

Upper Delaware Council
OPERATIONS COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES
June 27, 2023

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

Committee Members Absent: None

Staff: Laurie Ramie, Kerry Engelhardt

NPS Partner: None

Guests: None

The UDC's Operations Committee held its monthly meeting at the UDC office in Narrowsburg, N.Y. on Tuesday, June 27, 2023. Robinson called the meeting to order at 8:05 p.m.

Approval of the May 23, 2023 Meeting Minutes: A motion by Henry seconded by B. Dudko to approve the May 23, 2023 meeting minutes carried.

Executive Director's Monthly Report: Ramie provided some highlights of her written report which would not come up under later agenda topics. She is happy to report that the National Park Service authorized the \$300,000 award for Fiscal Year 2023 3rd & 4th Quarters and FY 2024 1st & 2nd Quarters on 6/9 based on the UDC's Application for Financial Assistance originally submitted on 4/25 ahead of a revision and federal fiscal system maintenance shutdown. After the funding became available in the UDC's online account on 6/12, she immediately withdrew reimbursement for the May abstract of bills then on 6/26 withdrew \$20,024.25 to cover June's expenses. That leaves \$257,940.78 in the account through 3/31/24. She said it's a great relief to have access to the federal funding for that amount of time before a new application will be due.

The dusk-to-dawn lights paralleling the office front door require repair. A 7/13 appointment has been made with Cintas Fire Protection for the required annual inspection of the UDC's fire extinguishers and emergency exit lights. The UDC received notice from MVP Health Care that the company has filed a request with the NYS Department of Financial Services to increase their premium rate by 9.2% in 2024. This request may be approved, modified, or disapproved. The UDC's 2023 plan for one NY state resident renews on 12/1.

The UDC issued four news releases in the past month on the topics of the Litter Sweep wrap-up, opening of the 2024 Technical Assistance Grants round, accepting reservations for the UDC's 8/6 raft trip, and announcing the NPS Water Safety presentation that has been scheduled for the 7/6 full Council meeting. She also issued a news release on behalf of the Upper Delaware Scenic Byway to promote the availability of free NYS Rt. 97 placemats and reusable ragbags which are in storage at the UDC office. She mentioned the varied subjects of Facebook posts over the past month and upcoming topics for publicity.

The UDC reserved information booth space for the 17th Annual NPS Zane Grey Festival in Lackawaxen on 7/15 but cancelled the accepted booth at the 33rd Annual Narrowsburg Riverfest on 7/23 due to being short-staffed and having to prioritize available time for deadlines like the summer newsletter being due on 7/24 and our own special events during this busy summer season. One of those is the Scranton/Wilkes-Barre RailRiders game on 8/1 which will serve as a community organization sponsorship night for the UDC. We purchased 25 discounted tickets at \$10 each and will be able to sell them for \$15 for the 6:35 p.m. game against the Rochester Red Wings at the PNC Field as a fundraiser, as well as being able to speak about the UDC's mission, activities, and partner with National Park Service staff on discussing water safety. Ramie said she needs to find time to figure out how to access the online ticket system so we can start selling them shortly. More tickets can be ordered as needed.

Twenty-four reservations have been made so far for the 35th Annual Family Raft Trip from Staircase Access to Kittatinny's Matamoras Base. The cost is \$29 for adults and \$19 for ages 4-12, which is a discounted group rate. Ramie has been handling this event which has typically been a task for the former secretary to run. Advance sign-ups are needed by 7/28 in order to provide the livery with the guest count.

Following that event will be the UDC's 35th Annual River Valley Awards on 9/10 at Central House Family Resort in Beach Lake, PA, with U.S. Congressman Marc Molinaro as keynote speaker. Ramie has been asked to speak at two upcoming events coordinated by Friends of the Upper Delaware River, Inc. The first is the Day on the Delaware on 8/2 from 2-4 p.m. at the newly-improved Highland Access, then FUDR's "Water, Water Everywhere" conference on 10/24 and 10/25 at their Hancock office and streaming online, for which the UDC, NPS, and National Parks Conservation Association were asked to deliver a joint presentation on the Upper Delaware on 10/24 from 2:30-3 p.m. Ramie and UPDE Superintendent Kurnath have accepted that invitation.

August 18th is the operative date both for completion of the 2023 Technical Assistance Grant single project and submission of applications for 2024. The Towns of Deerpark and Lumberland have until 9/20 to complete their River & Shoreline Clean-up Grant projects to request reimbursement. Ramie noted that the rest of the items in her written report were self-explanatory.

New Business

Personnel Subcommittee Report: Administrative Support Position: Henry asked Ramie to provide an update. She reviewed that the UDC received six applications by the 6/1 deadline. The Personnel Subcommittee had her arrange interviews with two applicants on 6/8. One candidate was invited to sit in at the 6/20 Water Use/Resource Management Committee meeting to prepare minutes from a portion of the business as a writing sample which Ramie said this individual submitted by 6/23 and she found them to be a promising attempt. At the subcommittee's direction, they had discussed employment terms and the benefits package for her to convey. Ramie also checked references and reported those comments to the subcommittee. Henry said the subcommittee is ready to make an offer, which would then go before the full Council for a final decision if accepted. A motion by Henry seconded by Dexter to extend an offer of employment as Administrative Support to the candidate in question carried. Ramie said she would provide application materials to the board for their hiring vote at their next 7/6 meeting. She noted that the Personnel Subcommittee had advised Engelhardt and Ramie to keep track of their hours spent to fulfill the duties of the former secretary position during the vacancy. Ramie noted that this time since 6/1 has been incorporated into their existing work schedules in the absence of overtime compensation being available for salaried employees.

New UDC Board Appointments: The UDC received a letter from NYS Department of Environmental Conservation Commissioner Basil Seggos on 6/12 designating Ryan Coulter, Fisheries Manager for Region 3, and Chris VanMaaren, Fisheries Manager for Region 4, as the State of New York's UDC representative and alternate, respectively. On 6/15, UDC Town of Fremont Representative Jim Greier and Supervisor Brian Brustman notified Ramie that Dennis Bernitt has been appointed as the town's new alternate and that Greier will continue as representative until the end of the year. Greier said that Bernitt plans to start accompanying him to UDC meetings for the transition and that he will pass along his contact information.

Fee for 7/14 PA Legislative Breakfast at Wayne Conservation District: The Wayne/Pike Conservation Partners, for which Engelhardt is a liaison for the UDC, will be holding a 2023 Pennsylvania Legislative Breakfast on 7/14 at 9 a.m. in Honesdale at the Wayne Conservation District office. Ramie said the UDC has been invited to participate, as we did in 2021 when it was held at the D&H Canal Park at Lock 31 in Hawley and we were introduced to the governor's representative Thomas Caffrey who later came to the UDC to meet with us. This is an opportunity to discuss the UDC's funding issues with any federal and state elected officials who attend. There is a \$65 fee to print a poster outlining the "ask" that each partner designs and to have two people present. That will be UDC Chairperson Aaron Robinson if he is available and/or Ramie or Engelhardt. The completed poster in print-ready format and a handout for a collective packet are due by 6/30. A motion by B. Dudko seconded by Henry for the UDC to participate and pay the \$65 fee carried.

Summary of Pending Bills 6/27/2023: A motion by Henry seconded by Greier to approve the bills and pay them in the normal fashion carried.

Financial Statement 6/30/2023: Robinson said the financial statement is offered for individual review.

Other: None.

Old Business

Attendance for 7/6 Meeting with NYS Senator Peter Oberacker: Ramie reminded everyone that Senator Oberacker will meet with UDC representatives and staff at 3 p.m. on 7/6, ahead of that evening's full Council meeting. We will tailor a presentation about the UDC's mission, services, and funding to the time that he has available. She has been asked to provide an advance agenda and attendance list to his staff, so will be sending out an invitation memo to the full membership requesting confirmation of plans to participate by 9 a.m. on July 3. Regarding Pennsylvania funding, Ramie sent the letter that Wayne County Republican Committee Chairperson Steve Adams suggested would be helpful to Senator Baker, Representative Fritz, and Representative Adams on 5/31 outlining the situation and has not received any response as yet. Dexter said that the lawmakers are currently focused on approving the Commonwealth's budget.

New York Times Coverage Request by Aaron Robinson: A copy of a 6/8 letter that UDC Chairperson Robinson wrote to the New York Times proposing that they revisit a March 19, 1984 article that the newspaper had published under the headline of "Fury Aroused by Plan for Delaware" was handed out, along with that original article.

He wrote, in part, "On behalf of the Upper Delaware Council, I am reaching out to the NYT with a sincere plea of urgency to consider writing a follow-up story on its 38-year-old article that reported on an intensely controversial plan to preserve a 73.4-mile stretch of the Upper Delaware River in southern New York after Congress passed legislation in 1978 to include it in the Wild & Scenic Rivers Act... Although the RMP specified how the UDC would be funded by its partners, neither New York nor Pennsylvania has ever delivered one penny of operating aid in its 36 years of existence. The UDC has only received its 60% annual funding share from the Federal Government through the National Park Service, fixed at the grossly deficient level of \$300,000. It doesn't take an accountant to realize that the UDC is running on fumes and will in short order place this highly successful experiment to cooperatively manage this recreational jewel at risk for collapse. The Council is a legislatively mandated component of this plan without any alternative provision to perform its assigned oversight tasks. Over the past five years we have reached out to every Federal and State elected official that represents our river corridor for a funding remedy. For the most part their responses, if we even received one, are despicable. Last year we engaged the services of an independent consultant to analyze our financial future. His conclusion was shocking. The UDC will be unable to adequately function in 5 years or less and our already understaffed organization of three will need to be further reduced by one... At this juncture, with other approaches exhausted, publicity of this crisis from a credible news organization may be the only way to get our Representatives to act."

There has been no response to date. B. Dudko suggested sending it out to other newspapers like the New York Post. Ramie explained that the "hook" in this proposal was that this subject should be relevant to the Times based on their past coverage, to trace what has become of the Upper Delaware Scenic and Recreational River management nearly four decades later.

Vanguard Federal Money Market Fund: Ramie reported that staff sent a \$120,000 check by USPS Certified Mail for \$8.13 postage on 6/2 and never got any expected return receipt, but after some preliminary correspondence from Vanguard, the Council did receive a prospectus on 6/20 confirming the purchase of a Federal Money Market Fund. This is an investment of the UDC's unrestricted funds to yield higher interest than the local bank account was paying. Bookkeeper Mike Poska went online to find the statement confirming the deposit of funds as well. Ramie said we have deliberately avoided conducting transactions electronically because there had been some confusion about signatories that also have individual Vanguard accounts vs. the new UDC account that we want to absolutely assure are handled separately. Henry said that the \$120,000 balance showed up on his personal statement under the UDC's brokerage account number as it did with Poska, since Henry also has a designated signatory role as the UDC secretary-treasurer, though he would prefer that it didn't. Ramie will look into options but said that she does not expect there to be much activity with that account, unless the UDC opts to purchase a different financial product. Robinson said that the Federal Money Market Fund is currently yielding over 5% interest.

Status of Sullivan County \$2,000 Upper Delaware Litter Sweep Grant: Ramie reported that she had most recently fulfilled a 6/22 request by the Sullivan County Budget Office to submit proof of payment for the three items covered under the county's \$2,000 grant for the April 2023 Upper Delaware Litter Sweep, after having previously provided an application with a Schedule of Services on 6/5 detailing how it would be spent, executing the contract, submitting a voucher on 6/12, and adding the County of Sullivan as an additional insured on the UDC's \$2 million

liability policy as required. She hopes that receipt of payment will be the next step. Richardson confirmed that these funds were allocated by Sullivan County Legislator Nadia Rajsz from her District 2 discretionary funds.

Other: Richardson asked Engelhardt how her Penn State World Campus GIS course, for which the UDC is subsidizing the tuition, is going. Engelhardt said that she continues to maintain an A average, for which the committee members applauded. After she saw the ArcGIS Pro StoryMap that Dr. Claire Jantz's team at Shippensburg University had created for Lackawaxen Township's projected zoning at full build-out, she opted to choose as her final project creating a StoryMap on the Delaware Aqueduct Repair Shutdown. ArcGIS StoryMaps combine interactive maps as information layers that work on a variety of screen sizes for storytelling.

There was no Public Comment.

Adjournment: A motion by Henry seconded by B. Dudko to adjourn the meeting at 8:46 p.m. carried.

Minutes prepared by Laurie Ramie, 6/30/23