

Upper Delaware Council
OPERATIONS COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES
May 22, 2018

Committee Members Present: Aaron Robinson, Larry Richardson, David Dean, Al Henry, Jeff Dexter
Harold Roeder, Jr, Jim Greier
Committee Members Absent: Fred Peckham
NPS Partner: Kris Heister, Carla Hahn, Jennifer Cluster
Staff: Laurie Ramie, Pete Golod, Linda Drollinger
Guests: Roger Saumure

The UDC's Operations Committee held its monthly meeting on Tuesday, May 22, 2018 at the Council Office in Narrowsburg, NY. Chairperson Aaron Robinson called the meeting to order at 8:15 p.m.

Approval of April 24 Meeting Minutes: A motion by Greier, seconded by Henry, to approve the April 24 meeting minutes was carried. There was no public comment on the agenda.

Executive Director's Report & Monthly Calendar:

Ramie noted that she was on vacation from 4/28-5/6 during this report period.

FY 2018 Federal Funding: Ramie reported that Superintendent Heister estimated on 5/18 that NPS should be ready to obligate the balance of funding owed for FY 2018 "within the next week." A revised UDC budget, budget narrative, work plan, SF-424, 424-A, 424-B, and Certificate of Lobbying forms are now required to be submitted in order to implement any modifications, including addition of funds, to the Cooperative Agreement under new guidance received from the NPS Northeast Region on 4/26. Ramie reported that she was unable to access the ASAP federal account due to an internal server error that required calling the U.S. Treasury's Technical Support and setting up a new account. Ramie requested a drawdown of \$14,414.87 on 5/22, which left a zero balance and a shortfall of \$5,155.05 based on the May abstract totaling \$19,569.92. The UDC's financial and narrative progress reports for the second quarter (January through March) were submitted to NPS on 4/26. Corrections to the SF-425 form were provided as per NPS instruction on 5/9. The UDC has expended \$121,825.53 in federal dollars from October through March (first 6 months). Ramie requested a FY2018 spending analysis from UDC bookkeeper Mike Poska, who was vacationing from 5/16-22. She reviewed the worksheet of expenditures to date and projected spending through September 30, which was attached to her report, with the Committee.

Administrative Issues:

Storm Aftermath: The severe thunderstorm and accompanying microburst/tornadoes occurring in late afternoon of May 15 caused a power outage in Narrowsburg, forcing cancellation of the WU/RM Committee meeting scheduled for that evening and closure of the UDC office for the remainder of the work week. Power was restored late Friday night. Ramie attended the NY-PA Joint Interstate Bridge Commission meeting in Binghamton on 5/16, met Poska in the UDC office later in the day to review vouchers and bookkeeping reports, and worked from home Thursday and Friday, coming in to the office to catch up on Saturday. Administrative leave is provided for staff when hazardous weather conditions necessitate office closures or delayed opening.

Attic Stairs: The pulldown stairs were discovered to be broken (unable to open the latch and pull down stairs) on 5/10, when Ramie attempted to go upstairs for brochures stored there. Repeated calls to a contracting firm from 5/10 to 5/22 went unanswered after an initial promise of job evaluation on 5/10 that didn't occur. On 5/22, Ramie called a different contractor to provide an estimate for temporary repair and/or permanent replacement of the stairs. Having received no reply by close of business, she asked the Committee to recommend other reputable contractors. Henry, who has made temporary repairs to the stairs in the recent past, said the stairs are unsafe and should be replaced with

permanent steps built to meet code requirements. The Committee offered several suggestions. Ramie said she hoped to receive estimates for construction of a new staircase along with the temporary repair needed.

Staff Training: Golod has advised that his schedule will not allow him to participate in the final two courses (summer and fall sessions) of the Penn State World Campus GIS certification program. The \$5,200 allocated for his training will need to be reallocated.

Promotional T-Shirts: The \$205 cost of two dozen T-shirts bearing the UDC logo and a map of the Upper Delaware picked up by Drollinger on 5/21 will be paid from UDC funds. The UDC requests a \$15 donation per shirt. The T-shirts are promoted on the UDC website and will be taken to summer events.

Public Relations: Ramie issued three news releases: “UDC Has Upper Delaware T-Shirts for \$15 donation” (4/24); “UDC Awards River Cleanup Grants” (5/8); and “NY-PA Joint Interstate Bridge Commission Updates Status of Upper Delaware Bridges,” with a photo taken on 5/16 at Kellams-Stalker Bridge (5/17). Congressman Faso issued a news release about his UDC Advocacy Award on 4/27. Potential next topics: 8/5 UDC Raft Trip; UDC 2018 Membership; River Cleanup Grants Outcome; 2018 TAG Awards Projects Completed; Project Review Guide.

2018 Summer Events: Staff assignments for summer weekend events are as follows: June 16-18 Delaware River Sojourn (LR intermittently for newsletter coverage); June 30 Upper Delaware BioBlitz (PG & LD); July 14 NPS Zane Grey Festival (PG and LD); July 22 Narrowsburg Riverfest (LD & LR); August 5 UDC Raft Trip (LD & LR). Although there is already a raft trip registration “button” on the UDC home page, more publicity for the event will follow shortly. Registration is due by 7/27. Cost: \$27 for adults, \$17 for children ages 5-12 for the trip from Skinners Falls to Ten Mile River, with rendezvous at Skinners Falls Campground between 9-10 a.m.

Ramie said the rest of her written report was self-explanatory. She also referenced the June calendar of meetings, activities and deadlines.

Old Business:

5/4 NPS Annual Water Safety Partners’ Meeting: Golod attended this meeting of NPS rangers, interpretive staff and livery owners held at the UDC office. He noted that 69 drownings have occurred in the Upper Delaware since 1980. In hope of dramatically reducing that figure, NPS has implemented a free life jacket loaner program for swimmers. There has been a recent decrease in life jacket use among swimmers, down from 51.1% in 2016 to 45.6% in 2017. Golod emphasized that this is true for swimmers only, not for rafters, canoers, kayakers, or boaters, and that liveries provide life jackets to their clientele. But when the river is 6 feet above normal height, 100% of swimmers are wearing life jackets, as required by NPS. Golod said the good news is swimmers are taking the loaner life jackets from stations at various access points and using them. The bad news is they sometimes fail to return them. But that was found to be due in part because the color of the jackets was identical to that of some livery jackets. New jackets will be red and blue, with NPS ownership clearly indicated on each. Heister said two interns hired for the 2018 summer season will have responsibility for life jacket inventory. In addition to placing loaner stations at Minisink, Skinners Falls and Narrowsburg access points, two new “Wear It” billboards are planned for placement on Route 652 East and at the junction of Route 6 and 434 near Lake Wallenpaupack. Regarding particular safety issues anticipated this season, the Pond Eddy Bridge causeway has contributed to high waves and white water conditions in that area of the river.

5/18 UPDE Response to Unrestricted Fund Investigation Reimbursement Appeal: A copy of this letter from UPDE Superintendent Heister, along with the original 5/11 letter from Ramie and a referenced 9/14/17 letter from Heister, was included in the meeting packet. The UDC letter appealed the NPS decision to reimburse UDC for less than 100% of the \$7,829 cost incurred as a result of the Unrestricted Funds Investigation mandated by NPS. Heister stated that NPS is under no obligation to award additional funds above the existing \$300,000 annual award to UDC. Heister wrote, “However, in the spirit of our partnership, the NPS did commit to reimbursing the UDC for greater than 50% of those costs. As stated at the April 2018 Operations Committee meeting, the NPS is willing to reimburse

additional costs if failure to do so will interfere with the ability of the UDC to complete the work outlined in our agreement. To date, the UDC has provided no information on how incurring these costs has impeded its ability to implement their 2018 work plan or tasks associated with our agreement.” Heister acknowledged that, under the existing Cooperative Agreement between NPS and UDC, the UDC has the authority to make changes within budget categories as long as those changes represent less than 10% of the total annual budget. That would pave the way for UDC to reallocate unused funds accrued by the secretary vacancy and denied Berlin TAG grant award. To do so, UDC would need to reflect those changes in the documentation/budget being submitted for Modification 9 of the Cooperative Agreement. Heister concluded her letter, “If at some point later in the year the UDC is able to more clearly describe a specific project(s) that requires additional funding with a clear scope of work and reasonable cost estimate we are happy to reconsider this decision if funds are available. Please note that the cutoff date for modifications to our agreement is July 10, 2018.” Ramie summarized the appeal response as a “big fat no.” But Henry said it wasn’t necessarily a no. Heister said UDC has suffered no harm as a result of the investigation. Roeder responded that the unwarranted investigation cost the UDC a valued employee (Cindy Odell resignation). Henry said the NPS demand for financial information previously submitted was overly burdensome in terms of time, cost and effort, and that he was not satisfied with the NPS response that addressed only the compliance of interest payments. Heister said she had requested a more comprehensive response from Heidi Sage, who reviewed the information, but did not get one. Henry said that, as UPDE Superintendent and the UDC’s partner, she should have demanded it.

New Business:

NPS/Local Police Forces: Robinson introduced discussion of the NPS role in establishment and funding of local police departments. He noted that it was with NPS instigation and funding that some of the police departments and constabularies within corridor municipalities were founded, but that funding for them has since ended, leaving municipalities to bear the entire cost burden of their departments. As a result, some have been disbanded. Others have been severely reduced in size. Dean remarked that, once established, a police force is usually self-perpetuating. Robinson suggested that a study be undertaken to determine how the law enforcement contracts were originally funded by NPS, along with trash removal, where we are at now, and what the needs are currently. During the ensuing discussion, it was discovered that not all towns in the corridor initiated their own police departments. Some, like Cochection, Delaware and Fremont, opted to apply their federal funding for additional police resources to the Sheriff’s Department and/or New York State Police. Heister said the study should investigate need for assistance with river-based criminal activity; Robinson disagreed, saying criminal activity within the river corridor should be the focus of study, on the basis that the enabling legislation for the Upper Delaware addresses health, safety and welfare in the river corridor. Heister said she did not understand the objective and said that if it’s to increase funding, she has no more money to give. No action was taken.

Summary of Pending Bills: A motion by Henry, seconded by Roeder, to pay bills as noted on the April 24, 2018 Abstract of Bills handout, was carried.

Financial Statements 05-31-18: The Financial Statement was provided in the meeting packet for individual review.

Public Comment: None

Adjournment: A motion by Roeder, seconded by Henry, to adjourn the meeting at 9:40 p.m. was carried.

Minutes prepared by Linda Drollinger, 5/25/18