



**HOUSATONIC RIVER ESTUARY COMMISSION**  
**REGULAR MEETING MINUTES**  
**Tuesday, March 23, 2010**  
**Stratford Town Hall**  
**Room 213**  
**Stratford, CT 06614**  
**REVISED**

**1. CALL OF THE MEETING/PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

Chairman Gesullo called the meeting to order at 7:10 P.M.  
All in attendance pledged allegiance to the flag.

**ATTENDANCE**

Bob Gesullo, Chairman, Shelton  
Lori Romick, Vice-Chairman, Milford  
Bill Rohland, Commissioner, Derby  
Bill Rock, Commissioner, Stratford  
Bill Urban, Commissioner, Ansonia (arrived at 8:00 P.M.)

Also in attendance:

Ross Hatfield, Stratford Harbormaster  
Ray Swift, Milford Harbormaster  
Marianne Chaya, Clerk, HREC

**2. Public Portion or Guests**

Chairman Gesullo welcomed the Milford and Stratford harbormasters, Ray Swift and Ross Hatfield, respectively. He explained the purpose of the Commission and explained the charter as to the fact that we are stewards of the river and we don't come in conflict with any other river organizations or commissions. This commission gives each of the 6 towns a forum where they can come and talk about their issues and see if we can work it out. Most of the issues that we've dealt with in the last two years are environmental issues or threats to the environment. We'd like to know if there is anything we can do to help you, we are offering our services and our help. We have aligned ourselves with various river organizations and have a link to them on our website. We are all on other commissions as well as this one.

Vice-Chair Romick gave the harbormasters a copy of the last year's annual report. She explained that we wanted to find a place that was actually needed, so we felt that by working with all of the groups we'd ask for needs from everybody and then try and work with the legislature if we have to.

The Commissioners and Harbormasters talked about some of the past issues in their towns and how each handled it.

Vice-Chair Romick mentioned that if there is any safety issues that may come up to let us know and see if we can help. This year the legislation is only accepting legislators bills, no citizens bills. We had talked about promoting the requirement for kayakers to wear life jackets all year round because of the incident that happened last year. It's not just a Connecticut issue, it was mentioned in the 2008 national Coast Guard report.

Mr. Hatfield asked if kite surfers could be included in this requirement as well? Many times they are out there without a jacket, just their wet suit. We lost a kite surfer 3 years ago where he had no strobe light as well.

Vice-Chair Romick said that is what we're looking at. In order to get a bill passed right now you have to have a reason and dollar amount; not just human life. If you can not only save a someone's life but also find them faster, thereby reducing the rescue costs. We also want to consider reducing the risk of injury for all the rescuers out there at all times of the day and night and all types of weather conditions. We did have opposition from those who want the couple of months of no PFD's and take that risk. There are many organizations that are promoting this issue nationally and want to pass it through Congress. We would like letters from you saying you are in support of that and would be a help to us so we can add it to our packet.

The Commissioners and Harbormasters talked about working on getting identification tags on the kayaks. They mentioned that some of the kayak rental places have them available. Mr. Swift mentioned that several kayaks were washed away during the past rainstorm. Commissioner Rohland said that what he is planning is to go to the "big box" stores and give them one decal for every kayak they have in inventory. Commissioner Gesullo said that the Coast Guard and the auxiliary have partnered with many kayak community organizations and retailers to educate the users.

Vice-Chair Romick suggested having an ad put in the Coast Access Guide for kayakers to let them know they can order an identification tag.

There was also discussion of the debris in the river and that we are trying to partner with the area universities to have students do a study of where the debris is coming from. The last time we did a river cleanup pictures and information was submitted to help the passing of the bottle bill. We are going to continue to take photos of the next cleanup and beyond and hopefully we will see a reduction in the number of plastic bottles coming down the river. Then we should be able to show justification to the legislature that this was a good thing to do.

Mr. Hatfield mentioned that he is seeing barrels in the river and Commissioner Rock said that he has seen a number of barrels over the past few years. Most of the barrels they have seen are blue. Vice-Chair Romick said she'd look into it. She said DEP has inspectors that will come out and investigate. She said that anytime they see barrels to contact the Commission.

Commissioner Rock mentioned that the river cleanup this year will be on May 1<sup>st</sup> and asked if the Commission wants to donate money for the food again this year. Chairman Gesullo again said that he wanted the harbormasters to be able to meet the members of the Commission and to know that we are a resource for

them if needed. They said that at this time there are no issues but to keep emailing them with anything that may concern them or call them. Mr. Swift talked about the process of helping a local catamaran owner that everyone was familiar with get the proper permits and insurance needed. Chairman Gesullo thanked Mr. Hatfield and Mr. Swift for coming to the meeting and hope to continue an open communication.

### **3. APPROVAL OF THE November 23, 2009 and January 26, 2010 MEETING MINUTES**

Commissioner Rohland MOVED to accept the minutes from the November 24, 2009 meeting and the January 26, 2010 regular meetings. Vice-Chair Romick SECONDED the motion. All were in favor, MOTION PASSED.

Chairman Gesullo noted that after review of the last minutes he noticed there was an item that was supposed to have been put on this agenda and he will add that discussion; which is the use of member alternates and/or member at large.

### **4. Finance Report**

Chairman Gesullo said that Commissioner Blake is not here to give the report. He did say that Commissioner Blake has been considering resigning from the Commission due to conflicts with his business and the town of Orange is not supporting him.

Vice-Chair Romick said she needs the finance report to give to Milford to justify why we are asking for the \$1000 annual contribution. Chairman Gesullo said that the City of Shelton should have that information.

Vice-Chair Romick said that she has met with the Board of Finance and now has to meet with the Board of Aldermen for the \$1000 fund request.

There was discussion that maybe the other towns who haven't contributed would be more open to contributing \$500 if \$1000 is too much.

### **5. Web page report – Bill Rohland**

Commissioner Rohland reported that all the updates have been made that were asked for. So far this month we've had 147 hits and 15 requests.

Vice-Chairman Romick reported that we have not received any emails.

Chairman Gesullo and Vice-Chair Romick talked about the ease of the website and it has been useful, especially when he had to go before his town for funding request.

### **6. Commissioners Remarks**

Vice-Chair Romick reported on the ongoing work regarding stormwater and runoff pollution. She also brought the newspaper article published in February on Chromium Process regarding them going out of business.

She mentioned that DEP has come out with a Municipal Primer. We should get familiar with it and pick some of the things from this that we feel will be a benefit to the river. A lot of it has to do with land use and management of erosion.

She also talked about the push right now to reduce the amount of pharmaceuticals that are getting into the streams and brooks and ending up in the rivers.

May 7<sup>th</sup> is the Green City Blue Waters annual Long Island Sound summit if anyone wants to attend.

April 16<sup>th</sup> is a Rip Rewards and Recreational Liability seminar. It talks about working with volunteer groups, students and liability insurance for things like river cleanup.

Housatonic Valley Association has a great website giving information of a lot of things going on.

Ms. Romick passed around the letter she sent to the DEP regarding stream flows for the Commissioners to review. It was a letter she did from the last time we met and needed to be submitted right away. She said that there were over 600 letters sent to the DEP. This is because there are new regulations from DEP for companies that are taking water out of the small streams and tributaries that flows to the Housatonic. A lot of them are drying up and they want to regulate that. My letter said that if you are going to allow it, at least have some other recourse for reclaiming water. You have water coming off their buildings. You can do rain gardens, retention ponds that would store excess water, and could look into recycling systems to recycle some of the water.

Milford Inland Wetlands Commission has been merged with the Planning & Zoning. The idea behind it was to streamline things and to cross-train. There has been flack from a lot of Inland Wetlands and Conservation Commissions around the state. They are not in favor of it at all.

I haven't heard anything regarding the tree cutting along the Baldwin Station homes but once the weather gets better I will take my boat out and check to see if there is any erosion.

## Tape 1, Side B

Commissioner Rock outlined the history of the issue of dredging starting back in 1976, which is the last time the river was dredged. In 1994 the Harbor Management Act of the Waterfront Harbor Management Commission became involved and became the lead agency for dredging the river. Between 1994 and 2003 there was a whole timeline of events. In 2003 the Army Corps said they were going to dredge 650K cu. yds from cam 1 to beyond the power plant. They based it on 18-20' wide. There were issues of where the dredged material was going to be placed. Then there were issues of the material itself and required additional testing. The DEP wanted the material and agreed to do the testing and found the material 97% pure, just as the initial test done by the EPA. Then there was the problem of the cost of moving the dredged material to the desired location. In 2007 we asked the CT Maritime Commission for their help. Later we went out with members of the Army Corps of Engineers plus a member of the waterfront commission out onto the river where we looked at different places that needed to be done. We did the same thing last year but this time we brought the Mayor of Stratford because we talked about using the spoils for beach

nourishment for Long Beach or Short Beach. We did the hydrographic surveys plus soundings and looking at the areas we realized we don't need 650K cu. yds. All we need is about 50K cu. yds. The areas we isolated were just to the south of cam 23 where the bend is by the Pootatuck. The next place was the breach in the secondary breakwater around 6 and 7. Another area that was not covered by the Army Corps survey was the area between 1 and 2 and the sound buoy #1, which is the bell buoy further up. We got together with the Army Corps again and asked for another survey. The problem is now we are not using the river for barging. The Army Corps has a dredging hopper vessel that can take 350 cu. yds at a time and then can dump to where ever we need. We made our appeal for this through the CT Maritime Commission. We have been told that there are environmental issues of why we can't use this vessel. What we are going to work on now is to use a group of harbor management commissions to talk to the DEP as well as the Army Corps of Engineers to use the Housatonic river as a test case as to why the dredging hopper vessel should be used in small dredge projects in the State of CT. The Mayor has agreed to give his support of this issue by sending a letter as well as requesting Mayor Richitelli joins in this request plus funding requests.

The Commissioners and the Harbormasters continued discussing the dredging issue.

Commissioner Rock offered his letter to the Chairman for this Commission to send a letter in support.

Commissioner Urban suggested requesting that New England Region 1 EPA to declare a need to the Army Corps. The Housatonic River, because of its PH has been identified as a prime Zebra mussel invasive potential marine system. If some of the dredging can be used to potentially prevent colonization of the Zebra mussel. Let the EPA call the shots. Vice-Chair Romick said she wasn't sure this would work.

There was discussion of the Army Corps and Commissioner Rock commented on how very cooperative they have been.

Commissioner Urban did not have anything to report from Ansonia except some potential air pollution problems along the river in terms of one or two smoke stacks. We are in process of investigating with the DEP.

Chairman Gesullo said he has a copy of the letter sent by McCallum Enterprises regarding the fence issue at the canal with copies to the Conservation Commission, Housatonic Valley Association, Planning & Zoning & the CT DEP to FERC. It was recommended that maybe we send a letter taking the same position. We will take it under consideration if we are going to respond.

Commissioner Rohland had nothing to report from Derby.

## **7. Old Business**

Chairman Gesullo addressed the issue of the use of alternates. Stratford had used Scott Corner as an alternate. Commissioner Rock explained that what he did originally when this Commission was formed was that his town's council had set it up with 6 members and then I explained that there is only one person needed from Stratford and they appointed me. I agreed but said to Scott that I am already on 3 or 4 commissions and I don't know if I can make all the

meetings and would you like to at least be a substitute for me, which he has been.

Chairman Gesullo said the issue is regarding the voting. It's not addressed in the by-laws.

Chairman Gesullo asked what he thought about it and Commissioner Rock said he wanted to know how the rest of the Commission feels.

There was some discussion on how this is done on other commissions and Chairman Gesullo said he doesn't want to change the rules but would be ok with substitutes and they should not vote.

Vice-Chair Romick said that she wanted to make sure when we have our meetings that we are going to get a quorum. We still need a member-at-large.

Do you think Scott would be interested?

Chairman Gesullo asked if there are any other recommendations.

Commissioner Rock said he would talk to Scott and see if he is interested.

The Commissioners agreed that they would not change the by-laws and if a substitute were used they would not vote.

Commissioner Rock talked about the upcoming river cleanup on May 1. This one will be a little bit scaled down due to the lack of as many sponsors and the fact that they closed the ramp in Devon.

Chairman Gesullo offered to call Scott and discuss the river cleanup and the issue of becoming the member-at-large.

## **8. New Business**

The Commissioners discussed a river boat trip in the near future and a offer for a boat came from Ray Swift.

## **9. Discussion on HREC next meeting**

The next meeting will be in Stratford on Monday, May 24, 2010 at the Stratford Town Hall, Room 213 at 7:30 P.M.

## **Adjournment**

Commissioner Rohland MOVED to adjourn. SECONDED by Commissioner Urban. All were in favor, meeting adjourned at 8:35 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Marianne Chaya  
Clerk, HREC