

Housatonic River Estuary Commission (HREC)

HOUSATONIC RIVER ESTUARY COMMISSION SPECIAL MEETING MINUTES Tuesday, November 24, 2009 Shelton Community Center Craft Room 3

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 Urban, Commissioner, Ansonia (arrived at 7:35 P.M.)
Scott Corner, Commissioner, Stratford (arrived at 7:40 P.M.)

Also in attendance:
Marianne Chaya, Clerk, HREC

2. PUBLIC PORTION OR GUEST

None

3. APPROVAL OF THE September 29, 2009 MEETING MINUTES

Vice Chairman Romick wanted to note that on the September meeting minutes in the Finance Report section where it stated Shelton received money on "their" behalf was intended to state on Milford's behalf, not Shelton.
There was no motion to approve the minutes because there is not a quorum.
(Note: after there was a quorum Commissioner Corner asked to not vote on approving them because he would have to abstain)

4. FINANCE REPORT

Chairman Gesullo stated that Commissioner Blake is not here to present the Finance report. He did not run a final tally but he did have a check cut for Bill Rohland for the expenses incurred in setting up the website in the amount of \$135.00. The other expense was for the clerk. He estimated the balance in the account to be around \$3000.

5. Web page Report – Commissioner Rohland

Chairman Gesullo commented that Commissioner Rohland did email a report to the Commissioners. The report is as follows:

HREC Minutes should be considered a draft version until approved at the next regular meeting.
HREC Minutes submitted to the respective town's Town Clerk's office for legal posting requirements.
Tape recording of the meeting is available at Shelton City/Town Clerk's office.

The Housatonic River Estuary Commission (HREC) domain name has been purchased. The preferred name “HREC.org” was not available, so the name “TheHREC.org” was purchased.

At the last meeting the Commissioners were polled for publishing design ideas, and input. The website has since been created and published. Slight differences from the Commissions’ original design were made. This was done primarily due to graphics issues. The contents of the website are as follows:

The Home page contains:

- The names of the current mayor of each of the 6 towns, with links to their respective town websites,
- The name of each Commissioner with a link to email any Commissioner,
- The Commissions authorization by statute,
- The Commissions Mission Statement,
- Links to the following pages, News, Photos, Meetings, and Links,
- A Hit counter.

The News page contains:

- While this page is for any news the Commission decides upon, it currently displays the newspaper article of the Achievement award won by the Stratford Waterfront Commission.

The Photos page contains:

- Various pictures of the Housatonic River

The Meetings page contains:

- The meeting schedule and minutes of The Housatonic River Estuary Commission.

The Links page contains:

- Links to the various organizations that were approved at the last meeting. The logo of each organization was used wherever possible.

Each page contains a link to the Webmaster, William Rohland, for input by any individual.

Respectfully Submitted
William Rohland

6. Year End Report

Chairman Gesullo stated that this report has to go out now to the appropriate town’s leadership. It can’t wait until the next meeting. We will do this by email. He asked Vice-Chairman Romick to send the draft to all the Commissioners again for final approval right after Thanksgiving. He will then tell all the Commissioners we need their approval right away and will have Commissioner Rohland publish this on the website.

Chairman Gesullo and Vice-Chairman Romick discussed some of the people they want to receive a copy.

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Vice-Chairman Romick commented that Commissioner Rock emailed her and said the report looked ok to him. She also noted that no one else responded to her draft other than Chairman Gesullo.

7. Sacred Heart University collaboration

Vice-Chairman Romick explained that the university is putting together a new master's program in Environmental Sciences. In order to get approved for this program they have to develop a list of courses for the 4 years for the students including a 5th year Masters course program. They gave us all the details, which were forwarded to all the Commissioners. What they wanted from us was a letter of recommendation and commitment to be available to the students. They may want to sit in on some meetings and may be involved with projects with us on the river. If they need to get sampling, there might be some vessels available. We could assist them in different sites.

Chairman Gesullo asked how they knew of us and Vice-Chairman Romick said that Dr. Mark Beekey (one of the individuals heading this up) is also on the Long Island Sound Assembly. Dr. Beekey targeted the Housatonic as a good available resource for study and research for the students for this program and picked our Commission to help them. One of the studies they could do was the one I talked about last meeting of the floatables and debris and the impact. They will be looking at not where it's coming from but what types of debris and where it is landing and the impact on marshes, bird nesting and fisheries. It may take the university about a year to get this program up and running. He also talked about some grants available to them for the students to do the work. They would need us for leadership and guidance.

Vice-Chairman Romick said she also went to DEP in regards to the supplemental environmental penalties for companies like Chromium Process who have to pay fines. These funds go into the SEP accounts to use for remediation and enhancement projects for the areas damaged. DEP said that once Sacred Heart begins their program funds would be available.

Vice-Chairman Romick said that she responded to Sacred Heart via letter and brought the letter she sent to them. She said she was sorry but they cut her letter down to one page and it left off the other Commissioner's names.

The letter sent to the University is as follows:

November 17, 2009

Kirk A. Bartholomew, PhD
Chair, Department of Biology
Sacred Heart University
5151 Park Avenue
Fairfield, CT 06825-1000

Dear Dr. Bartholomew,

The Housatonic River Estuary Commission has reviewed your invitation for participation as part of Sacred Heart's planned "Professional Science Master's in Environmental Analysis and Management" program of studies.

This commission is authorized under the State of Connecticut General Statute Sec.25-170 (Chapter 483b) to work collectively with each of the six neighboring towns as the stewards for the river for which each of these towns share borders. The Commission is composed of one representative from each town who is appointed to this Commission by the City Executives (Mayor or First Selectman) to serve a term of two years. 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 for the Housatonic River estuary that may impact its' resources. *This is a forum in which the these communities regardless of their own local or similar efforts, come together without borders to collectively work together for one common goal, the stewardship of the Housatonic River.*

The Commission wholeheartedly supports student research and stewardship projects within the river and its watershed. The HREC would encourage this collaboration and is willing to assist students with internships for much needed projects of study and education with regards to the river and its resources.

River systems are extensive and play a vital role to the ecosystem overall. Natural resources rely on watershed functions. Clean water is paramount to life. Expertise on the connecting functions of watersheds and ecosystems is needed. Not only must the values of all user groups be understood and valued, but emphasis on educational directives that imprint value of the natural resources as well as economic aspects of watersheds will drive appreciation and protection for future generations.

The Housatonic River Estuary Commission welcomes the development of this planned "Professional Science Master's in Environmental Analysis and Management" program of studies and supports collaboration with the University and its student interns to develop studies of the Housatonic River watershed.

Sincerely,

Lori Romick

Lori Romick, Milford, Vice Chair of the Housatonic River Estuary Commission

Chairman Gesullo asked why they needed the letter and Vice-Chairman Romick said it was for the academic review board that will accreditate the master's program. Chairman Gesullo said that this Commission wishes them well for their program and looks forward to collaboration.

They agreed that this is a very big step forward for this Commissioner and along with the website we may actually be able to achieve something.

8. Commissioners remarks

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Vice-Chairman Romick stated that she was re-appointed for another 2-year term from her Mayor.

Chairman Gesullo said he checked from Shelton's mayor and he was told that he is still appointed until he is told otherwise.

Vice-Chairman Romick said she followed up on the issue with Chromium Process after the administrative hearing proceedings. After the hearings DEP was going to tentatively deny their renewal of their application. Chromium Process has filed an appeal at the CT Superior court. There was a stipulated judgment from the DEP. Right now Chromium Process is not discharging. There will be fines and penalties. Those fines and penalties will be put aside into a SEP funds. The DEP indicated these funds would be available to us (unknown amount). In this program the funds are to be used for the areas damaged by the company, such as the river. These funds could be used for us and the Sacred Heart students for studies.

Commission Urban arrived at 7:35 P.M.

Commissioner Corner arrived at 7:40 P.M. He said he got home at 7:15 and had a message from Commissioner Rock saying he couldn't make it and asked him to come to the meeting.

Chairman Gesullo and Vice-Chairman Romick brought the two Commissioners up to speed on what they discussed earlier.

Vice-Chairman Romick continued with her report. She said she followed up with the issue at Baldwin Station where the trees were cut along the riverbank. I emailed everyone regarding this and copied Mayor Richitelli. Mayor Richitelli emailed the Inland Wetlands coordinator to find out exactly what was going on and if he could offer any assistance. The IWC coordinator responded with a listing of the history of the incident and the current status. The Mayor and I decided we would give them until the spring to see what holds. If in the spring there any signs of erosion or sedimentation coming down that they would have to go back and remediate.

Commissioner Corner mentioned that whole trees are washing down the river and catching at the bridges in Stratford. It was discussed that this has been happening for years but seems to be getting worse in the last couple of years.

Chairman Gesullo commented that Milford is now on notice that someone is watching the Baldwin Station area.

Vice-Chairman Romick stated that this Commission needs to decide if we want to promote a change in the state statutes for year-round requirement for wearing PFD for kayakers. Commissioner Rohland brought this issue up at the last meeting.

She mentioned that thanks to Commissioner Rock the Long Island Sound Assembly is also approving it. I did draft a change for the state statute that we would have to send to one of our local state reps to submit for us. This would have to be submitted by January 1st to be part of this session. Residents/citizens cannot submit anything this year – it is every other year. Because of that we have to have it submitted directly through the legislature.

She mentioned that the American Canoe Association supports the year-round use of PFD's. Chairman Gesullo commented that all the professional organizations support this.

Vice-Chairman Romick said she also contacted the DEP and was assured they fully support this legislation as well, for the main reason that it allows the people to not get exhausted and gives us the ability to find them quickly because they will be floating. She mentioned that people don't just use ponds for kayaking; they use the rivers and the Long Island Sound.

Commissioner Corner suggested pushing for identification on paddleboats.

Chairman Gesullo said that the Coast Guard provides that service for free.

Commissioner Corner talked about all the times they find boats and they are not registered and when they find a boat, they assume there is a body that goes along with it and a search ensues.

Vice-Chairman Romick said she has a draft of the change for the legislation and would like a motion to proceed with sending it to the legislators. The

Commissioners agreed that she should send it.

Chairman Gesullo said he has no report from Shelton.

Commissioner Corner said he has no report from Stratford.

Commissioner Urban said he has no report from Ansonia.

9. New Business

Commissioner Corner said they are going to start talking about the river cleanup early. They will probably be looking at doing the cleanup about the same time as this year, depending on the tides (early in May). They cleaned up 37 tons of debris from the cleanup this year. He also mentioned that we are looking at different sources for money. It is becoming tougher every year to get contributions. We were off about \$1000 from the year before.

Tape 1, Side B

Commissioner Corner said that one of the big expenses for the cleanup day is the food for the volunteers.

10. 2010 Meeting Schedule

The meeting dates for 2010 are as follows:

The Commission will meet the 4th Tuesday of each month @ 7PM. Meeting places are noted as follows:

January 26 - Shelton

March 23 - Milford

May 25 - Stratford

July 27 - Stratford

September 28 - Shelton

November 23 – Shelton

Vice-Chairman Romick mentioned that last year we talked about taking a boat tour of the river. Chairman Gesullo said most likely he could get a Coast Guard boat to use.

It was noted that since we have changed the meeting dates it should be changed in the bylaws.

Commissioner Urban MOVED to change the bylaws to reflect the Commission is now meeting bi-monthly. SECONDED by Vice-Chairman Romick. All were in favor, MOTION PASSED.

11. Adjournment

Vice-Chairman Romick MOVED to adjourn. SECONDED by Commissioner Urban. All were in favor, MEETING ADJOURNED at 8:22 P.M.

Respectfully submitted,

Marianne Chaya
Clerk, HREC