

Upper Delaware Council
OPERATIONS COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES
October 25, 2016

Committee Present: Fred Peckham, David Dean, Harold Roeder, Jr., Larry Richardson, Alan Henry, Aaron Robinson
Committee Absent: Jeff Dexter
NPS Partner: None
Staff: Laurie Ramie, Cindy Odell, Pete Golod
Guests: None

The UDC's Operations Committee held its monthly meeting on Tuesday, October 25, 2016 at the Council office in Narrowsburg, NY. Chairperson Peckham called the meeting to order at 7:32 p.m.

Approval of September 27 Meeting Minutes: A motion by Roeder seconded by Richardson to approve the September 27 meeting minutes was carried with Robinson abstaining. There was no public comment on the agenda.

Executive Director's Report: Ramie reported that we have access to our federal funding as of today. She said she received Modification No. 3 to the UDC Cooperative Agreement on October 24th obligating funding for the period of October 1 through midnight on December 9 in accordance with Continuing Resolution Public Law 114-223, dated September 29th. This represents 19.08% of our \$300,000 for Fiscal Year 2017. Ramie said she requested a funding drawdown earlier in the day to cover the October abstract of bills. She told members that she responded to NPS Northeast Region Agreements Officer Jennifer Fleming's questions on September 29 and October 21 regarding the UDC Financial Assistance submissions and budget. A brief discussion about a possible government shutdown took place.

The Eckersley and Ostrowski, LLP team will be on-site November 9, 10, and 14 to review the UDC's financial records to prepare the FY 2016 audit, Ramie stated. Dick Eckersley will deliver a findings report at the November 22nd Operations Committee meeting.

Ramie said that the Personnel Subcommittee will offer a report under New Business regarding Resource Specialist Golod's performance appraisal which was conducted earlier this evening. Based on the recommendation of the Committee, a draft resolution will be prepared regarding his employment status for the November full Council meeting.

Ramie reported that the staff met with board member Aaron Robinson and Dorene Warner of W Design on October 5th to further discuss digitization of UDC meeting documents and adding a member portal for on-line access. Use of this portal will be voluntary for members. She provided details of the meeting and said we await additional research and service costs.

Ramie noted that staff committed extra time this month to various research projects. One of those projects was obtaining information on the Schoharie Valley's Early Warning System for Gilboa Dam. She said she also arranged an October 7th meeting at the request of the Town of Delaware supervisor to discuss the corridor boundary map, the status of their zoning law substantial conformance determination, and solar project issues. Ramie said results of our research showed that the Park Service has not taken action on the Town's most recent zoning law update after receiving proper documentation from the UDC. Richardson said he appreciates that the Town of Delaware took this initiative to clarify its position. He said we may have differences of opinions about how to make determinations, but if we all have the aim of protecting the river corridor and trying to follow the guidelines of the River Management Plan (RMP), we can find a way to work issues out. Roeder agreed, adding that the Town acknowledges they are part of the Management Plan and intend for it to stay that way. Peckham referred to the RMP as a compromise and said it was drafted to have flexibility in it. Henry questioned what year it was when the letter regarding the Town of Delaware's substantial conformance review was sent to the Park Service. Ramie said it was May of 2013 that the UDC sent a favorable recommendation to Superintendent Sean McGuinness. Henry suggested that the UDC implement a tracking system to monitor the status of UDC correspondence and requested actions to and from the National Park Service to save on research time. Members shared ideas for accomplishing this.

Ramie said she updated the Draft Position Paper on Large-Scale Solar Energy Systems and prepared a cover memo to the 13 towns and townships which was distributed on October 13 with responses requested by December 30th.

Henry made a motion that a procedure for tracking documents to the National Park Service be developed. This motion was seconded by Richardson. Dean suggested that acknowledgement of NPS receiving documents should be part of the system. Richardson recommended a spreadsheet be used for documenting the information. A vote was taken and the motion passed. Richardson suggested bringing the proposed tracking system back to the Operations Committee for further discussion.

Ramie said that staff also spent time looking up the history and outcome of the UDC's Draft Position Paper on Natural Gas Exploration in the Upper Delaware Scenic and Recreational River Corridor at the request of the NPS superintendent to provide some direction for how to handle the solar energy position paper. She showed members a copy of an outline dated November 18, 2008 and as a result of our research, it was determined that the position paper was never approved. What the Council did do was to repeat a position statement in any comment letters that were sent regarding the issue of natural gas. That position was to request that no permits for natural gas well pads, or ancillary facilities, be approved within the Congressionally-designated Upper Delaware Scenic and Recreational River corridor. Robinson stated that the Council therefore has no precedent for the Solar position paper. He was told that is correct. Discussion about how the topic of solar, if approved, would be incorporated into the River Management Plan, if at all ensued. It is Peckham's opinion that if the Council takes a position and the position is agreed upon by the Department of the Interior, it has to become part of the Plan. Richardson said the questions that need to be clarified for us are, "Is adding a position on solar to the Plan a minor change and what is the procedure for having a minor change formalized?". Ramie said that Heister has stated it is her opinion that taking a position would not change the Plan. She has said that the definitions referred to are already in the Plan and we are using those definitions to apply to a new land use. Henry recommended waiting to hear back from the solicitor about how to proceed. Ramie said she feels the time researching the natural gas position was well spent as it helps inform us moving forward with the solar issue that we need to start from scratch essentially. In regards to the Draft Position Paper on Large-Scale Solar Energy Systems, Robinson feels that test 1 will be to get the feedback from the towns after 90 days to determine if the majority are in favor of such a policy. Ramie feels it wouldn't hurt to simultaneously check on the procedure. Richardson said the draft may have to be re-worked to bring the municipalities' positions and the UDC position together. Robinson feels that is redundant if the burden is placed on the township, which he feels it should be, to decide if a proposed project is in or out of compliance with the River Management Plan. He said that when Shohola Township reviews a project, in addition to their standard review, they look to determine if the project complies with the River Management Plan. He does not like the idea of a uniform policy that precludes the needs for a town's review. He believes that is what the towns which have expressed misgivings to date are adverse to. Richardson stated that he feels there ultimately needs to be a compromise position between the Park Service and the Council about how to deal with a solar project that is potentially threatening. He asked how the Council, as the go-between, can come up with a process about how the project will be reviewed. Suggestions for how to achieve this were shared. Minor and major changes according to the River Management Plan and the process were reviewed with Peckham reading from the Plan. Discussion took place about the procedure that was followed to draft the Draft Position Paper on Large-Scale Solar Energy Systems and if the Park Service has taken its own formal position on this issue. Dean suggested waiting for the member responses and then for the UDC to formulate its own opinion based on what the member responses are.

Ramie said a quote for FY 2017 printing, labeling, and mailing services of the Upper Delaware newsletter from Courier Printing will be addressed under New Business. She noted that three news releases were issued in the past month. Those releases were: "The Upper Delaware Fall/Winter 2016 Newsletter Available On-line and by Mail", 10/3; "Barryville Butterfly Bike Ride to Take Flight on October 15", 10/3; and "Upper Delaware Council Awards Seven Technical Assistance Grants", 10/7.

Ramie reported that a flash drive containing all of the UDC's digitized newsletters and meeting minutes was received from Iron Mountain Document Capture Service on October 11th. We await the return of the hard copies, she added.

Ramie said her written report contains a list of non-UDC meetings or events and a list of documents produced by her. Copies of any documents are available upon request. She referred members to the November calendar of UDC Meetings, Activities and Deadlines, noting it is current as of today and will be updated for the November full Council meeting on November 3rd.

New Business

Draft Resolution 2016-12: Awarding the Printing of “The Upper Delaware” Newsletter to Courier Printing Corp. for FY 2017: Ramie noted that the cost went up \$69.00 per issue which she said she finds very reasonable. A motion to forward the resolution to the full Council for its approval was made by Henry, seconded by Robinson and carried unanimously.

Penn State On-line GIS Course Tuition Request: Golod referred to the handout in members’ packets which contains information regarding the Penn State World Campus GIS Certificate Program. The certification is 11 credits and is issued upon completion of four courses. Each course is 10-weeks in length and requires 8-12 hours per week. The handout contains the approximate costs involved for the certification. Golod requested approval from the committee to begin the GIS certification course in the Spring of 2017. He feels the course is something he will need in order to work more efficiently in his position. Peckham suggested hearing the Personnel Subcommittee report prior to making this decision. Henry stated that the Personnel Subcommittee met with Golod earlier this evening to conduct a performance appraisal upon completion of his six-month probationary period. He said the recommendation of the Subcommittee is to move Golod to permanent employee status. A motion of the Operations Committee, in light of the positive evaluation by the Personnel Subcommittee, to recommend to the full Council the advancement of Resource Specialist Pete Golod to permanent employee status was made by Richardson, seconded by Henry and carried unanimously. Henry welcomed Golod and told him “to keep up the good work.” Discussion returned to the GIS course tuition request. Golod said he awaits a response from Penn State regarding additional costs that may apply to the course. The application deadline for the course is November 2nd, he added. Henry questioned if Golod would be taking the course during UDC time. Golod said he initially planned on taking it on his own time, but considering the weekly time that will be required, he may need to conduct some of the work on UDC time. He said he has been discussing this with Ramie. Ramie said that she and Golod also discussed the terms of the Resource Specialist Training Reimbursement Agreement. Richardson said the policy is not that the Council pay for one’s time; it is to pay for the education expenses. Henry recommended that Golod receive some compensatory time as an initiative to take the course. Golod said that without the training, he is at a loss when it comes to GIS. A motion to fund the course GEOG 482: The Nature of Geographic Information, including any necessary course costs, to be taken on the employee’s own time, was made by Robinson and seconded by Henry. Members collectively reviewed the costs of the course. Golod reiterated that he awaits a return call from Penn State to clarify any additional costs. Robinson stated that Golod should be able to determine if he will need the additional courses to match our needs upon completion of the first course. Ramie said the courses are a path to certification. Richardson said the Council will fund the first course and then evaluate the program upon completion of it. Henry asked Golod if he had researched other educational opportunities for GIS training. Golod said he had and described them. A vote was taken and the motion carried.

Richardson noted that there is a request in a change of policy. A request for consideration was made to allow Golod to use accumulated sick time for his vacation which had been planned prior to the start of his employment, given that vacation leave is not in effect for one year. A motion to allow Golod, as a one-time consideration, to use sick time while away on vacation was made by Richardson, seconded by Henry and carried.

Report on 10/18 Economic Benefits of Tourism Forum: Ramie referred members to the handout titled, “Tourism’s Economic Impact on Counties in the Upper Delaware River Region, 2014” provided in their packets. Ramie attended the program sponsored by the Delaware Highlands Conservancy on October 18th at the Tusten Theatre in Narrowsburg. The presenter, Dr. Steve Morse, Economist and Director of the Hospitality & Tourism Management program for the College of Business at Western Carolina University, spoke on the topic of how tourism helps one save money on taxes. A second topic was that if you make an area tourism friendly, that’s a driver of your local economy. He pointed out that there is a quantifiable value to tourism. Ramie said the tax offset value of tourism in the Upper Delaware is depicted on the handout. Roeder spoke of how gas drilling, if allowed, would influence taxes. Ramie provided additional details of the presentation and said that Dr. Morse encouraged people to think of tourists as “temporary taxpayers.” Ramie said she has a few copies of the entire report available if anyone was interested.

Summary of Pending Bills 10-25-16/Financial Statements: The committee was provided with the abstract of bills dated October 25 to review. A motion by Robinson, seconded by Henry to pay the bills listed on the abstract was carried unanimously. Financial Statements as of October 31, 2016 were provided for individual review. Richardson questioned the credit card late fee listed on the abstract. Ramie said she believes that the timing of the monthly meeting to pay bills is the reason for the late fee. Richardson said if that is the case, he recommends that the Visa bill be paid as a recurring bill when received in order to avoid any late fees in the future. Members agreed. Ramie said she will look into that. Henry referred to the unobligated fund balance and noted that should a government shutdown occur, that money may be needed to fund the Council's operations. He said he was under the impression that amount should increase annually. After a lengthy discussion, Ramie said that our auditor Dick Eckersley will be at the November 22nd meeting and we will ask him to explain how the UDC's depreciation is accounted for and how it affects the unobligated fund balance.

Personnel Subcommittee Report: Addressed earlier in the meeting.

Other: Ramie encouraged members to cast their votes for the 2016 People's Choice Awards in Upper Delaware's 2016 Photo Contest! Vote by 'liking' their favorite pictures on the Park Service's Facebook page at <https://www.facebook.com/updeNPS/>. The winner will receive a prize, and voting ends November 8th.

Old Business: None

Public Comment: None

Adjournment: A motion by Robinson, seconded by Roeder to adjourn the meeting at 9:07 p.m. was carried unanimously.

Minutes submitted by Cindy Odell, 11/2/16