UConn, and they presented this approach at an economics conference. That doesn't cover health insurance costs and other health-related costs. It's based on a Surgeon General's report as to the value of these reduction. This only looks at the percentage of people we'd expect to get enough exercise to see those benefits. One of our questions was how could we attribute these benefits to trails, as people could get the same benefit from walking their neighborhoods, but we've found that trails provide a safe and comfortable space for exercise that tend to induce additional exercise. One important thing to note is that these benefits are accruing to counties, not to individual towns. We attempted to generate individual community based impacts to give towns a better understanding of the impacts of the NRG on their own budgets.

Comment: Oxford is working on extending a trail that would connect from Seymour up through the Larkin Trail, so we'll want to talk about the potential impacts for us on this project as well.

A: And we're hoping this analysis will be translatable to pretty much any trail the region is interested in developing.

Aside: Herman needs to leave the call, which would cause quorum to end.

Q: In 1987 the Governor established a greenway commission, and the Oxford land trust built the first link along the Housatonic. The goal is to run from Pittsfield from the Sound. One of the questions that we didn't originally consider: who insures liability for a trail section?

A: We've found that liability is not as big an issue as towns tend to worry, as it rolls into the parks program typically at the municipal level.

Q: Does the study include the cost of land acquisition?

A: The hope is that most of it will not require private property purchases, as it looks like it can be built along existing parks, road and other public rights of way. There will be some, but we don't know exactly what the right of way costs might be in order to factor those in. Some of the sections don't have a firm alignment yet, so it would be difficult to calculate.



Motion: To reorder the agenda to take up administrative items requiring voting first.

Motion made by Robert Clarke, seconded by Nancy Clark

VOTE: Unanimous

Q: Negative business impacts?

A: Some businesses that are along the trail and do not serve typical trail users may not see positive benefits from the trail, and similarly businesses far from the trail may have decreased business from competitors on the trail, or during trail festival days.

Q: Accessibility?

A: The State of Connecticut wants to ensure that all trails are accessible to people in wheelchairs, which may occasionally mean building switchbacks or other accommodations like we've done in Derby.

Q: What about horses? That's a discussion we've had in Woodbury.

A: That would be a town-by-town decision, though most towns do not allow the mixing of horses and people.

Comment: Similarly, Derby doesn't allow dogs on the trail, and a lot of the survey responses were asking for dogs to be allowed. Whereas other towns that did allow dogs, a common survey response was that dogs should be banned. But from the surveys and focus groups, the big takeaway was that we should try to develop a consistent standard down the road.

Q: What about the trail counts margins of error?

A: We did counts multiple times on multiple trails, and ended up with differing numbers due to the sensitivity of the counters. We did thirty-something hours of manual counts to adjust these, which showed about a 24% undercount (which is pretty standard). Usually this was because people were walking in groups. And we assumed that most people were hitting the counter twice, going forward and back, so we cut that number in half to be conservative. When we started doing these counts, the state Greenway Council said it would be nice to have a statewide project. As they oversee the CT recreational trails program, they encouraged us to apply for a grant to do a statewide survey. It's called the CT Trail Census, and we're administering counters across the state.

Comment: Something that we found when we were building in Southbury was that building loops was helpful for encouraging use of the trail, so ensure that trails are connected and loopable.

3. Update and motion: NVCOG Public Participation Policy and Environmental Justice Policy documents

Motion: To recommend the Council endorse the Environmental Justice and Public Participation NVCOG Policy documents.

Motion made by Nancy Clark, seconded by Bob Clarke

VOTE: Unanimous

4. Update: Water Issues: State Water Plan, State Water Supply Plan (Water Utility Coordinating Committees – WUCC) – Aaron Budris

State Water Plan

Getting very close to the end. They should have a draft report out by the end of this month for public comment. The deadline for submission is before the end of the session. There's going to be one or two more public workshops / public meetings for that. They don't have final dates set but I will pass those on to Joanna.

State Water Supply Plan (WUCC - Water Utility Coordinating Committee)

Exclusive Service Area Draft Maps are on the WUCC websites. The Western WUCC has each of our towns, and the draft exclusive area map for each town. It's out for public comment now, and comments are due at the end of this month. Let me know if you have any issues, and submit issues directly to the WUCC. I think everything was covered in



the last six months, but if you see an issue please speak up. Over the next year, they'll be combining the three WUCC reports to develop a comprehensive water supply plan for the state to identify future water supply and demand to allow for planning.

Q: Is quantity *and* quality included? Water treatment locations should be included in the plans to ensure water supply is treatable.

A: Yes, but I don't think it's the highest priority. The quality is addressed more in the state water plan, whereas the WUCC is looking more at supply.

5. Update: Municipal Low Impact Development and MS4 Regulatory Assessment and Action Plan Project – Aaron Budris

We tried to give towns a head start on this process. The permit itself is around 90 pages, and it isn't easy to read or to understand. What we heard early on was that zoning changes and other regulatory changes in the town are going to be one of the biggest stumbling blocks. It's going to take a long time, and it needs to be voted on at the town level. We thought if we looked through and looked at your regulations to give you an idea of what regulations are going to be impacted and what DEEP is looking for that might help. Feel free to ask me any questions or contact me. We're happy to come out and talk individually to each town if you want.

Q: Did copies get sent to P&Z in each town?

A: It went to CEOs, town planning staff, public works, and the RPC.

Q: Could you explain the colorcoding?

A: We used a process that UCONN CLEAR used in the past to identify obstacles to low impact development. It's pretty subjective, honestly. We looked at it from the perspective of a developer, and if I as a developer wanted to build some element of LID would it be allowed under existing policy. Red means I could not, yellow indicates that it may be allowable. Each of your zones have very different requirements, as well. We tried to weigh all of them rather than look at them separately, but we really had to guess on some elements. We hope it at least gives you a head start on where to look. DEEP has contracted with UCONN CLEAR to provide public outreach and assistance to towns. Amanda Ryan, who they just hired, is the MS4 circuit rider. She can come out to your town and help you out, and should be a good resource for towns. Their website has a lot of information on there as well. They're also committed to writing ordinance language that you could take and apply/use. UCONN NEMO has the CT MS4 guide.

Hopefully you all got your stormwater management plans in when they were due. We have a list of on-call consultants that was meant to assist with your plans, but if you need assistance they're all more than capable of helping.

Comment: We received a visit from DEEP, too.

Comment: As did Naugatuck.

More information on the NVCOG website: www.nvcogct.org/content/ms4.

6. Administrative Items

- a. Approval of December 6, 2016 Meeting Minutes (Motion) – No comments.

Motion: To approve the meeting minutes from the December 6, 2016 RPC meeting.

Motion made by Bob Clarke, seconded by Jeremy Leifert

VOTE: Unanimous

- b. Approval of February 7, 2017 Meeting Minutes (Motion) – Since a quorum was not obtained at the February 2017 meeting, only a record of meeting is needed.



c. Referrals

- Received 17 referrals since Feb 2017 RPC meeting
- Beginning to see stormwater and LID zoning amendments (Cheshire)
- Southington referral for floodplain zoning change was based on need to incorporate new FEMA requirements for new Flood Insurance Rate Maps (FIRM) which take effect May 16, 2017. Southington is part of the Quinnipiac watershed. Bristol, Ansonia, Derby, Cheshire are also within this watershed. Staff urges these municipalities to review FEMA docket No.: FEMA-2017-0002, which describes these FIRM changes.

d. Correspondence

- RPC resignation letter from Joseph Jaumann, Ansonia effective 3/21/17. He has a new position as selectman in Ansonia.

7. Roundtable - Points of Interest/Local Activities

Woodbury – Robert Clarke, Zoning Commission Chair

We're trying to find money to start working on our POCD. Our finance commission has taken away the money that was allocated.

Staff Comment: We have been in communication about what we could do at the COG level to help out short of writing it. We can do a lot of the mapping and data assistance, like we've done for Ansonia, Seymour, Derby, and Oxford.

The ZBA is considering a property with an unknown history on Route 6. What they're putting in at the property would suggest that it's more than a simple workshop as we've heard, but we've only been eyeing it. Inlands and Wetlands is going to court for turning down Dollar General's application for a location on Main Street. They are taking up the Region 14 project at the Nonnewaug High School at their next meeting. Zoning was slapped down by the Board of Selectmen for its multi-housing application. We withdrew it and they'll look at in the future. People are saying it's a good idea, but maybe not in their neighborhood. We're picking up an application for a multi-housing project in a PID. Unfortunately when our last town planner left we were working on fixing the language because the PID as it reads currently allows housing, when we had intended to only include motels and hotels. There was an application for barrel racing at a local farm, and we spent a late evening trying to hear everyone go for it except the neighbors. As it turned out, the commission decided 4-1 that it wasn't the commission's business.

Waterbury – Jim Sequin, City Planner

Carmax, Home Depot, and Dollar General are breaking ground now. Aside from that, we have some inter-town drama. First of all we have Middlebury talking about blowing up rocks near Waterbury property lines, and we're having a hearing at Wetlands and back to Zoning this week. We also had a junkyard fire. That junkyard has been there since 1965, which has gone through a long period of non-use, but the owner continued to renew his license. There were some concerns about contaminants in the soil from the fire, so DEEP is investigating.

Naugatuck – Sue Goggin, Town Planner

We just got approval for a private high school on 54 acres, which includes on campus housing and dorms. We have to make amendments to allow residential on a first floor in a zone which requires commercial on the first floor. We had a two-lot subdivision approved along one of our corridors for commercial development. Our zoning applications have started picking up for smaller projects like fences and so on. The Tractor Supply had their groundbreaking and have their foundation in. We're also supposed to be getting an Ace Hardware nearby, though the application hasn't come through yet. We have an events center open after a renovation of a vacant parcel along a rail line. We're now working on creating a transit oriented district for our downtown area to tie in with the train line.



Derby – Leslie Creane, Chief of Staff

In Derby, the P&Z Commission voted on one of the three plans out of the charrette from last fall. They endorsed the U Street plan, which has been sent to our engineers for laying out the necessary infrastructure, including streets and utilities. That project's moving along well. Just to give you a sense of how far along it's gone, it's less than a year ago that we hired the consultants. We've gotten an awful lot done on that in not much time. So the infrastructure plans will be done on that. The draft of the regulations probably have one more back and forth with the consultants, but it's very close to completion. We're getting a full time secretary/clerk in the land use department. The brewery on Roosevelt Drive has been approved, and we expect it to be operational by June. Very excited about that. WalMart has moved out of their space on Derby Avenue, We have a single-family residential neighborhood behind it, what's essentially a 1950s strip mall design with lots of parking, but it doesn't bode well without an anchor. We're trying to determine what the best use is for that, and what we can do with the property. People have been asking for a grocery store, though the rumors about Stew Leonard's are false. We also have a contentious election coming up, so watching out for that.

Plymouth – Margus Laan, Town Planner

We're making progress with our brownfields project. It's an old gas station on Route 6 by the river. In 2007 there was a gasoline spill because the lines to the pumps burst, so that's the hot topic.

Middlebury – Ken Long, Zoning Commission

As far as building permits, there's been at least three houses under construction now. There was a development that was approved back in the early 2000s for some senior housing, right around the housing bust, so the permits had all expired. Someone else has purchased the property and come forward with some proposals, but neighbors are wanting 100' setbacks instead of 50' setbacks. A new grocery store looks like it's going to go in on Route 188 in our Gateway Zone. Plans have been sent to the town engineer and several other departments. CT Water will be supplying water to us it looks like. As for Triangle Boulevard, we've capped the sewer lines, but they're still in the road and we have a pump station serving just four houses. I was informed that Julianne Drive around the airport was going to be moved to the west. The antenna system has to be moved to the west into where the roadway is now. He was talking about three buildings going up, at least two in Oxford but maybe one in Middlebury that would have to tie into our sewer. These are all for the power plant.

Thomaston – Jeremy Leifert, Land Use Administrator

It's been a little slow application-wise. Right downtown the historic Fuller's Five-and-Dime building has a couple of prospective buyers trying to determine allowable uses. Hopefully we'll get some movement there soon. We have an upcoming meeting for our Town Center Plan Committee that's working on a planning document for our downtown development district. We're looking at everything including the boundaries of the district. We're hoping by the end of this year to have a good planning document that concentrates on the downtown. We have a couple of referrals to go through for the next phase of our track project. And we have a lot of work to do for the MS4 update. We've got three pending court cases, one for wetlands enforcement that's been going for two years now, and two zoning cases, one that the town was sued on for a zone correction and another one for a zoning enforcement case. The only other thing I have in here is an ERT coming up for about 160-170 acres of town open space.

Southbury – Nancy Clark, Planning Commission

We continue to have some small unbuildable lots along the lake. We had requests for a doggy daycare in a residential zone, both denied. The medical building has been approved but there's no progress yet on renovations. Southbury Training School study has three bids in for the RFP. We'll make a decision to send to the Board of Selectmen and Finance. We're working on a Strategic Plan Commission to review the future of the town, using the POCD as a base.



We have a proposal for an upscale restaurant inside the theater and for some residences. We have a public hearing for some two- and three-bedroom apartments, as well as a petition for a nine-lot subdivision. The medical building expansion on Waterbury Road is nearly complete.

Bristol – Marie Chasse, Planning and Zoning Commission

Bob Flanagan is now our City Planner, so we're happy. We're also hiring someone else for the Public Works Department. Otherwise, we haven't had any subdivisions or anything like that. We've had a number of applicants come through for businesses, though. We were just looking at the cost of our application, so I don't know where that will land. We're finishing up our Route 6 corridor study, and we should have a report done there in another month, with a public hearing to show it. And downtown, the Bristol Hospital is on a roll, and will have all of their documentation in place to build a medical office building right in the downtown.

8. Other

Robert Clarke – April 22nd is Earth Day. Check out the Hollow in Woodbury if you'd like.

Sue Goggin – Was there any information on the bill to advertise on the website instead of the newspaper? Our local newspaper no longer allows us to advertise in it, so we have to advertise in the Republican-American.

Marie Chasse – We added public participation to our planning meeting. We put some rules in, but no public has shown up as of yet.

9. Adjournment

Motion: To adjourn.

Motion made by Bob Clarke, seconded by Ken Long

VOTE: Unanimous

The meeting was adjourned at 8:37 PM.

Respectfully submitted by
Joanna B. Rogalski
Regional Planner, NVCOG
And
Benjamin Muller
Transportation Planner I, NVCOG