

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 April 9, 2024 Meeting (subject to approval at the next meeting)

CCT/HRC Office, West Cornwall and via Google Meet

Christian Allyn – North Canaan – P
Jack Anstine – North Canaan – A
Pending new commissioner–Canaan (Falls Village)
Ellery Sinclair – Canaan (Falls Village)–A
Stacie Weiner – Salisbury – P
Gordon Whitbeck – Salisbury – P
Jim Saunders – Sharon – A
(Acronyms listed on the last page)

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

Also present were: Madeline Scherff – Project Manager; Jackie Dias – NPS; Rodrigo Pinto – HVA; Andy Brydges – FirstLight; and Tom Zetterstrom.

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

Mr. Tingley thanked Mr. Jones for arranging the use of the CCT/HRC offices as a location for HRC meetings. He then introduced Mike Benjamin as the new commissioner from Kent.

The March 12, 2024 Meeting minutes were approved as written.

Treasurer's Report and NHCOG Financial Reports – Mr. Andreotto reported \$7,073.70 in the NHCOG-HRC subaccount. Of the total awarded NPS funds of \$150,000, there is a balance of \$75,000. NHCOG received the second installment of \$37,500 and that balance is now \$48,447.19. Budget requests for 2024-2025 have been sent to the towns. Going forward all letters will go out to towns in December for budget planning.

A letter will be sent tomorrow to the North Canaan Selectmen/Board of Finance so that HRC dues can be reinstated into the annual budget.

Mr. Jones moved to approve a payment of \$150 to NHCOG for the purchase of 250 checks. The motion was seconded and approved unanimously.

Mr. Jones moved to approve Susan Francisco's March invoice of \$180. The motion was seconded and approved unanimously.

Communications

Mr. Andreotto received an email from the New Milford River Trail Association. They are building up river trails along the river, including at Sega Meadows Park in New Milford.

Zoning Permit Applications for HRC Review

Update – River Woods Subdivision – North Canaan

A new set of plans was released. Mr. Allyn said a 300' conservation easement along the river bank is included and strongly recommends that the HRC stand behind the statement that it be a separate parcel from the lots. Mr. Whitbeck suggested that replanting with native species (because of the extent of invasive understory that has been/will be removed) be included in the plan.

It's important to know who would be the easement holder and that wording includes “with public access”. The next public meeting in North Canaan is Monday, April 22 and HRC attendance would be appreciated.

Connecting with town zoning boards – redefining point of contact with zoning - Mr. Tingley asked commissioners to connect with their town zoning boards and wetlands commissions, including attending a meeting to let them know of HRC's interest. They should be getting applications to HRC a month in advance and be prepared to present plans at an HRC meeting. Ms. Dias reminded everyone that if any

construction is planned within the bed or the banks of the river, the NPS needs to review it. It was suggested that a clear explanation of what circumstances would or would not require an Army Corps permit be shared with town selectmen.

Subcommittee Meetings

Ms. Scherff set up a meeting time schedule and has been working with subcommittees. The goal is to have everyone attend the regular monthly HRC meeting plus one (usually virtual) subcommittee meeting.

Mr. Jones was appointed Nominating Committee chair and will submit a slate of nominees for chairman, vice-chairman, secretary, and treasurer for a May meeting vote.

Mr. Tingley listed possible subcommittee chairs:

Executive - Mr. Tingley, Mr. Hart, Mr. Klingebiel, Mr. Andreotto

Steering - Mr. Tingley

River Use and Access - Mr. Klingebiel, Mr. Jones

Communications and Outreach - Ms. Scherff

Resource Protection - Mr. Gambino, Ms. Weiner

Ms. Scherff reported that the Resource Protection Subcom. met yesterday and are moving forward with developing an RFP to target habitat zones along the river and a baseline survey of invasives.

Discuss Billing/Mailing Address

The new mailing address for the HRC is PO Box 222, West Cornwall, CT 06796.

Work Plan Project Status Reports:

- **Website Improvements** - Julie Saxton continues to work on layout options for the website.
- **Invasive Plant Management** – Mr. Zetterstrom said that he started the survey of sites of Japanese Knotweed along the river in 2018 and brought a large map (that will remain in the office) that is a composite of five maps (New Milford, Salisbury, Canaan, Cornwall, and Sharon) created by the HVA cartographer, pinpointing each location.
- **Visitor Use Management** – Mr. Pinto said that HVA is in the process of interviewing a strong set of candidates to be RIO stewards for the summer season. Mr. Tingley added that there are many benefits to hiring an EnCon officer to be a presence at access sites on weekends. Mr. Jastremski is taking the lead on this issue.
- **Update Management Plan** – Ms. Dias said that water resources is the only section left needing work. There will be a meeting about that in late May. She hopes to have a workshop-style review by late summer/early fall to brainstorm full objectives and will be done by the end of 2024.
- **Access Survey and Recommendations** – Mr. Jastremski is working on this phase as HVA is the contracted entity. Progress can be reported through the River Access Committee.
- **Ruggles Landing Site Plan** – Mr. Allyn reported that the Friends of Ruggles Landing group is yet to be officially recognized, so site work is delayed. Ms. Dias will contact Matt Devine from CT DEEP. Mr. Tingley emphasized the importance of having the state and the town of North Canaan working together.
- **Stormwater/Stream Crossing Surveys** – This is an HVA project but there needs to be clarity on what the HRC is looking for before a project can begin. There also might be other contacts to reach out to.
- **Signage** – Ms. Weiner said that Mr. Allyn will send the locations that they have identified that make sense and have the Communications Subcommittee review and comment on them. She will have three companies set up to do the bidding. The signs will include Housatonic River as well as Wild & Scenic.

Mr. Tingley is contacting someone to make a couple of signs with the logo for the office and on the road to direct people to the location. They will be run through the committee.

Ongoing Resource Issues reports:

- **Housatonic Railroad and Housatonic Herbicide Working Group** – no report
- **Gaylordsville** – stone dumping in the river – Ms. Dias said NPS hasn’t heard from the Army Corps. Nor has any more been heard since a marshall was sent to serve a summons to the landowner for the stone dumping.
- **GE Settlement/PCBs** – no report

HRC Member Updates

- **NHCOG** – Mr. Tingley has spoken with Rob Phillips about adjusting the payments from HRC to NHCOG. They remain the fiscal agent, but there is less to attend to as HRC now has a Project Manager and their own PO Box. The Steering Committee will work on it.
- **NPS** – Ms. Dias – The semi-annual gathering of partnership rivers organizations will be held at Jay Peak Resort by the Missisquoi & Trout Wild & Scenic Rivers from Wednesday through Friday, October 16–18. Some funds are available for HRC members’ registrations and possibly travel.
- **HVA** – The subject of an EnCon officer to patrol river access points during summer weekends came up again.
- **CT DEEP** – Mr. Tingley said that help and support will be needed from DEEP regarding the June 8 Wild and Scenic celebration at HMST. Comments on the Honey Hill project will also be appreciated.
- **FirstLight** – Mr. Brydges spoke about the need for energy storage to offset fossil fuels and to generate renewable energy. FirstLight intends to submit RFPs for two storage facilities; one at Stevenson Dam and one at Bulls Bridge. It’s currently in the conceptual stage and they are assessing options. These ~500 square-foot “boxes” are not expected to have a visual impact on the watersheds. Mr. Brydges also shared that on March 30, 45% of the energy used in New England came from wind and solar energy.

Discuss the location for future meetings

Mr. Gambino moved that the remainder of the 2024 HRC meetings be moved from Cornwall Consolidated School to 7 Railroad Street, West Cornwall at the CCT/HRC office. The motion was seconded and approved unanimously.

Mutual Concerns & Future Agenda Items

The HRC celebration of the Housatonic designation as a Wild & Scenic Partnership River will be held on Saturday, June 8, from 12 to 3 p.m. at Housatonic Meadows State Park,

The meeting was adjourned at 8:34 p.m.

Recording Secretary,

Susan Francisco

Next regular meeting – May 14, 2024

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

BLEC – Berkshire Litchfield Environmental Council	RC – Federal Energy Regulatory Commission	ISP – Housatonic Meadows State Park
CCC – Citizens Coordinating Council	CC – Farmington River Coordinating Committee	CR – Housatonic River Commission
CCT – Cornwall Conservation Trust	GE – General Electric	AV – Housatonic Valley Association
DEEP – Department of Energy and Environmental Protection	E.A.L. – Housatonic Environmental Action League	W – Japanese Knotweed
DOT – Department of Transportation	IPA – Housatonic Meadows Preservation Association	D – Northwest Conservation District
EnCon – Connecticut Environmental Conservation Police	WG – Housatonic Herbicide Working Group	COG – Northwest Hills Council of Governments
EPA – Environmental Protection Agency		S – National Park Service
		O – River Information and Outreach
		P – Request For Proposal
		Z – Zoning Enforcement Officer