

Housatonic River Commission

“to coordinate on a regional basis the local management and protection of the Housatonic River Valley in northwestern Connecticut”

Minutes of the Meeting on February 13, 2024

via Google Meet

Christian Allyn – North Canaan – P
Jack Anstine – North Canaan – P
Matt Gallagher–Canaan (Falls Village)– A
Ellery Sinclair – Canaan (Falls Village)–P
Stacie Weiner – Salisbury – P
Gordon Whitbeck – Salisbury – P
Jim Saunders – Sharon – P

William R. Tingley, Chairman – Sharon – P
Phil Hart, Vice-chairman – Cornwall – A
Barton Jones – Cornwall – P
Jesse Klingebiel, Secretary – Kent – P
Pending new commissioner– Kent
Marc Andreotto, Treasurer – New Milford – P
Robert Gambino – New Milford – P

(Acronyms listed on the last page)

Also present were: Madeline Scherff – Project Manager; Liz Lacy and Jackie Dias – NPS; and Rodrigo Pinto and Julia Rogers – HVA

Mr. Tingley called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m.

The minutes of the January 23, 2024, Special Meeting were approved as written.

Treasurer's Report and NHCOC Financial Reports – Mr. Andreotto reported \$5,473.70 in the NHCOC-HRC subaccount. Of the total awarded NPS funds of \$150,000, there is a balance of \$112,500. Of the first transfer to NHCOC of \$37,500, there is a balance of \$17,142.52.

Mr. Gambino made a motion to pay Susan Francisco's January hours invoice for \$382.50. The motion was seconded and approved unanimously.

Communications - none

Section 7 – tabled

Zoning Permit Applications for HRC review

- Update - River Woods Subdivision (Honey Hill) – North Canaan The zoning application was submitted and will be covered at the North Canaan March P & Z meeting. Zoning is waiting for HRC comments. It was noted that the plan is not definitive. There is a proposed 300' conservation easement and Mr. Whitbeck pointed out that houses on the plan are not actual placements for buildings or septic at the moment, and there are no restrictions. Plans have already been submitted to Wetlands. It is important that HRC look at the plans carefully. Comments and questions can then be emailed to Ms. Scherff, who will collate them and send them on to North Canaan P&Z.

Work Plan Project Status:

- Invasive Plant Management – Mr. Gambino discussed several questions he has surrounding JKW on the river. Will there be chemical or mechanical treatment? In his opinion, chemicals are the only viable treatment. Permits will be needed from each town's wetland commission and also from DEEP. He would like each town to review its own town map of JKW and determine an accessible site for a treatment demonstration. Do landowner(s) need to be approached for permission? Who will be doing the actual work – an HRC contractor, or the landowner? As to timing, there is a review process, a contracting process, and a permit process. Permits would need to be sent to DEEP by April, and demo applications would occur in August.

Mr. Klingebiel emphasized the importance of having DEEP on board before any work with herbicides begins. Mr. Gambino said that if done right, it becomes an example.

Ms. Lacy suggested getting information about how other partnership rivers are dealing with the issue. Concerns about the effects of herbicides will need to be addressed to the public, so outreach will be critical for public understanding.

Ms. Scherff has spoken with Laura Hart about the Farmington River Coordinating Committee using this issue as an opportunity for public outreach and empowering private property owners to do their own management.

- Visitor Use Management – Mr. Pinto said that HVA is rethinking the model for weekend river steward and other restoration work done during the week. Job descriptions will be updated. Mr. Pinto will confirm the numbers from last year and present them at a future meeting. There was a discussion about a celebration this spring or summer around the Housatonic Wild and Scenic status.
- Update Management Plan – Ms. Dias reported that is moving along on schedule. She hopes that she can schedule a workshop in the next two months to develop goals and action items around recreation and natural resources.
- Logo Search – Website Improvements – Mr. Tingley's contact has been working on the logo and Ms. Scherff shared drafts of options for review. Comments were made, and a more definitive discussion will be held next month. Ms. Lacy suggested looking at other river websites and logos.
- Access Survey and Recommendations – A contract is being worked on for HVA access surveys. Mr. Jones mentioned the River Management Society as a good resource for planning and executing river access issues. Ms. Lacy has been a very active member of that group for a long time. They host workshops and have published a river access planning guide. HRC may become an organizational member. It was suggested that people check the website and then check in with Ms. Lacy, Ms. Dias, and Mr. Pinto to discuss sharing. Ms. Lacy also suggested checking out River Network.
- Ruggles Landing Site Plan – Mr. Allyn has met with the attorney and was given pertinent documents to creating a Friends of Ruggles Landing organization. Incorporation can happen relatively quickly, although non-profit status takes longer. Mr. Anstine will serve as secretary, Tim Abbott will be treasurer, and Mr. Allyn president. The goal of the project this year needs to be established so that Ms. Scherff can begin working on the necessary steps for contract work. Getting a map of the area and cataloging what's there is important.
- Stormwater/Stream Crossing Surveys – Mr. Pinto said that HVA is aware of this and it is similar to the access survey mentioned above.
- Signage – Ms. Weiner reported that she has reached out to DOT but has yet to get a response. Ms. Lacy said that the inventory and location components can be settled before the DOT is involved.

Subcommittee structure proposal

Ms. Scherff proposed a new subcommittee structure to add to the by-laws. If approved at the next meeting, it would add: 1) Executive Committee - annual reporting and developing work plans, policy, and administration 2) Communications and Outreach – primarily to bring awareness of management along the river 3) River Use and Access – separate from resources because major projects might be better separated, committees can overlap and work together, especially if developing grants programs 4) Stewardship or Resource Protection – (invasives management) targeting projects' focus

Ms. Scherff will share the proposed subcommittees with all. It is beneficial to work out details in committees rather than the entire HRC at a meeting.

ONGOING ISSUES

- Housatonic Railroad and Housatonic Herbicide Working Group – Mr. Sinclair reported on a productive January 15 meeting with State Sen. Harding and State Rep. Horn. The group will be following up about legislative options to get something into the management plan that is closer to the Massachusetts plan for methods and restrictions regarding spraying along the tracks.

- Gaylordsville – stone dumping in the river – Ms. Lacy is waiting to hear back about an enforcement order with a March 7 deadline. The next step will be attempting to work with the Connecticut Army Corps of Engineers.
- GE Settlement/PCBs – There was a discussion about the clean-up area in Massachusetts.

HRC Member Updates

- NHCOC – no report
- NPS – Ms. Dias shared the 2024-2025 Proposed Work Plan, composed of ballpark estimates on budgetary lines. Each area was described, with the goal of going into next year, knowing who's going to be contracted, which projects are doable, and project costs. Ultimately everything in the Work Plan must link back to the Management Plan. Items will be handled in subcommittee, reviewed, and recommendations made regarding funding to the entire HRC.

Mr. Jones made a motion to approve Work Plan 2024-2025 as presented. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

Ms. Dias described the quarterly Partnership Wild and Scenic River Speaker Series, hosted by NPS. The next presentation, on dam removals, will take place on February 21 from 12–1:30 p.m. Jamie Fosburgh will be one of the speakers.

- HVA – reported earlier
- CT DEEP – no report
- FirstLight – no report

Mutual Concerns & Future Agenda Items

It is important that all members of HRC (commissioners and others), make an effort to attend meetings to have input on discussions of the work plan and budget.

Mr. Tingley proposed linking up with the York River in Maine (which became a W&S Partnership River at the same time as the Housatonic) and asked Ms. Scherff to reach out to them.

The Town of Kent is still in need of an HRC commissioner.

Mr. Sinclair will check in with Canaan (Falls Village) commissioner Matt Gallagher.

Mr. Tingley will ask Julie Saxton (website) to attend a meeting.

Add the celebration at Housatonic Meadows around the Housatonic's W&S Partnership River status to the March agenda.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:04 p.m.

Recording Secretary,



Susan Francisco

Next regular meeting – March 12, 2024

BLEC – Berkshire Litchfield
Environmental Council
CCC – Citizens Coordinating Council
CCT – Cornwall Conservation Trust
DEEP – Department of Energy and
Environmental Protection
DOT – Department of Transportation
EPA – Environmental Protection Agency
FERC - Federal Energy Regulatory
Commission

FRCC – Farmington River Coordinating
Committee
GE – General Electric
H.E.A.L. – Housatonic Environmental
Action League
HMPA – Housatonic Meadows Preservation
Action
HHWG – Housatonic Herbicide Working
Group
HMSP – Housatonic Meadows State Park

HRC – Housatonic River Commission
HVA – Housatonic Valley Association
JKW – Japanese Knotweed
NCD – Northwest Conservation District
NHCOC – Northwest Hills Council of
Governments
NPS – National Park Service
RIO - River Information and Outreach
W&S – Wild and Scenic
ZEO –Zoning Enforcement Officer

[Housatonic River Commission - \(weebly.com\)](https://www.housatonicrivercommission.com)