

Upper Delaware Council
OPERATIONS COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES
April 27, 2021

Committee Members Present: Jeff Dexter, Larry Richardson, David Dean, Fred Peckham (phone), Aaron Robinson, Al Henry, Jim Greier.

Committee Members Absent: None

Staff: Laurie Ramie, Shannon Cilento, Ashley Hall-Bagdonas

NPS Partner: Cody Hendrix- Community & Land Use Planner

Guests: Roger Saumure- Shohola Township- Alternate

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 7:28 p.m.

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

Executive Director's Report and Monthly Calendar:

Financial Status:

FY 2021 Federal Funding: Ramie was contacted by NPS UPDE Administrative Officer Michelle Blockberger on 4/12 with an offer for the UDC to submit an Application for Federal Assistance package by 4/15 to get in the queue for consideration of a Fiscal Year 2022 1st quarter allocation request for \$75,000. She immediately contacted our bookkeeper to get help with preparing a budget as the basis for the SF-424 forms, along with assembling the other required documentation. Ramie submitted that through Grant Solutions software program on 4/14 and via PDF to Blockberger on 4/15. Henry said he read the correspondence sent out and he thought it said because there is going to be a few personnel changes at Upper Delaware NPS that money might not be as readily available. Ramie said it did sound a bit speculative but if we weren't in this line to get it there'd be no chance. She said it did appear dependent on several factors whether they could isolate that \$75,000 and set it aside for our operations. Henry said from having worked there he can't see them having \$75,000 if they are fully staffed. Salvatore had mentioned 80% is personnel services and 20% discretionary funds. Henry said if we get used to doing this NPS may not have the lapsed money where they can fill UDC up in the first quarter of the next fiscal year with last fiscal year's money. He said what is the procedure and how would it work if that funding is not available? Richardson said maybe this new program is a mechanism to show that NPS is using all their funding. On 4/13, Ramie was informed by NPS Regional Grants Specialist Heidi Wiley via Blockberger that the UDC has entered "Fed-Late non-competing status" for Cooperative Agreement P20AC00940 and must submit an application under the correct CFDA number through Grant Solutions. Ramie inquired what that means, how to do it, and by when? She is awaiting further instructions. On 4/16, she was informed by NPS Regional Awards Specialist Patrick Reidy via Blockberger that the UDC must revise its Cooperative Agreement PC15AC01769 Fiscal Year 2020 4th Quarter SF-425 report ending 9/30/20 and submit "a final cumulative Performance Report which covers everything accomplished or not accomplished over the life of the 2016-2020 CA", both through Grant Solutions. Ramie inquired about the delay in processing for this now-closed agreement, why our five years' worth of quarterly performance reports are not adequate to cover the CA term, and what are we evaluating against to say what was NOT accomplished? Reply on 4/26 reiterated that the revised and new submissions are needed, and to contact the Grant Solutions Help Desk to figure out how to file those reports. Lastly, Ramie applied through ASAP on 4/26 to withdraw \$23,179.36 to cover the April abstract of bills, leaving a balance of \$152,795.50 for Fiscal Year 2021. Henry told Hendrix that this is why the Superintendent needs to attend these meetings, so he can be advised of this nonsense. He said the UDC is a staff of three and NPS is looking for someone who is a CPA go back and review records. When NPS asked for a professional audit, it cost UDC \$7,000 and NPS had to reimburse UDC that money and found nothing. Henry said if the Superintendent can't help UDC he would bump it up to the Regional Director. He feels we should contact PA Congressman Matt Cartwright or his staff immediately about these issues. Greier suggested a letter to both PA and NY representatives to put pressure from above down. He said they need someone above them to show them how absurd this is. Hendrix said he will bring this issue up at the NPS Management meeting tomorrow and follow-up with Blockberger and Salvatore.

Richardson said he's speculating but when UDC does a Five-Year Plan we have big objectives. We typically don't get all of those objectives done because of funding. Henry said when Marie Rust was the Regional Director, she advocated that the Upper Delaware be encompassed by the Delaware Water Gap. PA Congressmen Joe McDade wrote her a strong letter. The people that put money on the street is the Appropriations Committee; it's Congress, not the NPS and if there is a screw up someplace, they need to be aware of it and solve it or at least put some pressure on the NPS about the new program. Henry said look at what just happened with NYSDOT and the Litter Sweep. We sent a request to Senator Mike Martucci and that may have helped the process. He said let's use this to our advantage. Richardson said we have had negative balances before and all that amounted to was we overspent \$300,000 and we made it up out of our own money. Ramie said she was just surprised that wasn't already processed since they are talking about the 4th quarter of FY 2020 and we are in the 3rd quarter of FY 2020.

Federal and State Funding: On 4/16 the UDC submitted a Concern and Action Item about the lack of operational funding from PA via the Pike County Conservation District to prepare for the agenda of an upcoming Legislative Breakfast for county, state, and federal elected representatives. Under New Business, Ramie said she will report that Rep. Delgado aides reached out on 4/13 to set up a 4/20 call to discuss UDC federal funding status quo.

Administration:

Upper Delaware Litter Sweep: Ramie said among her administrative tasks for the April 17-25 event were setting up a new dedicated bank account at Jeff Bank after the 2020 account had lapsed; handling transactions of deposits and payments; preparing and tracking event finances through a Litter Sweep Donations Log; arranging for Certificates of Liability and Workers' Comp Insurances for DOT from Mike Preis Inc.; staff strategy discussions to seek the NYS DOT work permits (with a lot of Cilento's persistence) for state highway pick-ups with outreach to DOT officials and Sullivan County Parks & Rec after Rt. 97 pull-off areas were originally excluded; proofreading support letter templates; preparing a 4/2 support letter from the Upper Delaware Scenic Byway; sending a thank you letter to NYS Senator Martucci for his support; delivering supplies to the Town of Delaware; submitting a UDSB voucher for t-shirt donations; sending appreciation letters to all donors; issuing a 4/22 news release acknowledging donations; and saving contributed photos after obtaining identifications to folders for future publicity. We were very grateful for all the donors that helped with the event t-shirts and there was a lot of coverage by media and volunteers. She said if we do this event in the future, we have learned a lot and we will be a well-oiled machine. The Litter Sweep created a lot of good will for the UDC. We will come up with an overview of how much trash may have been picked up. All 250 t-shirts were claimed with 50-100+ volunteers beyond that. Cilento had a debrief with permitting agent Cathy Niederriter of NYSDOT and they talked about how the event can go smoother next year. Ramie said she received a Thank You card from Senator Mike Martucci and read it to the committee.

Administrative: Jeff from Chorba Consulting came in initially on 3/25 to run diagnostics on the existing WIFI boosters to improve the Internet signal strength in the office, found them to be outdated, set up and configured a new wireless system for \$365. Saumure said with everyone moving up here it's consuming all the bandwidth; his internet is noticeably slower. Cilento said she's never had the WIFI work in the backroom and it seems to be functioning now through her smartphone.

Public Relations:

"The Upper Delaware": Ramie submitted the Spring 2021 issue to Courier Printing on 3/23 via Dropbox after 63.5 hours of work. She received and returned blueline proof on 3/25. Hall-Bagdonas updated the mail program database on 3/29. Cilento posted the PDF version on our website Publications page on 3/29. Courier delivered the pre-sorted bags for bulk mailing to the Callicoon Post Office on 4/6, but it was held pending payment for additional postage owed. Ramie hand-wrote a check, obtained an officer's co-signature, and drove it to Callicoon. We were later informed that Courier Printing had made an error in the paperwork and the amount of postage in the account was adequate. Ramie updated the Index of Articles for our archives, and publicized its release on 4/7-8. Summer 2021 issue is due to the printer by 7/28 for publication on 8/9.

News Releases: Three news releases were issued: "The Upper Delaware Spring 2021 Newsletter Available On-line and by Mail", 4/8; "Donations Support Upper Delaware Litter Sweep", 4/22; and "UDC Supports Rehabilitation of Historic Skinners Falls Bridge", 4/23. Posted Rep. Delgado's Delaware River Watershed Congressional Caucus press release on the UDC website with a photo on 4/15. Ramie was interviewed on 3/24 for WJFF Public Radio show, "The Local Edition" about the Skinners Falls Bridge. She replied to questions from Linda Drollinger (River Reporter) on 3/21, Isabel Braverman (Sullivan County Democrat) on 4/6; and Laurie Stuart (River Reporter) on 4/1, 4/14, and 4/26 to proofread articles and editorials for accuracy. Ongoing publicity occurs through Facebook,

Instagram, LinkedIn, YouTube and Vimeo outlets. UDC also posts all NPS UPDE news releases at upperdelawarecouncil.org.

Presentation: Cilento and Ingrid Peterec from NPS held a 4/7 SUNY Sullivan Community Learning Class: “Local River, National Significance: Partnering for Management of the Upper Delaware Scenic and Recreational River.” There were about a dozen people via webinar and Cilento felt it was informative learning what NPS’s role is and what UDC’s role is. She said SUNY was happy with the presentation.

UDC 9/12 Awards Ceremony: Ramie sent a keynote speaker invitation letter for 33rd Annual River Valley Awards Ceremony at Central House Family Resort to NYS Senator Mike Martucci on 3/26 and reiterated it in person at the 4/12 Rep. Delgado press conference. The Scheduling Office is evaluating it.

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 May’s monthly calendar. Individual comments on the Skinners Falls Bridge are due by this Friday.

Old Business

UDC Social Media Analytics: Cilento said the Upper Delaware Litter Sweep contributed to a lot of growth because UDC had so many organizations that worked with us and tagged us, thanked us, etc. Updates include Instagram (last 30 days): 96 posts, 931 followers (+123) 2,637 accounts reached, 11,366 impressions (post views), 545 profile visits, 39 website clicks in profile, 690 content interactions, 760 likes, 30 comments, 6 saves, 37 shares. 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: 401 followers, (+112) 323 likes, 5,200 people reached with posts. There have been 530 post engagements (likes, comments, shares). Our UDC LinkedIn has 74 followers with 224 post impression (83% increase since March). Facebook and Instagram are most popular right now and we will focus on those most to grow engagement.

Status of PA Grant Projects: Ramie provided in the meeting packet a Balance Sheet which she has updated. We are just under \$48,000. The latest expenses were UDC paid for the Litter Sweep logo and transferred over funding of \$933.75 for Litter Sweep supplies. We are awaiting Damascus and Berlin Townships to do their projects. She reached out to them for updates. Dexter said the bids for the Damascus project came in way over. The Townships were asked to complete all projects and ask for one check from UDC. The grant expires on 12/31/2021. The last project will be UDC’s Fiscal Sustainability Plan and she will be writing the Request for Proposals soon.

Other: None.

New Business

2021 River and Shoreline Clean-up Grant Applications: Ramie provided a handout on the 2021 UDC River Clean-up Grant Applications. Ramie said we traditionally end up with funds at the end of the Fiscal Year; which is why this program goes through 9/20. Ramie feels UDC can free up at least \$3,500 in the budget for the River and Shoreline Clean-up Grants. She said we always have our own funds if we absolutely had to. These have been loyal Towns in pursuing these cleanups and have done them regardless whether they had funding help from UDC. The Town of Lumberland submitted an application on 3/26. Trash will be collected along the shores within the Town of Lumberland from Camp Tel-Tehudah to the Mongaup River Access at the Town of Deerpark border every other week during the summer. The Town is advertising for bids by a local contractor for this work. The grant request is for \$1,100. The Town of Deerpark submitted their application on 4/12. Town Highway Department employees will pick up debris along 2.9 miles of NYS Route 97 to the Deerpark/Lumberland line for three clean-ups: after Memorial Day, after Independence Day, and after Labor Day. Costs are broken down per occasion for labor, dump truck use, trash bags, trash pickers, and dumping fees. The grant request is for \$3,308.43. A Motion by Richardson seconded by Dexter for a 2021 River & Shoreline Clean-up Grants draft resolution be presented at the 5/6 meeting carried. Henry asked that there be parameters on it meaning if funding is available. He said it saddens him that NPS can’t find any money for this project. Richardson said he has faith that we will be able to find the amount needed for the River and Shoreline Clean-Up Grants. Ramie will write a press release after it is approved.

Henry read from the 3/26/1987 Final Environmental Impact Statement for the Upper Delaware Scenic and Recreational River page 211: “Currently, the National Park Service allocates fund to local governments to provide for solid waste removal and law enforcement along the river. These would continue under any of the alternatives.”

Upper Delaware Litter Sweep Donations and Sullivan Renaissance Healthy Community Initiatives Grant:

Ramie said we have good news as you can see, provided in the meeting packet was the 4/10 letter from Sullivan Renaissance re: the Sullivan Renaissance Healthy Community Initiatives Grant. This was a mini grant and UDC was awarded \$500. Cilento had applied for this program which is a separate initiative from the Litter Sweep. Cilento said she and Hall-Bagdonas had seen through social media some other organizations further down river in the Philadelphia area that have rentable Litter Clean-Up Kits. It was a great idea and we were able to use that as a template and adapt it to what we thought would be useful here. Based on their funding schedule it we weren't able to utilize the Litter Buckets for the Upper Delaware Litter Sweep but we are able to capitalize on all of the promotion from that event. The Sullivan Renaissance Grant funds 12 Litter Clean-up Kits that includes a Home Depot bucket, and supplies needed to litter sweep. Each bucket would be for 2-4 people. It would include bags, gloves, masks, trash picker, maps, a first aid kit, vests, etc. People will be able to come to the UDC office at any point during the year to borrow them free of charge. A news release will be issued on this.

UDC Federal Funding Discussion with Congressman Delgado's Staff: At the press conference on 4/12 with Congressman Delgado, the Chairperson for the Sullivan County Legislature, Rob Doherty, had asked for some talking points and mentioned the UDC's funding problems during his time at the podium. That evening Ramie received an email from the Chief of Staff for Congressman Delgado, Amanda DeSantis who introduced her to Matthew Gerson who works on the legislative team and is the primary contact for the Delaware Watershed Caucus. DeSantis set up a call with Ramie and advised Gerson that Delgado met with the UDC in 2019. Ramie had a half-hour call with them on 4/20. She explained how UDC is financed and that we are part of the base funding of the Upper Delaware Scenic and Recreational River (UPDE) receives and that \$300,000 comes through a Cooperative Agreement. Gerson asked why has it been capped at \$300,000? He said if we can get to the root cause if it's a choice or the bill that could help UDC. Ramie advised them that we had just signed our Five-Year Agreement which again sets funding at \$300,000 a year as has been the case since 1988. Ramie said she sent them follow up information and is waiting to hear back.

Summary of Pending Bills 4/26/2021: A Motion by Henry seconded by Greier to approve bills was carried.

Financial Statement 4/30/2021: Dexter said the financial statement is offered for individual review.

Other: Robinson said we should be cognizant of a possible \$15 minimum wage increase for Federal contractors that could impact our operations.

Public Comment: None.

Adjournment: A motion by Greier seconded by Robinson to adjourn the meeting at 8:44 p.m. was carried.