

***HOUSATONIC RIVER ESTUARY COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES***

Thursday, February 28, 2008

7:00 P.M.

***Craft Room 3, Shelton Community Center
41 Church Street
Shelton CT 06484***

1. CALL OF THE MEETING/PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The meeting was called to order at 7:30 P.M. by Chairman Gesullo.
All in attendance pledged allegiance to the flag.

2. ATTENDANCE

Robert Gesullo, Chairman, Shelton
Lori Romick, Milford
Jeff Snyder, Member at large

Guests: Hank Lauriat, Shelton Land Trust & Conservation Commission member

There was not a quorum present

3. PUBLIC PORTION OR GUEST

Hank Lauriat stated that he is a member of the Shelton Land Trust and Conservation Commission and decided to come to listen in on the discussion of the Shelton canal issue. I have an interest of the river. When I worked at Lycoming we had a 17-ton steel 40' with 4000 hp. We ran it for 7 years on the Sound and I got to know the lower portion of the Housatonic River very well. I just wanted to find out what this commission is all about.
Chairman Gesullo welcomed Mr. Lauriat to the meeting.

4. APPROVAL OF THE JANUARY 24, 2008 MEETING MINUTES

There is not a quorum of members to be able to make any motions. It will have to be taken care of at the March meeting.

5. FINANCIAL REPORT – DISCUSSION OF ESTABLISHING AN ACCOUNT

At the last meeting Commissioner Blake had the task of looking into setting up a bank account for a place to deposit the seed money from each town. Vice-Chairman mentioned that we might not be categorized as non-profit. By statute we are allowed to bring in our own funds. We would be able to use those funds

to do our own studies or research. We would be limited if we become a non-profit organization.

Chairman Gesullo reported that he has yet to hear from Commissioner Blake but since has spoken with the City of Shelton. They advised me that we could set up a trust and agency account. All the money would go into this account and we would draw against it. Technically this money become Shelton's but is a trust fund for us. It does not go into their general fund. I received a letter from Sandy Nesteriak, the administrative assistant to the Mayor, and her letter stated that the Shelton BOA had approved the \$1000 for the starting of this Commission. She also said she is unaware if any other towns have made the same commitment. She said presently the money is in a city account that they have been using to pay the clerk.

Vice-Chairman Romick reported that her Mayor has put this Commission on the April BOA meeting for the approval of a resolution to set up an account for this Commission with the initial deposit of \$1000.

After discussion the consensus was to have the one account set up in one of the towns.

6. COMMISSIONER'S REPORTS

Vice-Chairman Romick reported that she spoke with Susan Peterson and Marianne Haverstock (resides in Orange) with the DEP. Marianne has agreed to come to our next meeting. She is the Housatonic River (inland) expert for DEP. I also sent out two letters, one to Gary Montano, chair of the Milford Harbor Commission, and to the Stratford Shellfish Commission. Mr. Montano will be coming to our next meeting.

I printed off a list of the members of the environment committee for the legislature. Two of the local representatives are Paul Davis and Richard White. I will extend an invitation to them for the next meeting as well.

I will be contacting the river alliance group – the River Alliance of CT. They deal with all the CT rivers and streams.

I also have worked with is Carol Gonzala, from the USDA Natural Resources Conservation Services. She does a lot of environmental work, especially with economic development and planning.

I also talked with Christopher Malick, the DEP environmental analyst for water protection and land re-use. He is willing to help us.

The next group I contacted was the Interstate Environmental Commission. They deal with wastewater treatment along the shoreline as well as Milford and Stratford. There is grant money available and they will talk with us at the regional bypass workshop. They said we could contact them if we find issues going on with the wastewater treatment plants. There was an article in the newspaper stating that there are funds coming to Milford to boost the Beaver Brook plant. This is just one more thing for us to be aware of regarding things going on in the river.

Commissioner Snyder reported that his outreach efforts have been a bit more informal. Since the last meeting he attended a meeting of the Friends of the

Housatonic River (FOTHR). He spent some time educating the members regarding the direction this Commission is going towards. They were very receptive to it. There was discussion that FOTHR is interested in starting a simple water quality-monitoring program. There is money available for equipment for monitoring.

There are initiatives out there to get more involvement from FOTHR as well as from students from the high school to do field studies and river cleanups.

One of the contacts from FOTHR is Leon Sylvester, Jr. who would be instrumental in helping getting donations. We talked about having a river day activity, possibly tying it in with the fishing tournament.

A concern has come up with the closing of the Devon ramp due to the I-95 rehab. This leaves only Birdseye in Stratford and Sunnyside in Shelton. Birdseye can handle the increased volume but Sunnyside can't. They are wondering if Shelton is going to address this issue. There may be funds available in the Long Island Sound license plate program to do upgrades to the ramp.

Chairman Gesullo commented that Shelton sent him the info on the grant and asked if he was interested and they were only interested in putting in a dock instead of making modifications to the ramp. I had forwarded the information to the high school and have not heard back from them.

Mr. Lauriat commented that the Conservation Commission has reviewed the plans for the Beacon Point area and there are plans for a public boat ramp.

Chairman Gesullo said he noticed there is not much in the way of parking and it is also an issue at Sunnyside.

Chairman Gesullo asked Commissioner Snyder to set up a meeting with FOTHR, whether it is at one of our regular meetings or a separate meeting.

There was discussion of patrols along the river and Chairman Gesullo said he was going to a meeting next week concerning river safety. There was also discussion of one problem regarding people don't observe the "no wake" rule.

Commissioner Snyder said he spent time talking with Doc Gunther regarding the non-participation of Stratford on this Commission. He thinks once we have the mission statement established that we could go to them to encourage them to get on board. Chairman Gesullo said he has been discussing it with Bill Rock.

Tape 1, Side B

Commissioner Snyder discussed interaction with the CT Maritime Commission. Vice-Chairman Romick said she wanted to get a survey from the respective towns as to how many have already had NEMO (non-point education for municipal officials). It is a training program from DEP that will come to a town and talk about minimizing impacts of development, such as different types of parking areas (structured) that absorbs rainwater. These presentations are free of charge and the public is also invited as well as city officials and commissioners. It helps the town plan to use best management practices in development. I would like to find out how many towns along the river have had that and are implementing the recommendations. I will contact NEMO to find out who has participated.

I was invited to the urban ecology conference at Beardsley Zoo. There is one feature item I want to attend that it regarding river restoration. This happens to be on the same day the Long Island Sound fisheries forum. Both are in Bridgeport.

Vice-Chairman Romick also mentioned that Mayor Richitelli requested that we get our own letterhead. I did a quick draft and presented it to the Commissioners. Chairman Gesullo suggested she go ahead and create it. Commissioner Snyder and the Commissioners discussed on the on-going legal action where a homeowner has filed a petition for declaratory judgment with the DEP regarding a policy the DEP has not allowing private residential dock owners performing new water dredging.

8. DISCUSSIONS ITEMS

A. Preliminary Future Dredging

Vice-Chairman Romick discussed this topic that Doc Gunther & Dan Debicella has brought up for this Commission to initiate. Their wish is to dredge further up the river. It took Norwalk 8 years to get it going for them. If there is increasing economic development along the river this may become more and more important. Commissioner Snyder predicts this would become a very expensive project but we have to look at the benefits overall. If the dredging goes further up north up to the area of the dam you would then have the possibility of commercial/recreational boating that would extend to downtown Derby and Shelton. Chairman Gesullo explained that he is on the downtown Riverwalk committee and noted that along with this and Beacon Point is the first time he saw people looking at the river as a possible economic benefit to the community. Commissioner Snyder commented that at this point his concern is more with the lower portion of the river at the mouth. It seems to be starting to move in the right direction.

B. Canal filling in Shelton

The owner of the canal says he needs to fill in the canal to be able to sell the property for development so he could pay for the \$2M fish ladder he is required to install. The City has had discussions with the owner. They are looking to see what side this Commission is on. If this affects the river then there is need for comment. The Army Corps of Engineers has called for a public meeting. It was decided that they would wait until after the meeting to see exactly what the issues are before weighing in. At this point we are trying to gather more technical information to understand the impact, whether for or against the canal filling. We also want to see the result of the public hearing.

C. DEP hearing on residential dock – no dredge hearing

This was covered earlier by Commissioner Snyder.

D. Future meeting speakers

Vice-Chairman Romick suggested that each month we should have someone here from a group, i.e. DEP, Stratford Shellfish Commission, that is involved in river issues to provide education and information. We would like to see if we could get the Friends of the Housatonic River members to come for the April meeting. The members mentioned some of the other organizations that they could have attend a meeting or information from meetings they attend they could bring that information back to the Commissioners.

E. Progress on mission statement

Vice-Chairman Romick and Commissioner Snyder provided input on the mission statement to the Chairman. He incorporated the changes and the mission statement is at the end of the minutes. There was not a quorum to be able to approve the statement.*

They discussed the comments Chairman Gesullo received from Bill Rock.

F. Proposed HREC pamphlet

Vice-Chairman Romick presented a sample of a pamphlet she uses for a watershed commission she is on. There was discussion of distribution and how many we would need printed. This would be useful to get our name out there mentioning our goals along with contact information. Chairman Gesullo suggesting tabling this item until the next meeting.

9. REQUEST SUPPORT FROM HVA

Chairman Gesullo reported that they want something in writing emailed to them.

Tape 2, Side A

There was discussion of the role of HVA for this Commission. Chairman Gesullo asked for all the Commissioners to send an email to him relaying their concerns for him to be able to send the response to HVA. He is looking for a response within a week.

10. OLD BUSINESS/NEW BUSINESS

None

11. NEXT MEETING DATE/PLACE

The next meeting date is March 27. Milford will host the meeting. The meeting location will be noted on the agenda.

12. ADJOURNMENT

Vice-Chairman Romick MOVED to adjourn. SECONDED by Commissioner Snyder. All were in favor, MEETING ADJOURNED at 9:18 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Marianne Chaya
Clerk, Housatonic River Estuary Commission

*The following is the suggested mission statement for the Commission. Final approval will be given at the next meeting.

***Housatonic River Estuary Commission Mission Statement**

Our mission is the stewardship of the Housatonic River Estuary and its tributaries to both restore and protect the interest of the Housatonic River in the communities of Shelton, Ansonia, Derby, Orange, Stratford and Milford, Connecticut.

This is the forum in which the these communities, regardless of their own local or similar efforts, come together without borders to collectively work together with a collective voice in the common goal for the welfare and the valued resources of the Housatonic River.

This will include the collaboration and interactions with other similar local or state organizations that also work to protect, the immediate area as well as the entire length of the Housatonic River and its tributaries as it may then affect one or all our communities at-large.

Our Mission is to support and foster the many components of this stewardship, including but not limited to Restoration, Conservation, Preservation, Recreation, and Economics as these actions/intentions relate to the River Ecology, Environment, Economic Development/Planning, and Historical/Cultural values. We will seek to find collective, balanced solutions to provide equal value to theses components as a strategy to promote continued restoration and responsible economic development of the estuary, and to protect against any future threats, changes or adverse impacts.

Bob Gesullo/ Shelton (Chairman)

Lori Romick/Milford (Vice Chairman)

Date: _____

HREC Minutes should be considered a draft version until approved at the next regular meeting.
HREC Minutes submitted to the respective town's Town Clerk's office for legal posting requirements.
Tape recording of the meeting is available at Shelton Town Clerk's office.