

# 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 October 14, 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 – P  
Dick Heinz – Canaan (Falls Village) – P  
Mark Gozonsky – Canaan (Falls Village)–P  
Stacie Weiner – Salisbury – P  
Gordon Whitbeck – Salisbury – P  
Jim Saunders – Sharon – P

William R. Tingley, Chairman – Sharon – P  
Phil Hart, Vice-chairman – Cornwall – P  
Barton Jones – Cornwall – P  
Jesse Klingebiel, Secretary – Kent – P  
Michael Benjamin – Kent – A  
Marc Andreotto, Treasurer – New Milford –P  
Robert Gambino – New Milford – P

(Acronyms listed on the last page)

Also present: Madeline Scherff, HRC Project Manager; Sarah Better, NHCOCG; Drew Ransom, CT DEEP; and Mike Jastremski, HVA.

### Mr. Klingebiel called the meeting to order at 7:01 p.m.

Mr. Klingebiel introduced Mark Gozonsky, the new commissioner from Canaan, who learned about HRC from retired commissioner Woods Sinclair, and is interested in learning about the river and supporting its environmental health.

### The September 9, 2025 Meeting minutes were approved as written.

### Treasurer and NHCOCG Financial Reports

Mr. Andreotto reported that the W&S account balance is \$23,252.90, and the NHCOCG-HRC subaccount balance is \$7,743.72.

### Mr. Jones moved that the following invoice be paid for the Invoice Period 9/2/2025-9/30/2025

Date	Budget Line	Invoice #	Description	Check Mailed To	Amount
9/30	Organizational Development (FY25)	374	Susan's September Hrs	Susan Francisco	\$217.50
				<b>NPS BUDGET</b>	<b>\$217.50</b>

### The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.

Ms. Scherff clarified the financial situation regarding federal funds. Of the first year \$150K available, a little over 10% remains to be spent. Of the second year \$150K, a little over 50% remains to be spent. HRC needs to be diligent in spending down the money on eligible projects so that funding can continue. NHCOCG, as the fiduciary, reiterated that a plan is needed as soon as possible because it affects all involved. Ms. Scherff asked commissioners to attend meetings with ideas on how HRC can help local communities use these federal funds.

**Draft of updated Rules of Procedure** – Ms. Francisco has consolidated all amendments made over the decades to the original 1979 Rules of Procedure and updated them to reflect current practices. Mr. Jones added wording allowing virtual meetings and advised on the entire document. A final version will be presented for approval in November.

**Draft of 2026 Meetings Calendar** – The proposed calendar maintains the current practice of holding meetings on the second Tuesday of each month at 7 p.m. Approval of the schedule will be in November.

## **Zoning permit applications for HRC review and comments**

**Honey Hill – North Canaan** – Mr. Andreotto mentioned contacting the Northwest Connecticut Land Conservancy to research what projects HRC could coordinate with them on. There may be some options on the Honey Hill property.

## **Work Plan Project Status Reports**

**Community Grants Program** – Budget/Scope/Timeline Amendment Template – Discussion took place, with the main question being the upper limit on available funds for a particular project. The wording will be changed to increase the amount (up to \$20K or more) from the current \$10K. If more funding is being sought, an applicant would come before the group again.

**Mr. Tingley moved that the Budget/Scope/Timeline Amendment Template be approved, with the increase in possible funding included, recognizing the distinction between a new project and an amended project. The motion was seconded and passed unanimously.**

**Agricultural Science and Technology Land Laboratory request** – Mr. Hart introduced Bruce Bennett, chair of the ASTE school at Housatonic Valley Regional High School. The group is made up of people from the six towns that send students to HVRHS, who are involved with agriculture and business.

The project, located on two acres (of 18 owned by Eversource) that have been licensed from Eversource-owned land north of the school, aims to create a hands-on learning environment for students, focusing on sustainable farming, environmental education, and youth engagement with river resources. They hope to forge a greater connection to the river. A map was distributed showing a natural area for wildflowers and honeybees, a landscape construction area, and a farm-to-table section connected to the school's kitchen. Mr. Bennett mentioned that the project has received approval from the board of education, administration, and ASTE teachers, and that community members, students, and their parents are already volunteering to clear invasives. They are focusing on the school as a whole, so that art, science, and math can be included in the learning program. He has initially requested \$10K from the HRC to build an outdoor classroom—a pergola-like structure with picnic tables and storage—that could be labeled as Housatonic River Commission-supported. There was discussion about the importance of connecting the grammar schools as well.

Answering a question about riverbank integrity and water quality, there is a 30–50' buffer between the proposed site and the riverbank. An irrigation system will be needed.

Federal funds could be considered for payroll expenses for an additional ASTE teacher at HVRHS.

Mr. Bennett will come with a detailed budget for the November meeting.

**Website** – Monthly meetings to discuss updates are held with website creator, Julie Saxton.

**Invasive Plant Management** – Mr. Gambino suggested that HRC consider hiring someone to do invasive plant management. Mr. Tingley is concerned about the spread of invasive species moving downriver from Massachusetts to Connecticut as the Rest of River remediation project begins. Mr. Ransom said that dealing with invasives is generally an essential consideration with projects like the Rest of River.

## **Visitor Use Management**

**North Kent Road** – The road reopened, and there were very few issues. Mr. Ransom continues to communicate with CT DEEP officials about enforcement at the busy areas on the river.

## Access Survey and Recommendations

**Distribution/sharing process** – Mr. Jastremski will make a final edit based on the report and any feedback he’s already received. It was suggested that each commissioner go to their selectmen/mayor with the section of the report that applies to the stretch of the river in their town, and have them discuss how the River Commission can help with any issues.

**Ruggles Landing Site Plan** – Mr. Ransom continues to work on getting projects moving. Apparently, the removal of the old lodge building is on the demolition list.

Mr. Anstine has asked Tim Abbott from the Friends to prepare an invoice (grant application) to secure funding for maintenance and education at Ruggles Landing.

**Stormwater/Stream Crossing Survey** – The Steering Committee will review the report that is nearing completion.

## Ongoing Resource Issues Reports:

Gaylordsville – stone dumping in the river. Ms. Weiner reported that all the information is now with Senator Blumenthal and Rep. Jahana Hayes. She has made it clear that the Army Corps of Engineers must move forward with cleaning up the site.

## HRC Member Updates

Cornwall – Mr. Jones has recommended a replacement to the selectmen after he leaves in mid-November.

NHCOG – Ms. Better said that, as the fiscal agent, they are looking for ways to be helpful to the HRC in the area of spending down the federal funds as quickly as possible.

NPS – Jackie Dias is on furlough during the government shutdown.

CT DEEP is in the midst of planning meetings for 2026. They will run an angler survey across most of the W&S section, assessing usage and public opinion of the river.

**The Meeting was adjourned to PIE at 8:41 p.m.**

Recording Secretary,



Susan Francisco

BLEC – Berkshire Litchfield Environmental Council  
CCC – Citizens Coordinating Council  
CCT – Cornwall Conservation Trust  
DEEP – Department of Energy and Environmental Protection  
DOT – Department of Transportation  
EnCon – Connecticut Environmental Conservation Police  
EPA – Environmental Protection Agency  
FERC - Federal Energy Regulatory Commission  
FRCC – Farmington River Coordinating Committee

GE – General Electric  
H.E.A.L. – Housatonic Environmental Action League  
HMPA – Housatonic Meadows Preservation Action  
HHWG – Housatonic Herbicide Working Group  
HMSP – Housatonic Meadows State Park  
HRC – Housatonic River Commission  
HUD – Housing and Urban Development  
HVA – Housatonic Valley Association  
JKW – Japanese Knotweed  
NCD – Northwest Conservation District

NHCOG – Northwest Hills Council of Governments  
NPS – National Park Service  
RIO - River Information and Outreach  
RFP - Request For Proposal  
STEAP - Small Town Economic Assistance Program  
ZEO –Zoning Enforcement Officer

**Next regular meeting – to be rescheduled to another date in November, as the originally scheduled November 11 is Veteran’s Day** [housatonicrivercommission.org](http://housatonicrivercommission.org)