

**Upper Delaware Council
OPERATIONS COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES
January 26, 2021**

Committee Members Present: Jeff Dexter, Larry Richardson, Aaron Robinson, Al Henry, Fred Peckham, Jim Greier, David Dean.
Committee Members Absent: None.
Staff : Laurie Ramie, Shannon Cilento, Ashley Hall-Bagdonas
NPS Partner: Joseph Salvatore, Cody Hendrix
Guests: Roger Saumure- Shohola Township Alternate

The UDC's Operations Committee held its monthly meeting via Zoom on Tuesday, January 26, 2021. Chairperson Richardson called the meeting to order at 8:06 p.m.

Election of Committee Chair and Vice-Chair for 2021: A motion by Richardson, seconded by Peckham, to elect Jeff Dexter as Committee Chairperson was carried. A motion by Richardson, seconded by Henry, to elect Fred Peckham as Vice-Chairperson was carried. A motion by Richardson seconded by Dean to close the election nominations carried.

Approval of December 15 Meeting Minutes: A motion by Richardson seconded Henry to approve the December 15, 2020 Meeting Minutes was carried.

Executive Director's Report and Monthly Calendar:

Financial Status:

FY 2021 Federal Funding: Ramie prepared a budget for the \$225,000 balance of FY 21 funding, a narrative report, updated work plan, and SF-424 Application for Federal Assistance documents with attachments. This was finalized on 1/15 and she uploaded files to the Grant Solutions program. She received word from UPDE Administrative Officer Michelle Blockberger on 1/19 that she was unable to access the documents in the federal government's new financial management system. Blockberger requested that the 55-page packet be scanned and emailed, which Ramie did on 1/19. On 1/19, Blockberger offered the option that the UDC can proceed with annual reporting for the Performance Progress and Federal Financial Report SF-425 forms rather than the prior quarterly or the anticipated semi-annual schedule, which Ramie accepted. Grant Solutions is sending out late filing notices to grant recipients regardless of the reporting dates, pending a fix to that software glitch. Ramie withdrew the remaining \$12,566.21 balance in the ASAP account on 1/26 to apply toward the UDC's January federal expenses of \$19,704.82, leaving a deficit of \$7,138.61 which the UDC must pay out of its own funds until a new allocation of funds is approved. As is occurring at UPDE, NPS Northeast Regional Agreement Specialist Heidi Wiley has also been unable to access Grant Solutions. Blockberger reported that Wiley expects to begin review of the UDC's SF-424 package on 1/26 and will be in touch with any questions. Salvatore said he's concerned with this as well. Anytime the government launches a new system, it can be frustrating. He said please keep calling Regional regularly. He stressed that this is one of his number one priorities. Ramie said she's hoping because there is a new person looking at this there aren't a whole lot of questions; she said having Blockberger there is our biggest asset.

Financial Review: Ramie sent the 1/7 approved resolution and engagement letter for the FY 2021 Financial Review to Eckersley & Davis LLP. We received final IRS 990 form, NYS Charities Bureau 500 form, and 11 copies of the FY 20 Independent Accountants' Review on 1/19. She obtained officer signatures for the tax forms and payment for the state filing to return on 1/26. IRS Form 990 and attachments are being filed electronically.

NYS Funding for Upper Delaware: The advocacy petition from the Alliance for the Upper Delaware River Watershed which states, "I support the need for New York State to recognize the value of the Upper Delaware River region below the NYC reservoirs by investing in its long-term protection and restoration beginning in 2021" was circulated by the UDC as a co-sponsor via email and social media on 12/30/20. Ramie said it has garnered 454 signatures as of 1/25/2021 based on the UDC's petition. Ramie said that shows you the power of social media.

Ramie said Governor Cuomo has announced his budget and she doesn't know if there is any funding in there for the Upper Delaware River Watershed. She said the seed has been planted that at least there could be a line-item for it in the future.

Administration:

UDC Strategic Plan: Ramie circulated three options of language for the draft mission statement on 12/22 then prepared a matrix of the responses. She edited the draft "Five-Year Operating Program" submitted by facilitators Buck and Remy Moorhead. Following UDC approval of its resolution on 1/7, Ramie sent the final plan to NPS on 1/8 and it was posted online. Ramie prepared a news release on 1/19 to announce its public availability. The next step will be to work with the consultants on designing the Executive Summary excerpt of the plan for distribution upon request.

Annual Outreach: Hall-Bagdonas sent 2021 UDC Membership Updates to each member municipality to advise the UDC of any appointment changes for representatives and alternates, as well as Conflict of Interest Disclosure Statements for board members to complete. The only change we've had so far is with the Town of Fremont. Jim Greier is remaining as Representative but they have replaced George Conklin, the former Alternate, with Pam Reinhardt. The UDC presented an award to her and the Upper Delaware Chapter of Trout Unlimited for setting up the Trout in the Classroom program. Conklin has moved on to the Sullivan County Legislature. An appreciation letter will be sent to Conklin and an orientation folder to Reinhardt. Officer signatures have been obtained for authorization of transactions for the UDC's Jeff Bank accounts. An Anti-Sexual Harassment Training video link was sent on 1/12 with a request to view it to obtain certifications by 2/4. Ramie updated the Political Representatives Directory to reflect the 2020 election results. (a copy was provided in the meeting packet.) Henry said he never received the Conflict of Interest Disclosure Statements. Hall-Bagdonas said she has noticed a lot of mail is slightly backed up right now. She will send the form out via email so members have more than one way to return the document. Ramie said speaking of the mail, we've become aware that the newsletters are just getting delivered now. They went to the Post Office on 12/4 and we are just receiving a bunch of Winter 2020 address changes now. Ramie realizes they go out under bulk mail which is the lowest priority in the U.S. Postal Service chain of command. Henry said expect a 4-6 week delay with that kind of mailing. Ramie said we actually received a termination notice from NYSEG our electric company, that our service would be suspended as of 1/30 because they hadn't received our payment when we hadn't received our bill. Our bookkeeper went online to pay it.

Public Relations:

Publicity: Four news releases we issued: "UDC PA Grant Nurtures Care Cabin Food Pantry in Lackawaxen Township", 12/22; "Upper Delaware Council Launches Project Review Video on Jan. 25" (by Cilento), 1/7; "Upper Delaware Council Elects 2021 Officers", 1/8; and "Upper Delaware Council Releases Five-Year Plan", 1/19. Ramie requested a River Reporter correction to a wrong date for Workbook video launch on 1/14.

"The Upper Delaware": The Spring 2021 issue is due to Courier Printing by 3/24 for a 4/5 release.

Annual Event Dates: Ramie noted that the annual date for our UDC 33rd Annual Awards Banquet is set for 4/25 at Central House Family Resort in Beach Lake, PA with PA Representative Jonathan Fritz as a speaker. That's a carry over from last Spring when we delayed it three times. Ramie said end of April still may be ambitious for having any sort of banquet gathering. She said the schedule for that event is so intensive it's backed up two months to start soliciting public nominations for the award, one month for picking from the nominations, and taking reservations. She thinks by next month we should make a firm decision if we will be able to have the 4/25 event. Central House has provisions in place for COVID and social distancing.

The 33rd Annual Family Raft Trip is set for Sunday 8/1. The river segment is to be determined.

Consulting Projects:

Ten Mile River Access Boat Ramp Feasibility Study: Ramie received the cost estimates and a final design plan from JHA Companies which were evaluated by the Water Use/Resource Management Committee on 1/19. She sent a letter with follow-up questions on 1/20. She will meet with NPS Superintendent Joe Salvatore and staff on 1/28 to discuss enforcement of the NPS prohibition on trailered boat launching at the TMR Access.

Grants/Fundraising:

UDC Benefit T-shirts: The UDC agreed to supply t-shirts to the Equinunk General Store upon request of the proprietor for an \$11 wholesale rate experimentally, with a \$15 cap on what she can charge for them. Hall-Bagdonas set up a PayPal account to facilitate sales of UDC products and tickets on 12/28. The additional supply of shirts was received from Platform Industries in Honesdale at a cost of \$371.25. This is a non-federal, UDC expense. Ramie said maybe this will catch on and other outlets will be interested in selling these shirts. She said there aren't really any shirts that have both sides of the river featured that way, so it makes it an interesting product.

Ramie's report provides a list of meetings she's involved in beyond the UDC committee meetings along with a list of correspondence. Also provided is the February calendar.

Old Business

UDC Social Media Analytics: Cilento provided a Social Media Report for members. Updates include Instagram (last 30 days): 62 posts, 545 followers (+265) 3,076 accounts reached (115% increase), 9,571 impressions (post views) (50% increase), 522 profile visits, 17 website clicks in profile, 716 content interactions (9% increase), 631 likes, 23 comments, 10 saves, 45 shares (all increases). For our Facebook (last 30 days) we have: 223 followers (+59), 177 likes (+44). 6,010 people reached with posts (about 4,000 more than last month). There have been 411 post engagements (likes, comments, shares). We have had 103 distinct page views. On the UDC LinkedIn we have 72 followers (+5 since December). Dexter said a lot of good positive information was provided in that update.

Dan Nelson Logo Proposal for Litter Sweep: Hall-Bagdonas said last month she gave committee members a little introduction about Dan Nelson. He's very involved in the Pig Farm Ink River Clean-Ups in the Upper Delaware. At the 12/15 meeting as well as previous Water Use/Resource Management meetings she had shared flyers from the previous Pig Farm Ink Clean-Ups. Henry requested at the 12/15 meeting that Nelson provide a written proposal. The packets had a copy of email correspondence of his poster proposal for \$300. He is open to UDC being able to reuse the poster if we have Litter Sweeps in the future. Hall-Bagdonas thought that was pretty thoughtful that we could change the date and sponsors at the bottom of the promotional poster. Ramie said the Upper Delaware Litter Sweep was an item in our PA Grant Budget and because Dan Paparella (former event coordinator) moved away we were able to only pay him partially for his services rendered up until the time he left. As of 10/19 we have spent \$1,766.25 of the \$3,000 we had allocated. The remainder has not been allocated to anything as of yet because we anticipated that would be needed for coordinator services. Now Cilento and Hall-Bagdonas have agreed to take that task on in-house. Cilento wanted to add that when we shared on UDC's Facebook our Litter Sweep call for volunteers post, we have had 41 shares and it reached 5,293 people. Hall-Bagdonas received emails after that post about interest to help and that was really positive. Cilento said if we have an eye-catching flyer, we may be able to get even more engagement and volunteers. Hall-Bagdonas feels this would also be a great way to partner with the active Upper Delaware volunteers found at these at these events. A Motion by Henry seconded by Peckham to accept Nelson's \$300.00 proposal to design an event flyer for the Upper Delaware Litter Sweep carried.

Other: None.

New Business

Fiscal Year 2021 Updated Budget: Ramie provided a copy of the UDC FY 2021 Budget in the meeting packet. She notes we have zero dollars allocated for River Clean-Up Grants because we ran out of money when we tried to allocate \$225,000 and there are only so many discretionary lines that she can cut. Most of them are fixed costs. Ramie said when you are operating on the same \$300,000 each year eventually something has to give. She said that is what has to give in this particular scenario. She said she doesn't know if we have to give up completely on the idea because perhaps when we get around to when we solicit proposals for River Clean-Up Applications, we can shift some funds around. For example, now that we are doing Zoom meetings we don't have the mileage expenses. Ramie said she and Mike Poska have already accounted for knowing we're not paying mileage though. She said we also made the decision to increase the level of Technical Assistance Grants. We had originally budgeted \$20,000 and compromised with the three applications received to increase it to \$25,000. Ramie said there is no fat in the budget because we don't have any to give. She said we are even paying less than minimum wage as per the newly proposed Federal minimum wage for one of our positions. Ramie said she does wish we could do something about that in the future to make sure that salary is commensurate with the level of responsibility that is involved. She said these are all issues to keep in mind as we move forward and try to stretch that \$300,000 every year to accommodate costs that naturally go up. Ramie said please keep in mind right now, no River Clean-Up Grants, and maybe that's a

message we need to send because frankly if we don't show what the consequences are of having the flat level funding the people in charge would assume we are coping with it. She said it feels like a sacrifice and would hate to see it happen because a couple of the Town/ships do these each year for their municipalities through what was once funded by the NPS. When those funds were removed for trash services they opted to keep going because it was important and UDC picked it up as an expense. Salvatore said he sees what the budget allocations are for UPDE. He said he will do what he can to advocate for more funding. He said, unfortunately with the strained fiscal issues he's not real optimistic.

Dexter said that Damascus Township was one of the Town/ships that worked on river cleanups until that funding for trash services was removed. He said once or twice he believes UDC was short money to do this and the NPS gave some funds towards those cleanups. Ramie said the first year of doing the Clean-Ups was through a \$3,000 allocation that an Acting Superintendent had found for UDC and didn't come out of UDC funds. Ever since, UDC has taken it from our own operating budget. Salvatore said many Superintendents depend of base funding. They don't go after project funding. Project funding is a service-wide funding that is up for grabs. Their priority accounts might not be as high as Yellowstone or the Grand Canyon but he is telling his staff to think everything as a project. You can build a project and put it in the system. This River Clean Up can be sold as a cyclical project. He said he has a vacancy in his Facilities Manager position and the scope of work he's looking from candidates is understanding the fund sources that Washington and Regional hand out and understanding contracting. Henry said he appreciates Salvatore taking a look at that. He asked while he's scrutinizing the NPS budget there may be a miniscule amount of lapse funding he may be able to address this issue with. Salvatore said the funds continue to dwindle every year. He said we appreciate the President giving NPS a 1.5% increase on salaries but when they do that it's a hit to the budget and you don't get a 1.5% appropriates increase. He said these things happen and things continue to dwindle. He said UPDE is at 90% labor costs right now. He said as far as base operations or base funding goes, there's not a lot of slush let. Salvatore just had a Management Team meeting and talked about requirements as far as what's needed. He said he's done assessments since he's been here and every division is understaffed. He wants to look at it on a business aspect and how can they be more fiscally responsible which is go after funding outside of their base funding. He said there are a lot of funding sources out there that have looked at UPDE's requests. They will look at projects such as Zane Grey and needing to fix a bridge but they don't get down into the weeds that every five years the bridge needs to be painted. He wants to hire a Facilities Manager that's savvy with cyclical funding that will offset labor costs. Richardson said he wanted to remind committee members that Kris Heister told them on more than one occasion that we should have projects beyond our budget, ready to go and ready to submit. He said this could be one of them. Heister had said occasionally when it gets to the end of the budget year there may be some extra funding and if she had a project from us that was ready to go she could possibly fund that. Salvatore said he and Hendrix will work with UDC very closely regarding that. He said let's scope those projects out and see how they compete. If you don't ask you're not going to get it and every dollar counts. Saumure asked if projects that generate a return are easier to get? Salvatore said UPDE are revenue generating they have concessionaires such as liveries and permits. That's a program that would have to go through the Solicitor. He said we are obviously under a new Administration but nevertheless he thinks everyone is in the business of finding ways to offset their costs.

Personnel Subcommittee Recommendation: Permanent Employee Status: Henry said the Subcommittee met with Cilento and their wholehearted unanimous recommendation was to move her up to a permanent position status. Ramie said Cilento reached the end of her six-month probationary period on 1/15. Ramie did her Appraisal Interview on 1/12 and Cilento met with the Personnel Subcommittee via Zoom on 1/13. Next a Resolution would come before Full Council on 2/4 to advance her from probationary to permanent full-time employment. Ramie included a draft Resolution in the meeting packet. A Motion by Henry seconded by Dexter to send the Personnel Subcommittee Recommendation to the 2/4 full Council carried. Henry thanked Cilento for her diligence and hard work, saying she is a great asset to the UDC.

Letter of Support for Hancock Partners Grant Application: Ramie said we received a request from the Hancock Partners who are interested in a pretty ambitious improvement project for the Junction Pool River Access in the Village of Hancock. That's the one past the Waste Water Treatment Plant. There's a lack of signage there and it has a few picnic tables and benches but is not too well developed. The Hancock Partners is basically an economic development organization within Hancock and they are going to submit a grant application through the NPS Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program. It's due by 2/22. We have been asked through a letter by their new Director, Valerie Senese, to support their grant application. The letter laid out what the project would involve. It

includes better signage, a larger parking area, Japanese Knotweed remediation, bank stabilization, green space preservation, a hand boat river launch and a river trail to connect Junction Pool to Fireman's Park. Ramie said we've seen a lot of these come through the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation; they are simply the administrators of the Delaware River Restoration Grants. It's a 1:1 match and it does require a lot of partnerships and in-kind support. Hancock Partners has reached out to the Upper Delaware Scenic Byway (UDSB), Friends of the Upper Delaware River (FUDR) and UDC among others. Ramie proposed that we support their efforts to apply for this grant. A Motion by Richardson seconded by Henry for the Draft Letter of Support be sent to the 2/4 Full Council meeting with a recommendation by the Operations Committee to have the Chairperson sign it carried.

PA Grant Update and Fiscal Sustainability Plan: Ramie included that latest Balance Sheet. We receive interest that is compounded every week. The latest grant that we processed was Lackawaxen Township for construction and equipment expenses for the Care Cabin food pantry. They spent just under the \$15,000. We still have Damascus and Berlin Township to complete their projects. The deadline for this is the end of the calendar year 12/31/2021. On 1/22 Ramie sent a request to both of those Townships to check in. She hasn't heard back from Berlin Township but she did hear from Steve Adams from Damascus Township. They have a two-part project: an addition to their food pantry and also to improve the outhouses for the Damascus Forest Trail. Adams said the outhouses are going to be completed in the Spring, thanks to Dexter and his family providing a lot of that labor. The food pantry bid package will be put out in the next week. Adams said he held off on that due to COVID. Ramie said they are still within the time-frame for this. She did stress to the Townships that UDC does not want to do partial payments. Henry said he spoke with Berlin Supervisor Cathy Hunt last week and the biggest part of the \$15,000 is the paving for Berlin Township. They have someone lined up but have to wait for better weather. Henry said he or Hunt will get the information to her.

Political Representatives Directory: Ramie said after the 2020 Elections we had a few changes. She updated the Political Representatives Directory we use for in-house purposes. Updates were made to the President, Vice-President, and NYS Senator Mike Martucci who replaces Jen Metzger. In the NYS Assembly that represents Delaware County (122th District) Cliff Crouch had retired and the victor in the race is Joseph Angelino. Ramie will be sending introductory letters telling them who UDC is and what we do. Henry recommends that we reach out to Rep. Matt Cartwright who is on the Appropriations Committee to invite him and Rep. Antonio Delgado to a Zoom meeting with UDC. Dexter said he thinks that's a great idea and asked Ramie to set it up. Ramie said she wants to make sure we have a professional presentation in place because they are so busy it's important to maximize their time.

Summary of Pending Bills 1/25/2021: A Motion by Henry seconded by Richardson to approve bills carried.

Financial Statement 1/31/2021: Dexter said the financial statement is offered for individual review.

Other: None.

Public Comment: None.

Adjournment: A motion by Peckham seconded by Richardson to adjourn the meeting at 9:07 p.m. was carried.