

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 December 9, 2025 Meeting (subject to approval at the next meeting)
HRC Office, West Cornwall, and via Google Meet**



Christian Allyn – North Canaan – A
Jack Anstine – North Canaan – A
TBD – Canaan (Falls Village) –
Mark Gozonsky – Canaan (Falls Village)–P
Robin Sweeney – Salisbury – P
Stacie Weiner – Salisbury – A
Jim Saunders, Secretary – Sharon – P

William R. Tingley, Vice-chair – Sharon – P
Phil Hart – Cornwall – A
TBD – Cornwall –
Jesse Klingebiel, Chair – Kent – P
Michael Benjamin – Kent – P
Marc Andreotto, Treasurer – New Milford –P
Robert Gambino – New Milford – P

Also present: Madeline Scherff, HRC Project Manager; Jackie Dias, NPS; Sarah Better, NHCOCG; and Drew Ransom, CT DEEP.

Mr. Klingebiel called the meeting to order at 7:08 p.m.

The November 10, 2025 Special Meeting minutes were approved as written.

Treasurer and NHCOCG Financial Reports

Mr. Andreotto reported that the W&S account balance is \$22,178.70, and the NHCOCG-HRC subaccount balance is \$7,743.72.

Mr. Andreotto moved that the following invoices be paid for the Invoice Period 11/6/2025–12/1/2025

Date	Budget Line	Invoice #	Description	Check Mailed To	Amount
1 11/19	Organizational Development		Cornwall Conservation Trust Rent 1/1-6/30/2026		\$2,190.00
2 11/25	Project Manager	1230	10/1/25-10/31/25	HVA	\$2,820.58
3 11/25	Project Manager	1231	11/1/25-11/30/25	HVA	\$2,820.58
4 11/30	Organizational Development (FY25)	376	Susan's Nov Hours	Susan Francisco	\$202.50
				NPS Budget	\$8,033.66

The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

Communications

Protocol for technical difficulties during a hybrid meeting. It is imperative that the technical difficulties encountered be resolved. Mr. Saunders will review the lease. Ms. Francisco will review the hybrid options with the Connecticut FOI Director of Education & Communications.

A letter to remind town zoning boards that HRC commissioners are available to provide input and comment on any projects related to the river is in order.

Zoning Permit Applications for HRC review and comments–none

Subcommittee Reports

Communications and Outreach Ms. Scherff talked about the benefits of meeting with other organizations and partners to discuss visitor use and access sites. An event could be scheduled for the spring.

She also noted that funding has been provided to purchase photos from Brian Wilcox for the website.

Resource Protection

Native Plant Rebate Program -- Ms. Scherff explained that her plan is modeled after existing programs in the east, where such a program is useful due to the presence of private property adjacent to the Housatonic. Goals include incentivizing private property owners to initiate land management and conservation easements. Online training would be included in the workplan (with a potential line item of \$20K). Ms. Sweeney expressed interest in working with her.

Mr. Klingebiel moved that Ms. Scherff move forward with the HRC Sustainable Corridor Rebate program. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

EPA/GE/PCB status – Mr. Klingebiel gave a brief review of his Summary of GE’s (3,000-page) Summary 2024 Housatonic Rest of River Data Collection Report, in which they present the findings from their study of PCB levels in the Housatonic Rest of River. He highlighted what seems important for our towns and HRC to be aware of in the 41-mile HRC stretch of the river.

River Use and Access

Ruggles Landing – Mr. Ransom said the building on the property is on the state demolition list, but he is still waiting to hear from the Friends group, which needs to reach an agreement with the state.

Helco Field – Several HRC members visited the Helco Field site (north of the West Cornwall Covered Bridge) today. Sharon First Selectman Casey Flanagan is very interested in the property and how it would be used. Ms. Scherff mentioned the wildlife value. A few other sites were also visited.

Steering

Annual Report – shared and accepted.

Cycle of Community Grants – A submission schedule for community grants was discussed.

Mr. Gambino moved that community grant submissions be due three times a year - October 15, February 15, and June 15. The motion was seconded and approved unanimously.

Fiscal Year 2026-27 budget proposals – HRC members need to start thinking about funding for the next fiscal year and were urged to bring concrete budget proposals to the December 16 Steering Subcommittee meeting, assuming that HRC will again receive \$150K. By the end of January 2026, all 2025 funds must be spent.

HRC Member updates

Towns: North Canaan—a new commissioner needs to be appointed to take Dick Heinz’s place.

Sharon—an application has been made to replace the septic system at the old autobody shop just upstream of the Covered Bridge.

Cornwall—a new commissioner needs to be appointed to replace Bart Jones. The wastewater project is still in the design phase. Mr. Ransom mentioned a proposed idea of running a pipe from the facility (yet to be built) and out the mouth of Mill Brook into the Housatonic, a project he said couldn’t be done because of the trout. The CT DEEP fisheries division has the opportunity to review such plans.

Kent—Mr. Klingebiel spoke about a meeting with HVA and Trout Unlimited about Macedonia Brook habitat rehabilitation, with plantings and engineering in the stream.

Partners: NHCOC—Ms. Better reiterated the importance of completing spending for FY2025. \$37,500 was withdrawn for 2025, with another \$37,500 remains to be withdrawn. Rob Phillips has been working on a Memorandum of Understanding.

CT DEEP – A new regulation for 2024 was announced: catch and release for small bass from the Massachusetts border to the Bleacher Dam. The angler survey is scheduled for January 1 to March 1. Mr. Tingley said that there has been a good response from DEEP to the letter written on behalf of the commission regarding speedboats in Amesville.

The meeting was adjourned at 8:47 p.m.

Recording Secretary,



Susan Francisco