

**Upper Delaware Council
OPERATIONS COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES
July 27, 2021**

Committee Members Present: Fred Peckham, Larry Richardson, David Dean, Aaron Robinson, Al Henry, Jim Greier.
Committee Members Absent: Jeff Dexter
Staff: Laurie Ramie, Shannon Cilento, Ashley Hall-Bagdonas
NPS Partner: Cody Hendrix- Community & Land Use Planner
Guests: Liam Mayo- River Reporter

The UDC's Operations Committee held its monthly meeting at the Council office in Narrowsburg, NY. on Tuesday, July 27, 2021. Vice-chairperson Peckham called the meeting to order at 7:06 p.m.

Approval of May 22nd Meeting Minutes: A motion by Henry seconded Peckham to approve the June 22, 2021 Meeting Minutes was carried.

Executive Director's Report and Monthly Calendar:

Ramie said UDC had a visitor Friday, Mike Reuber, who was one of the first hires at NPS and Chief of Resource Management. Ramie said he is a former Distinguished Service Award recipient from the UDC and stopped in to say hi and said he reads all of UDC's minutes. Ramie said she had most recently seen Reuber at the 40th anniversary of the National Canoe Safety Patrol.

Financial Status:

FY 2021 Federal Funding: Ramie applied through ASAP on 7/26 to withdraw \$30,148.16 to cover the July abstract of bills, leaving a balance of \$80,462.31 for Fiscal Year 2021. Ramie reached out to recipients of UDC uncleared transactions year-to-date to reissue checks as necessary on 7/19 to reconcile the bank account. She reviewed a budget status worksheet prepared by the bookkeeper showing our spending projections on target to have no or a modest surplus. She will continue monthly expense drawdowns and prepare an annual Federal Financial Report and Performance Progress Report for online submission through Grant Solutions within 30 days of the fiscal year's 9/30/21 end.

State Funding: Ramie sent our NYS Funding Report to Senator Martucci's aide with elaborations on 7/13 upon request by Nadia Rajsz. She discussed with the senator at 7/25 Narrowsburg RiverFest his strategy to advocate for UDC operational funding by NYS which he will explain during his keynote address at the 9/12 UDC Awards Banquet. Ramie will participate in a 7/27 call by the Alliance for the Upper Delaware River Watershed to discuss the status of a NYS Environmental Protection Fund funding request. Ramie, Cilento and UDC Chairman Jeff Dexter will attend the Pike/Wayne Conservation Partnership's Legislative Breakfast on 7/29 in Hawley. A copy of the UDC poster prepared by Cilento was provided in the meeting packet.

Votes Needed:

Support Letter Requests: Ramie said two support letter requests have come up for action. The first request is by Camille O'Brien, director of Legislative Affairs for Senator Martucci, a letter to the Independent Redistricting Commission to advocate keeping the Upper Delaware River region within the same NYS Senate District 42 legislative boundaries. The support letter was requested on 7/23. Ramie would prepare it for 8/5 UDC vote (which O'Brien will attend).

The second letter of support is requested by Halle Van der Gaag, senior manager for PA & DE programs, National Parks Conservation Association, a letter to support NPCA's William Penn Foundation proposal which will include advocacy for operational funding of UDC. This support letter was requested on 7/26. The proposal is due by 7/30. A Motion by Henry seconded by Richardson to approve writing these Support Letters carried.

Public Relations:

“The Upper Delaware”: Ramie worked intermittently on the content selection, interviews, photo manipulations, formatting and layout, and composition from 7/7 until 7/24 for a total of 59.5 hours, including two Saturdays on 7/17 and 7/24. She uploaded final Quark Xpress file and 24 photos to Courier Printing on 7/26 after staff proofreading, with an instruction memo, ahead of our 7/28 deadline. Ramie will review blueline proof when ready. Hall-Bagdonas will update the mail program database by 8/2. We will await delivery on or by 8/9 to distribute and publicize.

7/25 Narrowsburg RiverFest: Cilento said we talked a lot about what the UDC does; people were excited about the Knotweed information. We handed out the life jacket yard signs. A handful of people discussed river safety. Hall-Bagdonas said we saw our friends Dave and Michele Dean, Cody Hendrix, Sue Sullivan and Liam Mayo of the *River Reporter*. Camille O’Brien, director of Legislative Affairs for Senator Martucci, spent some time at the booth with Cilento and Hall-Bagdonas, as did the senator.

UDC 8/1 Raft Trip: Hall-Bagdonas said we currently have 55 people signed up for the 33rd Annual Family Raft Trip. Many families mark their calendar for this event. The 33rd Annual Family Raft Trip is with Kittatinny Canoes: park at KC Matamoras Base between 9-10 a.m., shuttle up to Staircase Access. Cost is a discounted rate of \$29 ages 13 and up, \$19 ages 4-12.

Henry said NPS Delaware Water Gap has a PSA on WNEP about water safety that he recommended Cilento check out for potential social media sharing.

UDC 9/12 Awards Ceremony: Ramie updated the nomination form and publicized (twice) the acceptance of nominations through 7/23. She acknowledged each nomination. She selected the buffet menu and confirmed the charge (\$28.09 per person including gratuity) with the venue. Next steps will be to: select and publicize the 2021 recipients; prepare an invitation letter/reservation form; issue a news release announcing Senator Martucci as keynote speaker and opening reservations for \$30, due by 9/30; invite the 2020 recipients also; do interviews, research, compose and copy the souvenir booklet. Staff will set up at Central House Family Resort for the 9/12, 3 p.m. event.

Henry said he was asked by the Wayne County Historical Society and Berlin Township about a book he was just notified about to submit as a nomination. Ramie said it’s a loose deadline and we will certainly consider it.

News Releases: Three news releases were issued: “UDC Seeks Nominations for 33rd Annual River Valley Awards by July 23”, 6/25; “UDC Welcomes Public on Aug. 1 Raft Trip”, 6/29; and “UDC Will Recognize Award-Worthy People & Projects in Upper Delaware”, 7/12”. Ramie participated in a 7/2, 10:30 a.m. to 12:10 p.m. interview at 3 locations for Spectrum TV News with reporter Ben Nandy and Superintendent Joe Salvatore, on Upper Delaware River drownings. She responded to informational requests from Matt Spillane at the *Times Herald-Record* and others. She discussed the *Sullivan County Democrat*’s printing of life jacket promotional posters with Publisher Fred Stabbert on 7/7. Ramie did interview with *Sullivan County Democrat*’s Lilly Parnell about the Ten Mile River Access on 7/19 and proofread her draft article upon request. Ongoing publicity occurs through Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, YouTube and Vimeo outlets. UDC also posts all NPS UPDE news releases at upperdelawarecouncil.org.

Ramie had a Zoom meeting with the new owners of Kittatinny Canoes Holdings; Northgate Resorts. Their management team said they feel UDC is an influential player here and wanted to share with Ramie various programs they have coming up. They are very concerned about the drownings because 4 out of 5 happened at Kittatinny Campgrounds sites. Three were swimmers off their beaches and the other person jumped out of a raft. They said they take that to heart and realize that boating is a high-risk activity. Ramie said you can only promote safety so much and people have to take responsibility for themselves and their children. They said they are being very proactive about stepping up their communications. They are a progressive company that is using all means at their disposal to try and combat some of the behaviors and whatever leads to these incidents happening. They have met with Sullivan County IDA, Highland Town Board and Pike County because they extend out to River Beach in Milford. They want to develop projects the right way and hired Delaware Engineering to do their planning work for some expansions they have in mind, all of which will have to go before the proper boards for approvals. They will have 150 employees working in season. They are applying for a NYS CFA Grant with Tom Shepstone as a consultant on a wish list of improvements they’d like to make. Northgate Resorts officials would like to meet with

UDC once these plans are together. Richardson asked if they plan to continue the river cleanups that Kittatinny has had over the years? Ramie said that wasn't brought up but would be wonderful if they did.

Ramie said the Delaware River Civilian Climate Corps is still in the works with contacts being made in the region. This is also an outgrowth of a William Penn Foundation Program.

We have a presentation for August that Cilento was able to pull together. Rich Evans will be presenting "Climate Change and Our Hemlock Forests and Brook Trout" at the 8/5 meeting. Robinson had reach out for a September presentation by Gregory Wrightstone which will also be on climate change but it may be a point-counter-point situation. Robinson had read Wrightstone's book "Inconvenient Facts: The Science That Al Gore Doesn't Want You to Know". Robinson said he comes from a science background and his view is if the thinking is one-sided nobody's thinking. He was taught if you are not challenging science it doesn't progress. Wrightstone did a study on the lower Delaware River where the projection is the water level will rise about 12 inches in the next 100 years. Wrightstone came to another conclusion that the Delaware Bay will rise but not to the extent that others are projecting. Ramie said in both cases the presentations are doing as Robinson suggested, taking a huge topic of climate change and trying to look at its local impact on the Delaware River.

Ramie has sent members a link for the "Day on the Delaware" event on 8/5 from 11-1:30 p.m. at the Callicoon Riverside Park. They will have speakers from 11:15-12. Senator Martucci and Assemblywoman Gunther will be there. The event is for NY funding for the Upper Delaware region. There will be boxed lunches for everyone who reserves for the event and boat rides for the elected officials and press. One topic will be that they are trying to get a line item through the Environmental Protection Fund in the State Budget for the Delaware River. The Mohawk River has a program in there that they think would be a good model. In November 2022 an environmental bond is going to be voted upon. This would also provide millions of dollars in NYS for environmental causes. Everyone is invited to the 8/5 event and should be some good networking.

Then is the start of the Delaware River Sojourn. Cilento is part of the Steering Committee for that event. 8/6-8/10 are in the Upper Delaware corridor and there's going to be a Day 0 litter clean up in Hancock at the Bard Parker Access on 8/6. 8/9 she will be giving a presentation about who UDC is and what we do. 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 August's monthly calendar.

Old Business

Operations Tasks from Five-Year Plan: Henry sent comments. Cilento asked members to take another month to review and if there are certain priorities or actionable items they may want to take action of or help facilitate, let her know.

UDC Social Media Analytics: Cilento said it's been a busy month on social media. Updates include Instagram (last 30 days): 127 posts, 1,107 followers (+51) 3,225 accounts reached, 12,304 impressions (post views), 341 profile visits, 27 website clicks in profile, 838 content interactions, 625 likes, 27 comments, 18 saves, 57 shares. For Facebook (last 30 days) we have: 628 followers, (+112) 513 likes, over 18.8k people reached with posts. There have been 2,170 post engagements (likes, comments, shares). Our UDC LinkedIn has 80 followers with 189 post impressions. The "Let's Talk Delaware River Safety" post got 100 likes on Instagram, 88 shares, 907 accounts reached (33% were non-followers). On Facebook the post got 336 likes, 207 shares and reached 14.6 peoples. On LinkedIn it got four shares. Evan Padua also provided a video for World Drowning Prevention Day and he spoke about why he wears a life jacket and why. Cilento say we're using the hashtag #WhyIWearIt and will be doing some outreach in Spanish with the hashtag #PorQueLoUso because 4 out of the 5 drownings were Hispanic individuals, therefore targeting that demographic was important to NPS. We will continue to do posts on that and send out life jacket safety throughout the summer. Henry asked if UDC or NPS have done any posts about river safety on the websites with public information about the recent drownings primarily by swimming and river safety. Cilento said that's a good suggestion. Hendrix said he knows that Peterec and her staff are working on few projects. Henry suggested doing a PSA like Delaware Water Gap which was featured on WNEP.

Index of UDC Digitized Records: Hall-Bagdonas provided a copy of her progress with the digitized records. She is also providing a document of Technical Assistance Grants listed by type for reference. Richardson said when it was discussed last month it was his thought that applicants will have access to the archived material. If you're a

Town/ship that's looking to make a brochure but has never done one they can reference ones at UDC and review the application because they are what convinced UDC members they were worthy of funding. Hall-Bagdonas said when the document is complete it will be sent out to the committee.

PA Grant Account and Township Projects Update: Ramie said the handout has the balance of where we are with the spenddown of the \$100,000. All that has happened since last month is the continuation of interest. She reached out to the two Townships that have pending projects. Steve Adams from Damascus Township said he plans to get the outhouses at the trail finished this month. They are having issues with the Food Pantry project. They put it out for bid and the low bid was \$94,635 which was \$64,000 over budget for what they planned to spend. They rejected the bids as being out of the park. Now they are waiting on guidance on using funding through the American Rescue Act to help pay for some of that project. In the meantime, he is aware that we have a 12/31 deadline. Cathy Hunt from Berlin Township reported that work is scheduled to start this week and she will keep us updated on the various projects.

Other: None.

New Business

Payment for Town of Tusten TAG 2021-01: \$9,000: A Motion by Henry seconded by Robinson to approve the \$9,000 payment for Town of Tusten TAG 2021-01 carried.

Long-Term Fiscal Sustainability Plan Progress: Ramie said consultant Crane Associates, Inc., specifically Michael D. Crane, AICP, was hired to do the Long-Term Fiscal Sustainability Plan. He's from Burlington, Vermont and also has an office in NY on Lake Champlain in Port Henry. Ramie and Crane have had several phone calls already. Ramie provided the signed contract in the meeting packet and it lays out what he has agreed to do for UDC under the \$17,930 contract. It includes the two phases of developing the Fiscal Sustainability Plan as well as doing an accuracy check on the 1985 Economic Analysis from the River Management Plan (RMP). Ramie reached out to the other bidder so they knew the decision of the 7/1 meeting. Crane is aware we have until 12/1 to get this project done so he may present at the 12/2 UDC meeting his findings and recommendations. We also need to give time for the government required audit of the PA DCED grant. Eckersley & Davis, LLP will be doing that audit. Ramie said she's impressed with Crane so far. He will be attending the Delaware River Sojourn. They have set up a meeting with Michelle Blockberger, the NPS administrative officer, and he would also like to have a meeting with longstanding board members. He's looking at Wednesday, 8/11 during the day. Ramie thought Henry as treasurer, Robinson and Richardson would be valuable for that meeting to share town/ship insights and the UDC's financial situation. He would like to keep it to five people or under to keep the conversations productive. He would also meet with the UDC bookkeeper and Eckersley & Davis.

UDC Poster for 7/29 PA Legislative Breakfast: Discussed earlier.

Summary of Pending Bills 7/26/2021: A Motion by Henry seconded by Robinson to approve bills was carried.

Financial Statement 7/31/2021: Peckham said the financial statement is offered for individual review.

Other: Hendrix said he just got an email from the Department of Interior stating from the CDC that everyone must wear masks inside federal buildings whether you are vaccinated or not, just so everyone is aware.

Public Comment: None.

Adjournment: A motion by Robinson seconded by Henry to adjourn the meeting at 8:05 p.m. was carried.