

**Upper Delaware Council
OPERATIONS COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES
March 23, 2021**

Committee Members Present: Jeff Dexter, Larry Richardson, Fred Peckham (phone), Aaron Robinson, Al Henry, Jim Greier.
Committee Members Absent: David Dean (phone audio issues)
Staff: Laurie Ramie, Shannon Cilento, Ashley Hall-Bagdonas
NPS Partner: Cody Hendrix- Community & Land Use Planner
Guests: None.

The UDC's Operations Committee held its monthly meeting at the Council office in Narrowsburg, NY. on Tuesday, March 23, 2021. Chairperson Dexter called the meeting to order at 7:41 p.m.

Approval of February 23rd Meeting Minutes: A motion by Henry seconded Greier to approve the February 23, 2021 Meeting Minutes was carried.

Executive Director's Report and Monthly Calendar:

Financial Status:

FY 2021 Federal Funding: Ramie said now that we are fully funded, we just have to do our monthly drawdown of expenses based on the abstract. She withdrew \$23,199.17 to cover the March bills, leaving a balance of \$175,974.86. She renewed the UDC's System for Award Management (SAM) annual registration on 3/3 to ensure continued federal payments. She will continue monthly expense drawdowns and prepare an annual Federal Financial Report and Performance Progress Report for online submission within 30 days of the fiscal year's 9/30/21 end.

Administration:

Kristt Company technical services were required to restore our computer network's printing and scanning connections to the Kyocera color copier following a "bad" Microsoft update that shut down PCs with a blue screen "device error". Through a 3/19 remote session, technicians uninstalled the first update and installed a patch for it. The production of yellow dots across copy pages was also addressed. Staff from Chorba Consulting came today and will be returning to inspect the existing WIFI boosters and make hardware recommendations to improve the Internet signal strength in the office. Hall-Bagdonas said the frontier router was not transmitting IP addresses. There is a new AC wireless access point and Jeff Chorba was able to use the PICO Station we had as a bridge to save money.

Government Officials: Ramie sent UDC introductory letters with enclosures to NYS Senator Mike Martucci (42nd District) and NYS Assemblyman Joseph Angelino (122nd District), both on 3/4. A meeting will be set up with federal representatives to inform them of UDC funding issues.

Local Officials Directory: Hall-Bagdonas and Ramie met virtually on 2/12 with NPS UPDE staff (Michelle Blockberger, Christina Hollenbeck, and IT Specialist Brendan Dohn) to discuss transitioning the 2021 Local Officials Directory from a print booklet to an online format with active links. They will review the draft directory when ready.

Public Relations:

The Upper Delaware": Ramie submitted the Spring 2021 issue to Courier Printing on 3/23 via Dropbox. She dedicated 63.5 hours to preparing it between 2/25-3/23, including planning the contents, gathering information, requesting interviews, assigning articles, selecting and manipulating 18 photos, design, layout, writing, editing, and proofreading. She said it was a tricky issue with both Cilento and she were writing articles and having to meld them together. Hall-Bagdonas will submit database updates for mailing labels by 3/29. Ramie will review blueline proof when received from Courier and await a 4/5 delivery to UDC office and bulk mail distribution at Callicoon Post Office. She will update the index of articles and post on-line and publicize availability.

News Releases: Four news releases were issued: “Help Stop Spread of Spotted Lanternfly in Upper Delaware River Valley Region”, 3/3; “Volunteers Needed for April 17-25 Upper Delaware Litter Sweep”, 3/15; “UDC Welcomes Public on Aug. 1 Raft Trip”, 3/15; and “April 12 Training Set in Use of Upper Delaware River GIS Mapping Tool”, 3/18. Ramie was interviewed by Isabel Braverman on 3/12 for *Sullivan County Democrat* article on Skinners Falls Bridge Study. Ramie arranged a Thunder 102 Agriculture Show Mike Sakell interview of Andy Weber, NPS, for Spotted Lanternfly follow-up. She also updated Upper Delaware Regional Media Contacts list on 3/5. Ongoing publicity occurs through Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, YouTube and Vimeo outlets. UDC also posts all NPS UPDE news releases at upperdelawarecouncil.org.

UDC Raft Trip: Hall-Bagdonas contacted Kittatinny Canoes to confirm logistics for the 33rd Annual Family Raft Trip on 8/1 in order to have the information available for the spring newsletter, Scenic Wild Delaware River geotourism site listing, and *Hancock Herald* Summer Directory. The paddle will be between Staircase Access and Matamoras, with arrivals due at the KC Matamoras Base between 9-10 a.m. Cost is \$29 ages 13 and up, \$19 ages 4-12. Reservations are required by 8/23.

UDC Awards Ceremony: Ramie reserved the date of 9/12 for the 33rd Annual Awards Ceremony with Central House Family Resort after cancelling 4/25. Award nominations will be needed by 7/19. Banquet reservations will be due by 9/3. She contacted PA Rep. Jonathan Fritz, who declined on 2/24 the invitation to continue as keynote speaker. Ramie asked UDC board for suggestions and the idea of reaching out to NYS Senator Mike Martucci a keynote speaker invitation. She said there were no objections and she will reach out to him. She will work on the timetable and logistics when restrictions on indoor dining venues are known.

Non-UDC meetings or events as well as documents produced are listed on the Executive Director’s Report included in the meeting packet along with April’s monthly calendar. One meeting Ramie just arranged was after the last full Council meeting Bill Rudge had talked about getting together at the DEC Mongaup access to look at the redesign. That will take place on 4/9 at 11 a.m. on site between DEC, NPS, UDC and anyone that participated in our River Traffic Public Safety Task Force is welcome to come.

Old Business

UDC Social Media Analytics: Cilento said before giving her report Senator Martucci’s Director of Legislative Affairs, Camille Obrien, saw on UDC’s social media about the Litter Sweep and she and Senator Martucci are interested in volunteering in the Town of Deerpark. That was a positive benefit of social media and we will be reaching back out to Obrien regarding that. Cilento provided a Social Media Report for members. Updates include Instagram (last 30 days): 84 posts, 808 followers (+147) 1,751 accounts reached, 12,026 impressions (post views), 667 profile visits, 51 website clicks in profile, 879 content interactions, 760 likes, 25 comments, 22 saves, 72 shares. Most percentages doubled in the last month. Hall-Bagdonas and Cilento have a goal to get to 1,000 followers in the next few months. For Facebook (last 30 days) we have: 289 followers, 230 likes, 1,000 people reached with posts. There have been 229 post engagements (likes, comments, shares). Our UDC LinkedIn now has 74 followers. Facebook and Instagram are most popular right now and we will focus on those most to grow engagement. Hall-Bagdonas said something really fun that is happening now is people are engaging and commenting on Cilento’s posts.

Determination on Soliciting 2021 River Clean-up Grant Proposals: Ramie said this point of the year is a good time to look at the budget and see if there’s any opportunity to add in some funding for River Clean-up Grants. Ramie was working with UDC Bookkeeper Mike Poska on our spending status and trends as of 3/31 and where the variances are in our different budget categories. Ramie said it gives her anxiety trying to project ahead for what our financial needs are. She said at the end of the Fiscal Year we typically have funds available. Ramie said based on her analysis we should have a little over \$3,500 available. We are returning to in-person meetings and mileage checks will resume. Ramie thinks we could set aside between \$3,500-\$4,000 for the River Cleanup Grants. Last year we spent just under \$5,000 with just two applicants. The Town of Deerpark did three clean-ups at the Hawk’s Nest area after Memorial Day, Independence Day, and Labor Day. The Town of Lumberland hired an individual to do a trash collection along the shoreline from Camp Tel-Yehudah to the Mongaup River Access at the Deerpark border every other week. 2020 was the seventh year we did the River and Shoreline Clean-up Grants. As of last year, we have distributed \$31,932.81. Ramie said it would be great and consistent for UDC to keep offering these grants. Ramie put together a schedule for soliciting proposals. She said if the committee is comfortable moving forward, she would issue the memo seeking applications as soon as tomorrow. She’ll bring proposals to this committee on 4/27 with a

Resolution at the 5/6 full Council meeting, then issue the approvals so the communities have all summer to work on the cleanups. The payment request deadline would be in September to close out the fiscal year. Ramie said we may have to be conscious in being conservative in what we award for them but she believes we can afford to do it. A Motion by Richardson seconded by Robinson to proceed with the River and Shoreline Grant Proposals carried. Henry asked if there was any money budgeted for the WIFI upgrade? Ramie said not specifically but there is a line for \$1,200 allocated for computer repairs. He recommended perusing the River and Shoreline Grants but seeing what happens with the wi-fi repair. Ramie will include in the memo a clause that it's subject to available funding.

Other: Richardson said the Upper Delaware Scenic Byway (UDSB) met last night and they voted to cover whatever deficit the UDC has in purchasing Litter Sweep t-shirts. Richardson said the Town of Cochection team has lots of enthusiasm and he met with two people today. His team is up to 14 people with a stretch of 6 ½ miles of road. They are going to delineate every half mile. Richardson and his wife have driven it and marked every half mile on the map. Before the event they are going to put ribbons up with numbers so they can assign people numbers. He said it's a week-long event and they don't want people overlapping. The Preservation Society is going to meet the first Tuesday in April with a suggestion to provide refreshments for the Cochection team. He said another issue is the collection of trash and where it's going to go. If they have to do it, they may allow Cochection to be a staging area. Cilento said PennDOT has been really easy to work with and communications with NYSDOT has not. Richardson said he doesn't understand why because he remembers there were communications with NYSDOT and Dan Paparella, previous Litter Sweep coordinator. Hall-Bagdonas said we also had great representation from three different NYSDOT staff at our Litter Sweep meetings last year and they gave a lot of helpful information. Richardson said the Democratic Club in Cochection adopted 2 miles of St. Rt. 17B from the Bethel Town line to Fosterdale and they didn't have a problem with the Adopt a Highway Program. They had to go for trainings and make sure people signed on that they were trained. Ramie said that is with the Sullivan County Residency. We are dealing with the Main Office DOT and that's where the issue seems to be. Specifically, the person in charge of issuing permits had responded to Cilento by saying "NYSDOT will deny any litter pick up on Rte 97 and Rte 17 of course due to the narrow shoulders, no room to park and possible peds crossing the roadway. All other roads would be allowed for litter pick up." Ramie said Rt. 97 is critical to the whole river valley and to say when we haven't applied yet that we will be denied before even put it in for a consideration is frustrating. We had the process of permits in 2020 before they were revoked due to COVID and now we are having issues. Ramie said the NYSDOT contact said NYSDOT doesn't have the ability to set up the safety zones. Ramie said we don't need that or such an elaborate setup. It was also pointed out that Sullivan County has a program called Clean Teams that specifically did clean-ups along Rt. 97 in 2019. They stuck strictly to the roadside pull off areas and river accesses. Ramie said no one wants to do anything unsafe or a cleanup anywhere where it is too busy. She said we will be appealing to higher authorities to see what we can do as a compromise. Henry urges staff to get in touch with Senator Martucci appealing to him on this issue. Cilento said she had a wonderful interaction with a contact from PennDOT who thanked UDC for doing the event and is providing us with supplies.

New Business

SUNY Sullivan Community Learning Class and Sullivan West H.S. Presentations: Cilento said the flyer provided in the meeting packet is a draft which has Hancock is spelled incorrectly. The college is fixing that. After we gave the Litter Sweep presentation via Zoom Maura Caycho, the Executive Assistant to the President at SUNY Sullivan, wanted to get students involved with the clean-up because there is big gap of exposure of SUNY Sullivan students with the western part of the county. They will be working with the Tusten Litter Leaders. SUNY Sullivan also has a Community Learning program for both students and the community and asked Cilento to give a presentation on the corridor with NPS. Students get a credit for attending a certain amount of these programs. Cilento and Ingrid Peterec are presenting for an hour on 4/7 at 2:30 p.m. Peterec will give a brief presentation about the beginning of NPS and their role and Cilento will speak on UDC's role and they will both talk about projects they are working on including the Litter Sweep and ways people can get involved in the river corridor.

Another great public outreach opportunity is that a high school English teacher and National Honor Society (NHS) advisor from Sullivan West stepped up to be a Litter Leader in the Town of Fremont. His NHS students need to do community service and will be cleaning up a few different accesses, steering clear of Rt. 97. He also asked Cilento and Hall-Bagdonas to present to the NHS which is also on 4/7 via zoom to talk about the UDC and the microplastics study and how the group engaging in the clean-up will help protect the resources of the river. Robinson said Paddy McCarthy who received a Lifesaving Award last year from UDC may also be a valuable contact and is a teacher at Sullivan West. Cilento said Hall-Bagdonas and she were horrified to find out a statistic that plastic will outweigh

fish in earth's waterways by 2050! Richardson suggested including a link to our Project Review Workbook when Cilento gives her educational presentations.

PA Grant Update and Fiscal Sustainability Plan: Ramie included a Balance Sheet in the meeting packets. The latest payment was to Dan Nelson for the Litter Sweep logo because we allocated a certain amount for the Litter Sweep event. This means we have Damascus and Berlin Townships left to do their projects. Ramie noted at the end of the document there was a typo but have about \$48,000 left of our original \$100,000. Two of them will be the Township projects and the other will be the Fiscal Sustainability Plan. Ramie still needs to do a Request for Proposals for a contractor. We have until 12/31/2021 to finish that project.

Summary of Pending Bills 3/22/2021: A Motion by Henry seconded by Robinson to approve bills was carried.

Financial Statement 3/31/2021: Dexter said the financial statement is offered for individual review.

Other: Henry asked if there was a Town that came in under budget for the PA grant? Ramie said the difference was \$152.82. He recommended reaching out to the Town to reallocate that money for the Litter Sweep. He said it's a win/win.

Public Comment: None.

Adjournment: A motion by Robinson seconded by Henry to adjourn the meeting at 8:32 p.m. was carried.