

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 March 12, 2024

at Cornwall Consolidated School (subject to approval at the next meeting) and via Google Meet

Christian Allyn – North Canaan – P
Jack Anstine – North Canaan – P
Pending new commissioner–Canaan (Falls Village)
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 – P
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; Jackie Dias – NPS; Mike Jastremski and Rodrigo Pinto – HVA; Julie Saxton – website designer

Mr. Tingley called the meeting to order at 7:03 p.m.

The February 13, 2024 Meeting minutes were approved as written.

The January 23, 2024 Special Meeting minutes were amended as follows: Mr. Hart moved to authorize Mr. Tingley to sign an agreement with the Cornwall Conservation Trust...from February 1 through December 31, 2024. *The motion was seconded and approved unanimously.*

Treasurer's Report and NHCOC Financial Reports – Mr. Andreotto reported \$7,073.70 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 \$14,797.52. NHCOC will be requesting the second installment of \$37,500 soon. Budget requests for 2024-2025 have been sent to the towns.

Mr. Klingebiel moved to approve Susan Francisco's February invoice of \$255. The motion was seconded and approved unanimously.

Mr. Klingebiel moved to approve reimbursement to Susan Francisco of \$95.33 for Google Workspace use from its inception in October 2023 through February 2024. The motion was seconded and approved unanimously.

Mr. Jones moved to approve the contract with HVA for \$24,000 for the river access project, an inventory study of property along the HRC 41-mile stretch of the Housatonic River. The motion was seconded and approved unanimously.

Communications

Mr. Gambino reported that he had updated the New Milford Town Council at a budget hearing on HRC activities.

Zoning Permit Applications for HRC review

Update – River Woods Subdivision – North Canaan

Rob Phillips received another round of plans at NHCOC that will be shared with HRC. Members were asked to review them and send comments to Ms. Scherff if they haven't already done so. Ms. Weiner shared concerns about impervious surfaces and possible stormwater erosion due to the slope and closeness to the river.

Subcommittee structure approval

Mr. Jones moved to approve the HRC subcommittee proposal of February 1, 2024, as presented. The following subcommittees were proposed: Executive (already in place), Communications and Outreach, River Use and Access, Resource and Protection, and Steering Committee (expanded Executive). The motion was seconded and approved unanimously.

Each subcommittee will develop its own agenda and meet virtually (in most cases) prior to regular meetings.

Discuss the location for future meetings – The Cornwall Conservation Trust office is located at 7 Railroad Square in West Cornwall and has all the resources needed to be able to hold a public meeting. The only item needed is a large screen for virtual meetings and assurance about insurance coverage.

Mr. Gambino moved that the April 9 HRC meeting be moved from Cornwall Consolidated School to 7 Railroad Square to test the possibility of holding the remaining 2024 meetings at that location. The motion was seconded and approved unanimously.

Discuss Billing/Mailing Address

Mr. Hart moved that Ms. Scherff acquire a PO Box at the West Cornwall Post Office. The motion was seconded and approved unanimously.

The mailing address would change from the NHCOC address in Litchfield to the new one.

Work Plan Project Status Reports:

• Logo Search – Website Improvements

Julie Saxton shared her high opinion of the possible HRC logo choice, describing it as versatile, strong, vibrant, and scalable and promises to work well on the HRC website and in other capacities, now and in the future.

Mr. Gambino moved to approve the logo created by Pentagram for HRC and to use them as a consultant to Ms. Saxton, the web designer. The motion was seconded and approved unanimously.

• Invasive Plant Management – Mr. Gambino has been working with someone on the New Milford Town Council who wants to create an educational program on invasive species in New Milford. Ms. Dias discussed expenditures from the invasive species management budget line item that must be made in this fiscal year. There have been changes since the original mapping was completed, but redundancy in the work needs to be avoided. There is already a lot of data in place. It was suggested that a snapshot of what the inventory looks like now be consolidated so that plans can be implemented next year. There may be opportunities to do some remediation this year.

• Visitor Use Management – Having an EnCon officer dedicate some time to the HRC stretch of the river came up. The idea is supported by all of HRC as well as town officials. Mr. Tingley and HVA can contact DEEP to determine when it would be most useful during the summer (weekends/holidays). Ms. Dias and Ms. Scherff will work on funding lines. Mr. Pinto said that HVA is drafting a job description for the RIO interns that Ms. Scherff will share with the group. He mentioned the need for housing for summer interns and asked people to look out for possibilities.

• Update Management Plan – Ms. Dias indicated that it is moving along as expected.

• Access Survey and Recommendations – The subcommittee continues its work.

- **Ruggles Landing Site Plan** – Mr. Allyn reported that the Friends of Ruggles Landing will be incorporated this month. A site plan proposal needs to be initiated, and Ms. Scherff will help develop an RFP if needed.

- **Stormwater/Stream Crossing Surveys** – The subcommittee is working on it. Wild & Scenic coverage is the designated stretch plus a quarter mile upstream, downstream, and across tributaries. It would help to map the boundaries and then reach out to towns to see where HRC Wild & Scenic resources could help to keep streams flowing properly when issues arise.

- **Signage** – Ms. Weiner and Mr. Allyn have sent specs to two firms in Connecticut to make signage that needs to be reflective, highway-grade, and customizable. They are waiting for quotes.

Ongoing Resource Issues reports:

- **Housatonic Railroad and Housatonic Herbicide Working Group** – Mr. Sinclair reported that as a result of meeting with State Representative Maria Horn, State Senator Stephen Harding, and a number of groups, DEEP has incorporated parts of the Massachusetts River Management best practices into the Connecticut legislation. House Bill 5219 - HB5219 - has made it out of the Environment Committee and now goes forward. If there is still time for comment, Mr. Allyn will draft a letter in support.

- **Gaylordsville** – stone dumping in the river – The landowner, who has avoided responsibility for the stone dumping, is now facing some trouble with the law that he must deal with. Both Mr. Gambino and Matt Devine (DEEP) are keeping an eye on the issue. The goal is to get the stone out of the river.

Regarding the Gaylordsville/New Milford area, Mr. Gambino mentioned a committee in New Milford working on renovations to the deteriorating Boardman Bridge. Also, it may be time for the HRC to get involved in an area on River Road called Sega Meadows Park, which is related to river access.

- **GE Settlement/PCBs** – Mr. Anstine said that the EPA had invited the CCC to tour the Upland Disposal Facility in Lee at 1:30 p.m. on April 4. Anyone interested should sign up by Friday, March 29.

HRC Member Updates

- NHCOG – no report

- NPS – Ms. Dias reported that the federal budget passed and that the HRC will receive another \$150K next year. Forms are being reviewed and HRC can move forward with their Work Plan. She noted that there was a proposed increase to match funding for other rivers, but that didn't happen this year.

- HVA – possible dates were discussed for a joint celebration of the Housatonic's Wild & Scenic Partnership River status. It will be held at Housatonic Meadows State Park and hosted by HRC and HVA. A weekend day in May (18/19) or June (8/9) will be chosen.

- CT DEEP – no report

- FirstLight – no report

Mutual Concerns & Future Agenda Items

Mr. Allyn said the Honey Hill Subdivision is seeking a 300' conservation overlay on the subdivided parcels. He was recently alerted to an independent philanthropist looking for land to provide cycling trails in the area. The original written records are being transferred from the old Honey Hill application to the new one, and Mr. Allyn suggested that the HRC solidify recommendations and

include that they would like to see the parcel subdivided, be independent, and conserved for public recreational use.

Mr. Jones asked if Sharon Zoning had done anything about the platform that has been built out into the river at 492 Route 7. Mr. Tingley is following up.

The meeting was adjourned at 9:00 p.m.

Recording Secretary,



Susan Francisco

Next regular meeting – April 9, 2024

BLEC – Berkshire Litchfield Environmental Council	FERC - Federal Energy Regulatory Commission	HMSP – Housatonic Meadows State Park
CCC – Citizens Coordinating Council	FRCC – Farmington River Coordinating Committee	HRC – Housatonic River Commission
CCT – Cornwall Conservation Trust	GE – General Electric	HVA – Housatonic Valley Association
DEEP – Department of Energy and Environmental Protection	H.E.A.L. – Housatonic Environmental Action League	JKW – Japanese Knotweed
DOT – Department of Transportation	HMPA – Housatonic Meadows Preservation Action	NCD – Northwest Conservation District
EnCon – Connecticut Environmental Conservation Police	HHWG – Housatonic Herbicide Working Group	NHCOG – Northwest Hills Council of Governments
EPA – Environmental Protection Agency		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)