



**HOUSATONIC RIVER ESTUARY COMMISSION
MEETING MINUTES**

Tuesday, June 23, 2009

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

1. CALL OF THE MEETING/PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Chairman Gesullo called the meeting to order at 7:15 P.M.
All in attendance pledged allegiance to the flag.

ATTENDANCE

Bob Gesullo, Chairman, Shelton
Lori Romick, Vice-Chairman, Milford
Phil Marcucio, Commissioner, Derby
Bill Rock, Commissioner, Stratford
Bill Urban, Commissioner, Ansonia (arrived at 7:28 P.M.)

Also in attendance:

Bill Rohland, Derby
Marianne Chaya, Clerk, HREC

Chairman Gesullo stated that Commissioner Blake would be unable to attend the meeting.

2. PUBLIC PORTION OR GUEST

None

3. APPROVAL OF THE April 23, 2009 MEETING MINUTES

Vice-Chairman Romick MOVED to approve the April 23, 2009 meeting minutes.
SECONDED by Commissioner Marcucio. All were in favor, MOTION PASSED.

4. FINANCE REPORT

Chairman Gesullo stated that he was unable to get the finance report from Commissioner Blake.

Vice-Chairman Romick asked if there was any word from the towns as to whether they are going to make the \$1000 annual payment to the Commission's account. Chairman Gesullo stated that no, he has not heard although he is sure Shelton's is approved. Vice-Chairman Romick stated that it is approved for Milford. They all commented that they submitted a letter requesting the funds. They expect there will be no action until at least July 1.

Chairman Gesullo said they would change the order of the agenda items since Commissioner Urban has yet to arrive.

5. Commissioner's remarks/out-reach efforts

Vice-Chairman Romick reported that she has 2 letters she would like to send out and would discuss them later.

She mentioned that she is also on the Long Island Sound Assembly, along with Commissioner Rock. This council consists of representatives from all the towns along the shoreline including Mayors/First Selectmen, appointees, representatives from towns, and Governor's appointees who get together once a month and discuss any type of issues regarding Long Island Sound. They make recommendations in a report annually that goes to the legislature. This report helps legislators in making decisions to help push some of the projects forward. One issue that came up is that there is stimulus money available. There is a listing of all the projects from all of the towns in the state. I went through the list and pulled out ones that I thought would be related to the Housatonic River. Those were ones from all of our towns that involved sewer treatment plant upgrades, sewer collection system upgrades, and storm drain catch basin runoff issues and improvements. The LIS Assembly sent a letter and I drafted a letter to come from us, saying that if you are going to put any money in sewer treatment plants, why don't you put it into the towns that are adjacent to each other and get the biggest bang for the buck. (She distributed the draft to the Commissioners to review). This letter addresses the 5 towns that applied for funds.

Commissioner Rock mentioned the huge problem in Stratford regarding debris that washes down the river to them. It is a menace to navigation, ties up the boardwalk marina, washing up on the beaches and eventually goes out to the sound. We need to have a cooperative effort, and if there is stimulus money available to study this problem with an eye towards some solutions, I think this is something we should discuss. I think this is probably one of the best things we can do as a 6-town Commission.

Commissioner Marcucio asked what type of debris he is talking about and he and Vice-Chairman Romick said there is so many things, such as trees, boxes, plastic bottles, wood. The problem is even worse after a storm. People also cut trees at their property line, roll them down the bank and they end up in the river. All of this ends up into the Sound, working it's way to the Mattituck inlet or find it's way to Port Jefferson harbor.

The Commissioners discussed ideas of how to address cleaning up the river on a continuous basis and how to pay for it. They mentioned that when the two University of New Haven students came to one of the prior meetings they said they were looking for some kind of studies that we want done. Maybe we could approach the University.

Chairman Gesullo suggested that Vice-Chairman Romick's letter get sent to each of the towns we represent.

Commissioner Urban MOVED to send the letter regarding the use of stimulus money available for the towns we represent that have sewer treatment plant upgrades and to carbon copy each of the representative towns Mayor/First Selectman. SECONDED by Commissioner Rock. All were in favor, MOTION PASSED.

The second draft letter regards the tree cutting done by the Baldwin Station homes in Milford by the parkway bridge. After the last meeting you had said for me to write a letter. I tried twice to contact the Inland Wetlands officer and have not received any calls back. The letter was passed around for the Commissioners to review. They discussed the situation and the letter and made some editing suggestions. The core of the letter should state that HREC strongly encourages Baldwin Station Association and the Milford Inland Wetlands office and the office of the Mayor to remediate the situation. We reserve the right to review this in the future. They also discussed whom it should be addressed to and who should get copied. The letter will be directed to the Milford Inland Wetlands office with a copy to the Association and the Mayor's office.

Vice-Chairman Romick reported that at the Long Island Sound Assembly meeting their speaker was Marianne Haverstock from DEP (water quality coordinator for CT's watershed program). They are really pushing the low-impact development. Their idea is to representatives from associated Commissions (LIS Assembly & HREC) take the information to the towns to get them to implement some of the low impact development measures. Some of the measures are rain gardens, pervious pavers, rain barrels, and other ways to remove runoff and water from impervious surfaces to keep them from going right out into the rivers and streams and bringing sediments along with it, which cause our dredging issues.

She also reported that she found out about SEP (supplemental environmental project fund), which takes all of the fines from companies and returns them back to the towns for projects. The town of Naugatuck received a \$50K grant to do environmental studies, public education and outreach. We could have put in for money after the Chromium Process company fines by the DEP. The town has to request the funds. She suggested we should keep this in mind for future projects. We would support and encourage the town to put in for the funds to be allocated for us for river projects. The funds can only be used for remediation based on the impact the company had on the river.

Vice-Chairman Romick reported that after the river cleanup pictures of all the bottles picked up went to the legislators. She said that what would be good is to get some type of bar put across the cement catch basins to keep the bottles from falling in and ending up in the river. She and her husband filled at least 10 garbage bags with just plastic bottles. Commissioner Rock mentioned that at his property he and 5 guys spent all morning filling garbage bags filled with mostly plastic bottles.

Lori reported that the bottle bill did get passed but they are doing some slight modifications.

Vice-Chairman Romick also reported that DEP is changing their general permits for industrial discharges.

Commissioner Rock MOVED to have Vice-Chairman Romick send the letter to the Milford Inland Wetlands office, carbon copy to the Baldwin Station Association and the Milford Mayor with the accepted amended language. SECONDED by Commissioner Urban. All were in favor, MOTION PASSED.

6. Introduction of Bill Rohland, candidate for Commissioner-at-large

Chairman Gesullo introduced Bill Rohland who he is proposing to join this Commission as Commissioner-at-large. He lives in Derby. The Chairman spent some time detailing Mr. Rohland's experience and knowledge in reference to the river, the Coast Guard and the Coast Guard Auxiliary. He would replace Jeff Snyder who moved to Rhode Island.

The Commissioners asked Mr. Rohland some questions about his expertise and Commissioner Rock explained that he has known Mr. Rohland for quite some time.

Commissioner Rock MOVED to accept Bill Rohland as the Commissioner-at-large. SECONDED by Commissioner Urban for discussion.

Mr. Rohland mentioned that he is also the point of contact for the Coast Guard Sea Partners program, which is an outreach program for the marine environment. It has all to do with storm drain runoff, wastewater, and everything in marine environment – where it comes from and how many centuries' things take to biodegrade.

Commissioner Rock said that another thing about Mr. Rohland is he is a contact person for is emergency response for the whole division. Chairman Gesullo mentioned that Bill's area of expertise is working with other agencies that have to come together through the emergency response plan. He is also a permanent part-time employee of FEMA (he spent time down in Mississippi and New Orleans doing cleanup after hurricane Katrina). He also is a Coast Guard ICS instructor.

The Commissioners started discussing the river cleanup again and Mr. Rohland mentioned that there are oceanographic agencies that get volunteers specifically for debris cleanup. Maybe that is something we could look into.

They also talked about how bad the debris is now after all the rain we just had.

Chairman Gesullo asked for the vote on the motion regarding the appointment of Bill Rohland:

All voted in favor, MOTION PASSED.

Tape 1, Side B

7. Discussion on establishing a HREC website

Chairman Gesullo commented that Commissioner Rohland offered to look into setting up a website for the Commission.

Commissioner Rohland said the first thing would be to set up a name and then find out if it is available. His suggestion would be HREC.org. If it were available we would have to purchase it on an annual fee. The Commissioners spent some time discussing the work involved in this task plus possible monetary fees. They also talked about possibly piggybacking on one of the town's servers. Chairman Gesullo offered to talk with Mayor Lauretti about maybe hooking up with Shelton's server, but with using our own domain name. Commissioner Rohland said he would look into all of the details and get back to the Commissioners.

8. Continuation of Commissioner's remarks

Chairman Gesullo said he nothing to report from Shelton.

Commissioner Marcucio reported that Derby is working on the smell around the sewer treatment plant that affects the Riverwalk. He mentioned that Housatonic Lumber went out of business, which had been in business for a very long time (they incorporated 1 day earlier than General Motors). He thinks that after Sullivan's Island (located where the Naugatuck and Housatonic Rivers meet) gets cleaned up and it will be turned into a park.

They spent some time talking about other businesses in Derby that have closed. Commissioner Urban talked about change in staff on public works. The sewer plant is being refurbished and he is not sure what the estimated time of completion. He mentioned that the core of Ansonia does not have combined sewers. The original engineer came from New York City and that is how they did it there. They only started combining them starting in the late 60's. His Commission (Conservation) has not seen any of the details of the sewer treatment plant upgrade.

Commissioner Rock reported that they have a small boat rack installed for canoes and kayaks. We just got a fee rate, which is \$100/yr. and it has been opened up to the public. So far we have sold a few spaces.

The on-going project is the municipal pier. We are now into Phase II. Phase I was primarily a feasibility study water ward of the high water mark and a preliminary design. The preliminary design will probably be modified one more time prior to the completion of Phase I. That was part of a grant that we got from the Agriculture Dept. through the Aquaculture Dept. in Milford. It was a matching grant of \$24K. We got a second grant from the same source for \$18K. This is being used for application to the DEP Army Corps of Engineers and will also be used to solicit new funding for Phase III, which is the construction of the pier. That will cost about \$500K. This pier will go out quite a ways and will have a hydraulic lift and floating docks. This endeavor would also encourage more commercial use of the area. Also it would provide for the first time, transit docking for short periods of time. (Commissioner Rock and the rest of the Commissioners discussed more of the details).

Commissioner Rock also reported that the other Commission he is on is making a counter suggestion regarding the dredging. Instead of dredging 650K cu. yards from the mouth of the river up to the railroad bridge, go 18' deep, 200' wide. He discussed the reasoning based on the condition of some of the arteries. This

would change it to about 100,000K cu. yards. The Mayor had said he wanted the material on Short Beach. This is the latest proposal but we have reserved the right to maintain that we can dredge it to 18' deep if we can prove that it is necessary. Our major proof before was the Devon plant, who doesn't want to commit themselves. Now we have to go and take an average depth of how much water is drawn by most vessels. We have been doing this survey over the past year to see if we can come up with a non-commercial depth that is a compromise.

Also, they are starting to move on the mooring field. We sold two of the moorings (out of 4). (He discussed some of the details).

Chairman Gesullo asked Commissioner Rock about the debris, and who would we bring the issue to? Commissioner Rock stated that everyone they contacted didn't want to know about it. He thought it would be DEP but they said it wasn't in their jurisdiction. Since it's not in a federal channel, it's not the Army Corps. Commissioner Rohland mentioned about municipality responsibility and Vice-Chairman Romick suggested the Valley Council of Municipalities. The Commissioners spent some time talking about this issue and mentioned getting a study going. They suggested using one of the universities. Chairman Gesullo asked Marianne what the names of the two students for him to contact to see if they may be interested in doing a study.

9. New Business

Commissioner Urban mentioned and the Commissioners commented on the CT Post series on the beaches from Milford to Greenwich.

Commissioner Rock mentioned that this weekend it is an anniversary of the Coast Guard Auxiliary. This Sunday we are having an open house in Stratford's Coast Guard Auxiliary base at Birdseye.

Chairman Gesullo said he would make up business cards for Commissioner Rock and Rohland.

10. Old Business

None

11. Next Meeting

Commissioner Rock offered to set up the August 25th meeting at the Stratford Coast Guard Auxiliary.

12. Adjournment

Vice-Chairman Romick MOVED to adjourn. SECONDED by Commissioner Urban. All were in favor, MEETING ADJOURNED at 8:50 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Marianne Chaya
Clerk, HREC