

Housatonic River Estuary Commission (HREC)

Representing the towns of Shelton, Milford, Orange, Stratford, Derby, and Ansonia, CT.

HREC Minutes

Regular meeting of the Housatonic River Estuary Commission

Tuesday, September 25, 2012

6:30 pm at the Parson's Complex, Milford, Connecticut

*Note: There was no quorum so the acceptance of the May 22, 2012 minutes was not voted on.
The July meeting was cancelled.*

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Chairman Bob Gesullo at 6:37 PM.

The members present were:

Bob Gesullo, Chairman - Shelton

Lori Romick, Vice-Chairman – Milford

2. Public Portion

No one from the public spoke.

3. Approval of the May 22, 2012 Minutes

Since there was not a quorum an e-mail request for an electronic vote to approve the May 22, 2012 minutes will be sent out.

4. Finance Report

Bob Gesullo reported that a \$500.00 donation was made (voted and approved at the March 27th meeting) to the Housatonic River Clean-up. There is currently \$4,937.00 in the account. Shelton requested a letter for the 2012-2013 grant funding. Bob will submit the letter to Shelton requesting \$500.00.

5. Website

Lori will send River Clean-up photos to Bill Rohland to add to the website. Bob will request an invoice from Bill for the website annual fees.

6. Commissioner's Reports

Bob Gesullo - Shelton

Bob will send letters to the mayors of Ansonia and Orange requesting appointment of HREC commissioners that will actively participate. Bill Urban has not been to a meeting in a very long time and does not have electronic communication. Orange has not appointed a replacement yet for Jason Blake.

Lori Romick – Milford

Lori discussed the Milford Living magazine article on Milford's rivers which mentions the HREC and Sacred Heart river study. She will forward a copy to the commission once it is online.

Bill Rock - Stratford

Bill e-mailed his summary: The Stratford Harbor and Waterfront Commission (SHWC) was grateful for the letter of support for the Housatonic dredging project that was sent.

The SHWC will be sponsoring a river birding excursion for the birding festival on October 6th.

7. Shelton Life magazine article

Bob received a call from the Shelton Life magazine requesting information on HREC and a photo in May.

Bob had his friend Walter come to take a few photos during the May meeting to submit for the article.

Lori wrote the article and it was published in the June edition of "Shelton Life." (See attached.)

8. New business -

Bob reviewed the Housatonic dredging letter sent to CT DEEP that went out in support of the Housatonic River dredging. (See attached.)

Lori presented an environmental news article written by Senator Kevin Kelly who represents Stratford, Shelton, Seymour and Monroe. Senator Kelly is in support of recreation and natural resources. Lori will

introduce HREC to Senator Kelly by sending him a letter describing the Commission and copies of the past three annual reports.

Lori and Bob discussed the need for an annual report draft to be voted on at the November 27, 2012 meeting. A request will go out to all commissioners requesting their thoughts on plans for 2013 and updated 2012 information for the report.

Bob reviewed a letter he received from United Illuminating notifying stakeholders that the UI will be putting in a new substation on Old Stratford Road in Shelton. But this is not along the river.

9. Old Business –

Bob inquired as to the status of a boat motor to be loaned to Sacred Heart. Bob will contact Scott to see if the University agreed to utilize the boat motor. Lori will check with the professors regarding the study progress.

Bob noted that the Wooster Island area of the river was very busy this summer. The new signs were out up by DEEP Boating Division and DEEP Encon had a vessel available docked at the marina. Lori did contact DEEP and thanked them for their assistance.

10. Next meeting – Tuesday, November 27, 2012 at 6:30 at the Shelton Community Center.

11. Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 1900 hours.

*Respectfully submitted,
Lori Romick, Vice-chair, Milford Representative*

SHELTON LIFE: June 2012

Article written by: Lori Romick

The Housatonic River Estuary Commission (HREC) was established through CT General Statute Chapter 483b, section 25-170, back in 1990 supported by now retired State Senator George "Doc" Gunther.

CHAPTER 483b

HOUSATONIC RIVER ESTUARY COMMISSION

Sec. 25-170. Commission authorized. Membership. Duties.

(a) The towns of Shelton, Derby, Ansonia, Orange, Stratford and Milford may by ordinance establish a Housatonic River Estuary Commission. The ordinance shall set forth the number of members of the commission, their method of selection, terms of office and procedure for filling any vacancy. The commission may employ expert and such other assistants as it judges necessary and may accept funds from any source. Notwithstanding any other provision of the general statutes, funds appropriated to the commission, or received by the commission from any other source, shall be held in the custody of the commission and expended by the commission for the purposes set forth in subsection (b) of this section.

(b) The commission may study any issues relating to the Housatonic River and may make such recommendations as may be necessary to maintain, protect and restore the resources of the estuary of the Housatonic River. The commission shall consider the adverse impact any action proposed in or for the Housatonic River estuary may have upon the marine resources of said river. The commission may prepare and submit a report to the local legislative bodies of the towns represented on said commission.

(P.A. 90-341, S. 5.)

Senator Gunther felt that the lower estuarine portion of the river needed a multi-town commission that would act as a "watch dog" group and work collectively for the protection of the river and its resources. The lower "estuarine" portion of the river has unique value in its fish and shellfish resources. It is a designated state "natural seed oyster bed" providing a naturally renewable source of CT's famous oysters. Many of the State's seed oyster men utilize this area collecting oyster seed for the local shellfish companies that have leased grounds in Long Island Sound providing continued sustainable economic value for the shellfish industry. The area has a recreational economic value for the numerous boaters, marinas, fishermen, kayakers, birders, and other river enthusiasts.

But, it wasn't until after a controversy arose during 2006, when the CT DEEP approved dredge spoils from the lower portion of the river to be dumped into a "deep water hole" in the Shelton portion of the river, that Shelton Mayor Mark Lauretti decided it was time to formalize the commission. Mayor Lauretti spearheaded the designation of the six town representative members and HREC became a recognized multi-town commission in 2007.

The Commission met for the first time in Shelton at Mayor Lauretti's office and was asked to develop a mission statement and by-laws. Since that time the Commission added a "member-at-large" and currently have seven representative members.

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 these communities, regardless of their own local or similar efforts, come together without borders to collectively work with one 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's ecology, environment, economic development/planning and historical/cultural values. We will seek to find collective, balanced solutions to provide equal value to these 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."

The Commission meets six times a year and prepares an annual report of its activities. Each town representative member and our member-at-large also volunteer on other local and state committees and commissions increasing the opportunities for outreach and the sharing of information. The Commission members each have their own area(s) of expertise. Representatives report back to town leaders and local State Legislators. The HREC has invited guests to the regular meetings including but not limited to harbor commissions, CT Department of Energy and Environmental Protection, State Legislators, and local universities.

The HREC has recently partnered with Sacred Heart University's Environmental Master's Program to conduct a debris study along the lower portion of the river south of the Stevenson Dam. Students will be identifying the types of debris, assessing volumes and pinpointing natural "collection" areas that will be targeted during annual clean-up events.

The Town of Stratford sponsors an annual Housatonic River Clean-up event that the HREC members support and participate in. More than 20 tons of debris were removed from the river shoreline and islands during the 2011 clean-up. Volunteers include residents, boaters, fishermen, shellfishermen, and other civic groups.

HREC provides suggestions and voices concerns over many of the issues involving the river including commercial facilities, water usage for entities using river water for irrigation, letters of support for research studies and pilot projects, and boating safety.

Excerpt from The Housatonic Valley Association (HVA) guide "Welcome to the Housatonic Estuary."

- *The Housatonic River is CT's third largest river extending 149 miles north through CT and MA.*
- *The river is tidal for the 13 most southern miles from Derby to Long Island Sound and considered "estuarine" for the last eight miles.*
- *The river supplies approximately 11% of the freshwater entering Long Island Sound.*
- *The Housatonic has historically naturally supplied up to 40% of CT's seed oysters to the CT shellfish industry annually.*

www.hvatoday.org/publications/EstuaryGuide.pdf

HREC contacts:

Bob Gesullo, Chairman, Shelton, bobge@sbcglobal.net
Lori Romick, Vice Chair, Milford, lromick@optonline.net, 203-214-4637 cell
William Rock, Stratford, 203-377-653
William Rohland, Derby
Scott Corner (Member-at-Large)
William Urban, Ansonia, 203-735-2341
Vacant, Orange, 203-671-3155

Website: (copies of annual reports are available.)

www.TheHREC.org

HREC letter to the CT DEEP in support of dredging:

September 12, 2012

Ms. Kristen Bellantuono
Connecticut Department of Energy and Environmental Protection
Office of Long Island Sound Programs
79 Elm Street
Hartford, Connecticut 06106-5127

Subject: Application No. 201205488-KB Concerning Maintenance Dredging of the Housatonic River Navigation Channel

Dear Ms. Bellantuono:

This letter, on behalf of the Housatonic River Estuary Commission (HREC), is to express support for the proposed project by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers to dredge sections of the federal navigation channel in the Housatonic River.

The HREC was established by the Connecticut General Assembly with representatives from the towns of Shelton, Derby, Ansonia, Orange, Stratford and Milford adjoining the Housatonic River. Our mission, set forth in the Connecticut General Statutes, is to study any issues relating to the river and to make such recommendations as may be necessary to maintain, protect and restore the resources of the river's estuary. In this regard, we consider the adverse impact any action proposed in or for the estuary may have on marine resources.

For a number of years we have followed the efforts of the Stratford Waterfront and Harbor Management and Corps of Engineers to dredge sections of the navigation channel that have experienced significant shoaling and which have not been dredged for many years. We are familiar with the proposed plans for dredging those sections utilizing the Corps of Engineers' hopper dredge which will then place the sandy dredged material in the nearshore area of Long Island Sound.

It is our opinion that this proposed dredging project will achieve the important goal of maintaining safe navigation for the many vessels that use the navigation channel for recreational and commercial purposes. In addition, we believe that any environmental impacts that may be caused by the project will be insignificant.

Please call me at (203) 929-6957 if you have any questions or require any additional information.

Sincerely,

Bob Gesullo, Chairman

Bob Gesullo (Shelton)
Chairman Housatonic River Estuary Commission

cc:
HREC Commissioners
Mayor Benjamin G. Blake, City of Milford
Mayor John Harkins, Town of Stratford
Mr. Jack Karalius, U.S. Army Corps of Engineers
Mr. Bill Rock, Chairman, Stratford Waterfront and Harbor Management Commission
Mr. Joe Salvatore, Dredging Coordinator, Connecticut Department of Transportation