

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

Committee Members Present: Larry Richardson, Fred Peckham (Zoom), Harold Roeder, Andy Boyar (Zoom), Jim Greier, Jeff Dexter, Al Henry, Aaron Robinson, Ginny Dudko.

Committee Members Absent: None.

Staff: Laurie Ramie, Kerry Engelhardt, Ashley Hall-Bagdonas.

NPS Partner: Jessica Weinman- UPDE NPS Facility Program Manager (Zoom)

Guests: William Dudko- Town of Deepark Alternate.

The UDC's Operations Committee held its monthly meeting at the UDC office in Narrowsburg, N.Y. on Tuesday, March 28, 2023. Robinson called the meeting to order at 7:33 p.m.

Approval of the February 28, 2023 Meeting Minutes: A motion by Richardson seconded by Henry to approve the February 28, 2023 meeting minutes carried.

Executive Director's Report and Monthly Calendar:

Financial Status:

FY 2023 Federal Funding: Ramie withdrew \$23,879.27 from ASAP on 3/27 to cover the March bills to date, leaving a balance of \$24,212.80 in the online account. She worked on developing the \$150,000 budget for the 3rd and 4th quarters with Bookkeeper Mike Poska. She requested a Certificate of Liability Insurance renewal naming the NPS as an Additional Insured on the UDC's policy through 4/13/24, which was received on 3/23 from Mike Preis Inc. Ramie updated the UDC's annual registration in the federal System for Awards Management (SAM.gov) on 3/9, which was approved on 3/13 and will be in effect through 3/8/24. After a decision is made on a proposed GIS course tuition expenditure at 3/28 Operations, she will finalize the UDC's Application for Federal Assistance package (budget, work plan, narrative report, and SF-424 forms) for the 3rd and 4th Quarters to submit to Acting UPDE Administrative Officer Tara Harbert and through the Grant Solutions online program by 3/31.

Administration:

Maintenance/Technology: The slight oil leak on the floor of the utility closet discovered on 3/2 was successfully addressed by Bill's HVAC of Narrowsburg on 3/6 by disassembling and tightening the connections in the furnace, with follow-up checks done in the ensuing days, for a \$245 fee. Lake Region Computers set up all the UDC computers with the Avast anti-virus software subscriptions remotely and fixed a One Drive problem, for a \$411 fee. An issue on 3/20 with the failure of the multi-factor authentication process for Ramie to access and download paychecks from the Netlink Solutions portal was resolved by Sentinel Payroll Solutions Payroll Manager Andrea Beck on 3/21 removing one authenticator step from the encrypted system, with no fee.

Public Relations:

"The Upper Delaware": Ramie logged 46 hours intermittently between 2/23 and 3/27 to complete the Spring 2023 issue. Work included a 3/3 interview of Superintendent Lindsey Kurnath; outline of contents and assignment of articles on 3/9; formatting the 12 pages; selecting and manipulating photos, research and information gathering for articles; layout and composition; proofreading and editing; uploading of camera-ready files to Courier Printing with a cover memo on 3/20; approval of online proof that same day; Ashley's submission of the updated mail program database on 3/21; and delivery by the printer one week early on 3/27 for the 4/3 contractual deadline. She will deliver the UDC's bulk mail postage account reimbursement check awaiting approval at 3/28 Operations to the Callicoon Post Office on 3/29 morning to enable the mail delivery to proceed; distribute copies; and publicize its availability. Ramie will prepare for the Summer 2023 issue, which is due to the printer by 7/24 for release on 8/7.

News Releases: Four news releases were issued: "UDC Welcomes Public on Aug. 6 Raft Trip", 3/13 (with photo; special advance for summer magazine use); "Sponsors Needed by April 15; Volunteers Needed for April 22-30 2023 Upper Delaware Litter Sweep", 3/14 (with photo); "UDC Seeks Municipal Proposals for River & Shoreline Clean-ups", 3/21; and "UDC to Host 'Plastics: Damning the Delaware' Presentation on April 6", 3/24 (with photo).

Ramie facilitated a WJFF Radio Catskills interview with PA Director of Outdoor Recreation Nathan Reigner ahead of his 3/2 UDC presentation. She forwarded additional articles from railroad safety series by the River Reporter and coverage of UDC funding issues from Tri-County Independent, Hancock Herald, Sullivan County Democrat, and Times Herald-Record. Ramie's Facebook posts included the Rowland D&H Canal 200th anniversary event; NYS Senator Oberacker; Litter Sweep; updated spring season banner photo; river clean-up grants; and UDC April presentation. Ongoing publicity occurs through Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, YouTube and Vimeo outlets. UDC also posts all NPS UPDE news releases at upperdelawarecouncil.org. Next topics include: UDC Presentations; Litter Sweep Planning; Raft Trip; River Valley Awards; River Corridor Maps Distribution; GIS Mapping Tools on Website; and PA Grant.

UDC 35th Annual Raft Trip: In order to include an invitation in the Spring newsletter, Hall-Bagdonas made arrangements with Kittatinny Canoes for the 8/6 raft trip from Staircase Access in the Town of Lumberland to Matamoras, PA (meeting at Kittatinny's Matamoras, PA base), at a cost of \$29 ages 13 and up, \$19 for ages 5-12. Reservations are due by 7/28. Ramie prepared an advance news release on 3/13 for use in the Destination Hancock summer magazine published by the Hancock Herald.

UDC 35th Annual River Valley Awards: A copy of the keynote speaker invitation for the 9/10 awards banquet sent to U.S. Congressman Marc Molinaro (19th District-NY) on 3/10, requesting a reply by 5/1, was provided to members.

Festivals: The UDC registered with the Delaware Valley Arts Alliance on 3/20 for free, non-profit information booth space at the 33rd Annual Narrowsburg Riverfest to be held on 7/23 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m.

Grants/Fundraising:

3rd Annual Upper Delaware Litter Sweep: Ramie reviewed Hall-Bagdonas's draft letter to past sponsors on 3/7. The new t-shirt logo designed by Maggie Clauss of Platform Industries Custom Screen Printing was approved on 3/8. A news release was issued on 3/14 to solicit volunteers and sponsors for the 4/22-30 event. After being contacted by Legislator Nadia Rajs on 3/15 to submit an application for \$1,000 to the Sullivan County Discretionary Contracts program, Ramie prepared and sent it that day which was approved on 3/16. Another \$1,000 became available on 3/21, for which Ramie submitted a revised budget seeking \$2,000. Verbal approval has been given. The dedicated Litter Sweep bank account fund balance is currently \$1,588.31. Publicity will continue. Hall-Bagdonas will submit the NYS DOT Highway Work Permit application, coordinate and promote the schedule of local clean-ups. Ramie will deposit checks and transfer PayPal donations into the dedicated account.

2023 Technical Assistance Grants: Project completion for the Town of Tusten's \$8,622.50 project to integrate recent zoning law updates into an online document is due by 8/18. Ramie will publicize the outcome and issued a memo when the next round opens.

NYS Grants Gateway: Access was established to the UDC account with a new username and password. Ramie added to the Document Vault on 3/13 to enable the UDC to accept state funding and will complete uploads.

UDC PA Grant: Ramie sent another request on 9/28/22 inquiring about receipt of a formal close-out letter to Brad Shover, director of Compliance Monitoring for PA DCED. When the audit approval officially arrives, she will notify the grant sponsors and issue a final press release.

UDC Benefit T-shirts: Shirts are available for a \$15 donation through UDC events, website, public requests, and the Equinunk General Store as a PA sales outlet.

New Business

Penn State GIS Summer Course Proposal: Engelhardt said she has no formal GIS training, and she would like to change that. Penn State has a "Postbaccalaureate Certificate in GIS" program consisting of four courses: three required and one elective. (This is also the first year of a three-year graduate degree program to earn a MGIS.) Each course is 3 credits. She would like to take the first course this summer and see how it goes. Tuition is currently \$1,007 per credit, so that would be \$3,021 per course. There's also a \$65 application fee. All of the courses in the GIS/Geography department at Penn State are conducted online. They are asynchronous (that is, there aren't live lectures or lessons at a specific time), however there are weekly assignments, readings, discussions, and occasional

group work. The courses each run for 10 weeks. The summer semester begins 5/10 and runs to 7/19, 2023. The application deadline is 4/15. After she is enrolled, Engelhardt can obtain the ArcGIS software from Penn State at no cost. Students are expected to spend approximately 8 to 12 hours per week on reading and assignments.

Richardson said UDC wouldn't expect some kind of reimbursement of overtime hours; just the payment of tuition? Engelhardt said correct, if her reports are done at work and there is some time left in the work day, she could do some course work but she expects to also be doing some at home. Henry asked if she thought it would be something beneficial for the Council. Engelhardt said she thinks so, certainly after the River Corridor Map project and understanding what was needed for those maps. Henry also asked if the budget allows for this? Ramie said this was the reason she hadn't finalized the budget for the third and fourth quarters and we can afford it. She would take this money from Outside Consulting Services (\$3,454). \$3,086 would be involved for the tuition and the fee could be covered. Members and Ramie said they support the professional development.

A Motion by Robinson seconded by Henry to approve payment of tuition of Engelhardt's Penn State GIS Summer Course and application fee carried. She will register by 4/15 for the Penn State World Campus GEOG 482: "Making Maps That Matter with GIS" 10-week course from 5/10-7/19.

Draft Support Letter: Damascus Township Park Improvements Phase II Grant: Following its advance review, a Motion by Henry seconded by Roeder carried for Ramie to send the letter of support for the Damascus Township Park Phase II Improvements to Damascus Township to include with their PA DCNR grant package carried.

2023 River & Shoreline Clean-up Grants – Applications due by 4/21: Ramie prepared the 2023 solicitation memo and payment reimbursement form to send to all UDC member municipalities on 3/22, while issuing a news release (a copy of which was provided.) She will collect and review proposals received by the 4/21 deadline and prepare a report for the 4/25 Operations Committee to recommend a resolution for the 5/4 full Council. Project completions are due by 9/20. Ramie reported that we have already received one proposal from the Town of Deerpark.

Upper Delaware Litter Sweep Update: Hall-Bagdonas said we want to give a big thank you to Al Henry, Andy Boyar, Callicoon Pantry, Friends of the Upper Delaware River, Grace Church of Callicoon, Land and Water Real Estate (Travis O'Dell's company), Leah Casner, Lydia Joy Langley, Nadia Rajsz (personally), Pond Eddy United Methodist Church, The Dirt Diva (Adrienne Picciano), UDSB, and WJFF Radio. Litter Leaders are stepping up and Hall-Bagdonas will be making a Litter Sweep calendar like the previous year.

Ramie reported that the UDC was awarded a \$2,000 discretionary grant allocated by Sullivan County Legislature District 2 Legislator Nadia Rajsz.

The t-shirts from Platform Industries (Honesdale) are finished and will be dropped off this week. Hall-Bagdonas has been setting up Google forms for as many of the litter sweeps as possible to make sign-ups efficient.

Scranton/Wilkes-Barre RailRiders Non-profits Sponsorship Offer: The parameters of the program were discussed based on the baseball team management's outreach to the UDC. A motion by Dexter, seconded by Dudko, to accept the offer carried. Ramie will contact the Scranton/Wilkes-Barre RailRiders to accept their offer to secure a date for the promotion of the UDC as a non-profit community organization. Hall-Bagdonas will ask the NPS Water Safety Committee at their 3/30 meeting if they would like to team up in that sponsorship for educational outreach.

Summary of Pending Bills 3/27/2023: A Motion by Henry seconded by Ginny Dudko to approve the bills and pay them in the normal fashion carried.

Financial Statement 3/31/2023: Robinson said the financial statement is offered for individual review.

Other: None.

Old Business

Update on Federal and State Funding Efforts: Ramie handed out a log of activity since the UDC State & Federal Partners Summit on 2/23. On 2/23, Ramie sent out link to the recorded Summit meeting (approximately 50 minutes), the PowerPoint presentation PDF, and mailed the NY or PA-oriented information folders with supporting documentation to all state and federal elected officials. 3/1-2 Ramie received suggestions from Robinson and Henry for the content of a letter proposing to change the mechanism through which the UDC receives its federal funds and adjust for CPI. She drafted two letters re: Flaws and Remedy to Federal Funding of the Upper Delaware River Management Plan (directed to PA-Fetterman, Casey, Cartwright; and NY-Schumer, Gillibrand, Molinaro, Ryan). Letter content discussed at the 3/2 UDC meeting and we opted to send it to UDC attorney/solicitor Jason Ohliger for an opinion on any potential interpretation of lobbying violations for the UDC as a 501(c)3 organization.

Communications ensued on 3/2 with Emilee Joseph, deputy state director for U.S. Senator Fetterman, providing contacts for their appropriations specialists and newly-formed Northeast PA regional team, while suggesting that the UDC look into a Congressional Directed Spending (CDA) application for Fiscal Year 2024.

Summit coverage on 3/3 via lengthy articles with a photo provided by the UDC appeared in the *Hancock Herald* by Kristin Barron (3/1, page 6) and *Sullivan County Democrat* by Derek Kirk (page 1, 3/3), which Ramie scanned and shared with the UDC membership and elected officials by email.

On 3/7 Attorney Ohliger replied to our 3/3 request with a recommendation to amend one paragraph to delete references to legislation. The text of his opinion was shared with the board. The revised letters were signed by Chairperson Robinson on 3/8 and sent by USPS Certified Mail and electronically, including in the form of a “Casework Request” to Senator Schumer or directed to specific staff members when possible.

Ramie sent an appreciation letter on 3/10 to Sullivan County Legislature Chairperson Robert Doherty for his correspondence dated 2/16/23 to NYS Senator Oberacker and Assemblywoman Gunther expressing support that “it’s high time” for NYS to fund the Council “lest we endanger the UDC’s future”. Ramie submitted it for publication as a Letter to the Editor to the SC Democrat and the River Reporter.

On 3/10 a letter was sent to NYS Assemblywoman Gunther (100th District) re: Suggested Meeting with Ways and Means Committee expressing UDC’s appreciation for her personal attendance at the 2/23 Summit and following up on her offer to arrange a meeting with Blake Washington, secretary to the NYS Assembly Ways and Means Committee. We requested including Assemblyman Brabenec (98th District, as sought by aide Suzanne Edzenga) and Assemblyman Angelino (121st District) for full representation of the eight NY members.

Ramie reviewed the application portal for Congressional Directed Spending and Community Project Requests on 3/15, due by 3/17. She discovered that they are not intended to fund operations or maintenance of existing programs. Noting that the UDC is constrained by its lack of funding and resources to tackle new projects, Ramie submitted a project idea under Interior, Environment, and Related Agencies – Local Projects and Research to “seek \$60,000 to retain an independent contractor for a 12-month period to evaluate and coordinate implementation of the recommendations contained in the ‘Building a Sustainable Business Model for the Upper Delaware Council’ long-term fiscal sustainability plan that was commissioned from an environmental economist in December 2021, and to oversee funding and development strategies for the UDC on the federal and two state levels”. This concept was sent to the Fetterman staff for evaluation. That same day, aide Kurtis Miller provided guidance that “after reviewing and determining the best course of action...our understanding is that this is not CDS eligible, but I’d still like to meet with you to hear more about the program and learn if there are other ways to help, including potential future fiscal year appropriations cycles.”

Ramie received a call on 3/15 from Sullivan County Republican Committee Chairperson Gary Maas (Town of Cochetcon supervisor), reacting supportively to our Letter to the Editor on the State’s deficiency in funding the UDC and offering to set up a meeting between UDC representatives and NYS Senator Oberacker. He will advise us when it can be scheduled.

Ramie received a call from Assemblywoman Gunther on 3/17 reacting negatively to the Doherty letter as critical of her efforts but she is still working to get UDC on Ways and Means Committee calendar. Her staff will notify UDC of progress.

A Letter to the Editor was sent to SCD and TRR on 3/17 as “an update to the UDC’s quest to secure NYS funding to sustain our operations as envisioned in the 1986 River Management Plan’s 60% federal/40% NY/PA cost-sharing ratio”, applauding Assemblywoman Gunther for her advocacy and stating next steps.

Front-page coverage appeared in the daily Times Herald-Record on 3/20: “Upper Delaware Council Board faced with 35-year-old funding dilemma” with two river photos, syndicated by USA TODAY Network from Peter Becker’s publication in the Tri-County Independent. Ramie forwarded the article to the UDC membership and our federal representatives.

Robinson and Ramie met virtually with Kurtis Miller (Fetterman) on 3/21 to discuss the federal funding situation. He requested to be connected with Congressman Cartwright’s staff, for which Ramie provided April Niver’s contact as his director of Economic Development. Miller wrote to her on 3/22, “I’d be interested in learning more about what your boss has been doing regarding UDC.”

On 3/27 “The Upper Delaware” Spring 2023 newsletter published, including a cover article, “Upper Delaware Council Pursues Funding Changes as Clock Ticks” largely quoting from Aaron Robinson’s articulate remarks on the history and consequences from the 2/23 Summit. The newsletter has a circulation of approximately 9,000 subscribers. Ramie will continue to follow up on the UDC state and federal funding initiatives that are underway.

Vanguard Brokerage Account: Ramie started the set-up of a UDC account on 3/22, encountered technical difficulties, received assistance, secured personal information needed for each signatory, and began filling out the Application for Organizations online. She will obtain individual signatures, gather the required supporting documentation (UDC incorporation articles and certified minutes with a resolution on authorized signatories), complete an Electronic Bank Transfer Service Form, and mail the original application for processing ahead of investing a portion of UDC unrestricted funds into a high-yield Certificate of Deposit and Federal Money Market Fund to reinvest interest earnings.

UDC Social Media: Hall-Bagdonas said Ramie shared her social media posts for the month in her report. On Instagram, we linked the UDSB’s website to share fishing maps from the different Towns. We’ve reached over 2,000 accounts, and we’ve engaged with over 200 on our UDC platforms. Some of our topics that we’ve shared the last month include: the litter sweep, UDC presentations, and posts from our partners.

Other: Ramie will consult with Sentinel Payroll Solutions on their requirements to set up direct deposit authorizations for recurring UDC payroll payments.

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