

**Upper Delaware Council
OPERATIONS COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES
February 28, 2023**

Committee Members Present: Larry Richardson, Fred Peckham, Harold Roeder, Jeff Dexter, Al Henry, Aaron Robinson, Ginny Dudko.
Committee Members Absent: Andy Boyar, Jim Greier.
Staff: Laurie Ramie, Ashley Hall-Bagdonas
NPS Partner: Superintendent Lindsey Kurnath, Don Hamilton- Chief of Natural and Cultural Resources
Guests: William Dudko- Town of Deepark Alternate.

The UDC's Operations Committee held its monthly meeting via Zoom on Tuesday, February 28, 2023. Robinson called the meeting to order at 7:54 p.m.

Approval of the January 24, 2023 Meeting Minutes: A motion by Henry seconded by Richardson to approve the January 24, 2023 meeting minutes carried.

Executive Director's Report and Monthly Calendar:

Financial Status:

FY 2023 Federal Funding: Ramie withdrew \$20,963.58 from ASAP on 2/27 to cover the February bills to date, leaving a balance of \$48,092.07 through 3/31. She will prepare an Application for Federal Assistance package (budget, work plan, narrative report, and SF-424 forms) for the 3rd and 4th Quarters (or the next time period to be allowed by NPS). Kurnath said she has the temporary contact for Ramie to work with while they are waiting to fill the Administrative Officer position.

State and Federal Funding: Ramie contacted Fiscal Plan consultant Michael Crane on 1/30 to request updated figures from his fiscal plan report, which he provided for what the current value of the \$300,000 federal funding would be if it had been tied to inflation (\$769,568) and that under the trend of no increase or state cost-share contributions, the UDC will be forced to eliminate another full-time position down to two in approximately 5 years. She sent personalized welcome letters based on 3rd draft templates to newly elected officials and 20 invitations to the 2/23 UDC State & Federal Partners Summit with updated funding fact sheets on 2/7-9, followed by reminders. She researched legislative aide names and best email contacts to update our directory. Ramie met with the Executive Committee on 2/16 for a strategy session and prepared a 2nd new PowerPoint presentation from the officers' input, gathered contents for informational folders and updated additional documents including the PA and NY operational funds briefing reports, a summary of FY 2022 annual accomplishments, and the UDC one-page overview. Engelhardt sent Outlook invitations and participated in the in-person/Zoom meeting; Hall-Bagdonas copied handouts to collate folders that Ramie mailed to all the elected officials on 2/23, along with sending out a link to the recorded meeting and the PowerPoint slides.

Ramie will send a thank you letter to Sullivan County Legislature Chairman Robert A. Doherty for including this final statement in 2/16 correspondence "re: NYS Budget and Legislation for 2023" sent to NYS Senator Peter Oberacker and Assemblywoman Aileen Gunther: "The Delaware River Management Plan, which created the Upper Delaware Council (UDC) in Narrowsburg, outlined a 60% federal/40% states cost-sharing ratio based on a \$500,000 annual operating budget to subsidize the UDC's critical work. Thirty-seven years since the Plan's adoption, New York has never contributed any of its envisioned \$100,000 share. I'm sure you agree it's high time for funding to be allocated, lest we endanger the UDC's future." Ramie had been called on 2/15 to consult over that bullet point and received copies of the letters at her request from County Director of Communications Dan Hust on 2/22.

Administration:

Maintenance: The flag pole metal bracket detached from the UDC building on a day with high wind gusts and needs to be replaced.

Public Relations:

News Releases: Four news releases were issued this month: “Upper Delaware Council to Swear in Officers on Feb. 2”, 1/26; “Upper Delaware Council Names Roster for 2023” (with photo), 2/13; “UDC Will Host PA Director of Outdoor Recreation at March 2 Public Meeting” (with photo), 2/21; and for the D&H Transportation Heritage Council: “Interest in May 20 Historic D&H Bus Tour of Port Jervis to Phillipsport Needed by April 1”, (with historic photo), 2/23. Ramie was interviewed by Ted Waddell from the River Reporter on 2/16 for an article on railroad emergency planning in the Upper Delaware River Valley. Ramie posted Facebook photos from 1/31 Hancock EV Charging Stations ribbon-cutting, 2/2 UDC swearing-in ceremony and 2023 board photo, 2/10 Catskills Legislative Networking Breakfast, Town of Hancock’s corridor map presentation, 2/23 UDC Summit, and 3/2 UDC guest speaker, among other topics. Ongoing publicity occurs through Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, YouTube and Vimeo outlets. UDC also posts all NPS UPDE news releases at upperdelawarecouncil.org.

“The Upper Delaware”: Ramie will begin gathering information, setting appointments, and planning photo needs for the Spring 2023 issue, design and compose by a 3/10 copy deadline and 3/20 printer deadline for a 4/3 delivery date.

New Business

Follow-ups from 2/23 UDC State and Federal Partners Summit: Ramie said she appreciates everyone on the committee who was in attendance. She certainly wished we had a larger attendance of elected officials that we invited as we sent out 20 invitations. It didn’t help that there was a weather snafu that morning. She heard from a handful of people afterward that intended to participate but their schedules got mixed up with a school delay and people in the offices needing extra coverage. New York State Assemblywoman, Aileen Gunther attended and we had the district director for U.S. Senator John Fetterman from PA, Emitee Joseph. Since then, we’ve heard back from people who received the recorded the meeting and the PowerPoint presentation we distributed. An information folder was mailed out to everyone invited. We also had the offer from Assemblyman Karl Brabenec’s aide that they would like to be part of the meeting that Assemblywoman Gunther spoke of to get us in the room with the Ways and Means Committee to talk about New York State’s funding commitment. Ramie intends to follow-up with that but wanted to check with the committee regarding interest in traveling to Albany first.

Gunther did challenge UDC to convince Albany as she has tried to convince them, she said, because the language in the River Management Plan (RMP) does not explicitly have to do with funding. Ramie said our focus is honoring intent and the reality of trying to operate all these years without funding. Ginny Dudko said one thing she found concerning by Gunther’s statements was she wanted to talk about a Gov. Pataki stance and what she was reading to the group and referring to was nothing from the RMP.

Robinson started the conversation about sending a letter with a different approach regarding the Federal funding to review at the 3/2 full Council meeting. He said it’s either you want to fund this RMP and let it succeed or eventually let it collapse because we know we have a deadline. The fact is that there is clear-cut evidence that the intention was NY and PA were going to kick in 40% of UDC’s budget.

Following discussions of strategies, Ramie will draft a letter to our U.S. House and Senate members proposing a restructuring of the UDC’s federal funding mechanism for review at the 3/2 UDC meeting.

2/14 501(c)(3) Advocacy Tips Webinar Report: Ramie said this was quite timely that the Coalition for the Delaware River Watershed happened to put on this webinar: “Powerful Advocacy Tips for 501(c)(3) Organizations”. It was basically about lobbying and what you can and can’t do. She’s contended basically that since we are not a state funding recipient, we don’t have to necessarily abide by any restrictions. The point of this webinar was to define what organizations that are 501(c)(3) under the IRS rating (UDC is) can do in terms of having restricted funds. There are two forms of lobbying. One is direct lobbying, which is communicating directly with a legislator or their staff members, and the second is grassroots lobbying, which refers to communicating with the public about legislation and funding and proposals that perhaps haven’t been introduced yet, like appropriations, bills, or ballot questions. Ramie said it’s not to say that any organization can’t lobby. It’s about the disclosure of it and whether you’re paying someone to do it for you. Ramie said they recommended, if you’re ever in doubt, talk to a lawyer before you go ahead and do any sort of campaign to make sure that you’re in the clear. Volunteers, however, have no lobbying restrictions. If you had a Friends group, for example, they are free and clear to do and say

whatever they like. It's not considered lobbying if at the end of a letter of request, there is no call for action. They also suggested if you are seeking to make an impact with your legislators, it's a good idea to give them an experience by inviting them to do an activity with your organization rather than just show up at a meeting. They are more apt to be there because there are photo opportunities involved and it makes your organization more memorable.

Investment Recommendation for Charitable Trust Donation: Robinson provided an email to committee members in advance on investment options. Following discussion, Ramie will set up a Vanguard Brokerage Account for the Upper Delaware Council to invest \$150,000 of the UDC's unrestricted funds balance plus the segregated \$10,000 charitable trust donation into interest-bearing instruments including an FDIC-insured CD and a Federal Money Market fund, with electronic funds transfer capability to the UDC's existing accounts at Jeff Bank.

Summary of Pending Bills 2/28/2023: A Motion by Henry seconded by Ginny Dudko to approve the bills and pay them in the normal fashion carried.

Financial Statement 2/27/2023: Robinson said the financial statement is offered for individual review.

Other: None.

Old Business

Keynote Speaker Invitation for 35th Annual River Valley Awards on 9/10: Ramie will send an invitation letter to U.S. Congressman Marc Molinaro (NY-19th District) to serve as keynote speaker for the 35th Annual River Valley Awards to be held on 9/10 at Central House Family Resort in Beach Lake, PA.

UDC Social Media: Hall-Bagdonas said UDC social media has reached over 2,312 people this month with 459 people commenting, reacting, or sharing our posts. We are continuing to share lots of partner posts and are amping up our monthly UDC posts. We are excited to share Litter Sweep posts in the following months and also highlight the Upper Delaware River's world-class fishing.

Other: None.

Adjournment: A motion by Roeder seconded by Henry to adjourn the meeting at 9:00 p.m. carried.