

Upper Delaware Council
OPERATIONS COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES
January 27, 2026
ZOOM ONLY

Committee Members Present: Jeff Dexter, Al Henry, Ginny Dudko, Aaron Robinson, Harold Roeder, Larry Richardson
Committee Members Absent: None
Staff: Laurie Ramie, Kerry Engelhardt, Stephanie Driscoll
NPS Partner: None
Guests: Bill Dudko

The UDC's Operations Committee held its monthly meeting on Tuesday, January 27, 2026. Vice-chairperson Robinson called the meeting to order at 7:48 pm.

Election of Committee Chair and Vice-chair: A motion by Richardson to nominate Jeff Dexter as 2026 Operations Committee Chairperson and Harold Roeder as Vice-chair, with G. Dudko seconding, carried. Richardson's motion to close nominations, with G. Dudko seconding, carried.

Approval of the December 16, 2025 Meeting Minutes: A motion by Richardson seconded by G. Dudko to approve the 12/16 meeting minutes carried.

Executive Director's Monthly Report: Ramie said the office was closed yesterday due to the snowstorm Sunday into Monday this week. Typically, the day before the Ops meeting is when we do bookkeeping and she goes into the ASAP system to download funding for the month. She handled that task this morning instead. Because we needed to withdraw the full amount left in the account through 2025 last time, which exceeded the total amount of bills at that point, she only needed to withdraw a little over \$4,000 this time to align with the amount of January expenses. She had reported at the full council meeting that UDC was allowed to receive the full \$300,000 up front for 2026. This allows us to draw down from that amount each month to cover federal expenses. We greatly appreciate that UPDE staff advocated for this arrangement—especially since it did not necessarily have to happen under the Continuing Resolution environment which had imposed a Park Service spending limit of 33.42%. She said they were grateful to have the \$300,000 already in place, both for budget stability and because it reduces administrative burden. She attended a webinar on January 21 through Grant Solutions to provide updates about grant application messaging and feature changes.

Ramie said that the UDC's registration in the System for Award Management (SAM) will expire on March 5. She will renew it on that exact date because it takes effect day you complete it. The SAM renewal is what allows UDC to accept federal funding. The Federal Financial Report and the Performance Progress Report covering the 2025 calendar year are due on March 30 through GrantSolutions.

Marshall, UPDE's Agreements Technical Representative, told Ramie that NPS wants to complete negotiations for the next Cooperative Agreement between the UDC and NPS for 2027 in April. That sounds early, but NPS staff want to get everything in place well ahead of time so there are no processing problems, and the agreement is ready as soon as January 1 arrives next year.

Ramie said the UDC's Vanguard investment account is doing well. She was able to deposit the balance of the \$25,000 charitable trust donation UDC had received after subtracting computer purchases, upgrades, and installations; \$20,890.02 remained after those deductions. She temporarily "parked" that amount in the Litter Sweep account and then transferred it into Vanguard on January 7. The amount reflected in her report is as of 12/31 and will increase at the next report.

Ramie said she spoke that morning with Molly Oliver, Executive Director of Friends of the Upper Delaware River. Oliver told her that the New York Governor's budget currently does not include any increase in funding related to the proposal that Assembly Member Paula Kay and others had been advancing for UDC and FUDR to obtain additional state support. There is presently a \$350,000 allocation for the Upper Delaware River Network

(administered by FUDR). They had requested additional funding, with the idea that a portion would flow to UDC—since in UDC’s case, it would represent new state support, and for FUDR it would represent additional support beyond the existing allocation. Oliver reported that meetings are scheduled with various legislators to follow up, and she specifically mentioned Assemblywoman Deborah Glick. This effort would route through the Environmental Conservation Committee, and Oliver is hopeful those meetings would produce progress.

After the Fall-Winter newsletter was published that featured Assembly Member Kay’s awards banquet speech prominently on the cover as a rallying call for state funding, she sent Kay the newsletter link. Kay responded enthusiastically, writing back “This is wonderful!” The UDC wants to make sure people feel recognized and appreciated when they support the campaign for state funding, and she viewed that exchange as a positive reinforcement of that effort. On the Pennsylvania side, she unfortunately had no update. The letter sent October 28 to Governor Shapiro has gone unanswered so far. Hopefully we’ll hear something soon.

Ramie said Dick Eckersley with Eckersley & Davis LLP submitted a draft Form 990 and the financial review for her to review before finalizing. She returned one correction and some comments, and then Eckersley & Davis provided final versions. The tax documents will be filed for the IRS and the New York State Charities Bureau on the UDC’s behalf. We obtained Jim Rodgers’ signatures in his capacity as 2025 Chairperson. She said that all documents—including the management representation letter and the engagement letter for 2026—have been returned to Dick Eckersley.

She provided an update on member appointments. In the Town of Highland, there was a change in the alternate position: Michael Keller joined the board, succeeding Supervisor John Pilzolato. In the Town of Fremont, Jim Greier has officially retired. Supervisor Brian Brustman is now the alternate. Ramie sent Greier a letter listing his years of service and the roles he held. Greier called to say he enjoyed working with the Council and asked that Ramie pass along his regards to everyone. Ramie said Cathleen Breen is now the voting representative for the Town of Tusten, with Evan Padua is first alternate, and Susan Sullivan as second alternate. Ramie said this confused election results because the change was unexpected. Because of that, the Nominating Committee had to be reactivated to make a new Vice-chair nomination. The e-vote began on Friday the 23rd, and at this point there is a majority (even though not all 15 people had responded) in favor of nominating Aaron Robinson as Vice-chair. She thanked Robinson for stepping into that role “mid-stride.”

Ramie submitted information for signature cards for UDC’s 2026 accounts to Jeff Bank. The bank needed the resolution and minutes from the meeting at which the authorization occurred to prepare the paperwork. As of Friday afternoon, the paperwork was ready for Dexter, Henry, and herself to go sign. After the e-vote is affirmed, she will add Robinson as well. The paperwork will be waiting at the Callicoon branch whenever those individuals can get there.

Ramie described the annual Directors & Officers liability insurance process as involving a thick packet of questions about UDC’s policies and practices, with particular attention to the cybercrime policy. She completed and returned it to the Mike Preis Agency on January 21 so that renewal could proceed. We also needed to obtain EINs from vendors and grant recipients for preparation of 1099 forms. The 1099s are ready to be distributed to everyone who met the earning threshold. They will be mailed out tomorrow.

The UDC has issued five news releases on various topics, all listed in her report. Our signature events have been set, the 6th Annual Upper Delaware Litter Sweep will run for the entire month of April, with the theme ‘America 250.’”, the 38th Annual UDC Family Raft Trip will be held on the first Sunday of August, August 2”, and “The 38th Annual River Valley Awards will be held on September 13 at Central House Family Resort. Another upcoming event for March 11 is the Citizen Preparedness Course at Tusten Town Hall Community Room. The press release for that course was sent to 197 email recipients through various contact groups, in addition to media outlets. They posted it on the UDC website, distributed it via the Upper Delaware River Community Network, and posted it to UDC’s Facebook and Instagram pages. They also placed it in community calendars, handed out the flyer at meetings, and shared the information with contacts from the Sullivan County Local Emergency Preparedness Committee network that offered to help—specifically referencing the county, 911 centers, and state police. We have created a Facebook event, pinned to the UDC page so it appears prominently whenever someone visits. We need a minimum of 50 participants; otherwise, the program could be at risk of being canceled, and she stated we do not want that.

The “Upper Delaware” Fall-Winter 2025 newsletter arrived a few days early on December 19; contractually it was due by December 22. She said the next issue—Spring 2026—is due March 30. By then, they will need a new design program, because QuarkXPress is no longer compatible with their printer and also is not available on our current Windows 11 computers. We are looking at Adobe InDesign as the replacement graphics program, and she will need to learn how to use it well in advance of the March 30 deadline so staff can produce the next newsletter in a new format with a “whole new look.”

On December 12, the UDC submitted a grant application in the first round of Sullivan Catskills Visitors Association (SCVA) tourism grants, seeking funding for the spring newsletter—framing it as part of promoting tourism because of the newsletter’s content. The SCVA application deadline was pushed back and the decision deadline has been delayed multiple times. The decision was originally expected January 15, then moved to February 13, and then moved again to March 3. SCVA told applicants that the response was overwhelming—demand was 700% greater than the funding available—because people are excited about the program. Disbursement would occur in April. She added that SCVA will then open a second round, with applications due April 14, awards announced May 15, and funds disbursed in June. If the UDC does not make it in the first round if necessary, Ramie plans to apply again in the second round, hoping it may be less competitive.

Ramie shared an update on a proposed grant/mitigation project tied to the Skinners Falls Bridge work: the Upper Delaware River Valley Historic Preservation and Interpretation Grants Program that had been envisioned as a mitigation project is on hold. PennDOT is currently dealing with the Pennsylvania abutment and whether it will be removed. Because of that uncertainty, Cultural resource professionals would have to start their review from that point once a decision is made. The Memorandum of Agreement is on hold. Once the abutment decision is known, it must be released for a 30-day public review and comment period. Her conclusion was that this mitigation work will not be happening anytime soon, because the abutment decision itself likely will not be made anytime soon.

Since the last operations report, the Dudko’s made a generous \$250 donation in memory of Ginny Dudko’s father, Lew Schmalze, on December 30. Ramie began a new 2026 list of individual donations because UDC received its first donation of the new year: \$300 on January 22 from the David, Morris and Gertrude Robinson Charitable Trust. Ramie noted that this is connected to Robinson’s family, his brother, Dr. David Robinson, who lives in St. Petersburg, Florida and parents. Ramie expressed appreciation for the gift and stated that she deposited it and sent the appropriate thank-you letters, and that she will continue to update the tracking list.

New Business

Payment Approval for TAG 2026-02: Town of Delaware Crosswalks Study: A motion by Henry to approve payment for TAG 2026-02: Town of Delaware Crosswalks Study at \$3,000, seconded by Richardson, carried.

Disburse Payment for TAG 2025-01: Town of Tusten Open Space and Conservation Plan: A motion by Henry to release payment for TAG 2025-01: Town of Tusten Open Space and Conservation Plan at \$9,740, seconded by Richardson, carried.

Draft Resolution 2026-04: Reaffirming the UDC’s Sexual Harassment Prevention Policy: Ramie said staff had looked into available options for Sexual Harassment Prevention Training. There is nothing new or different available beyond the New York State Department of Labor training video that the Council has used previously. Under the resolution, the training will be conducted by distributing the Department of Labor video link to council members, who will be required to watch the video individually. Each participant must submit either an acknowledgement of completion or a certificate showing that alternate training has been completed for an equivalent certificate elsewhere. The resolution will appear on February 5th’s full council agenda. At that time, the training link would be circulated, and members would be given a specific deadline by which they must complete the training. Failure to do so would trigger the consequences outlined in the Council’s bylaws regarding mandatory training requirements.

Summary of Pending Bills 1/27/26: A motion by Henry to pay the monthly bills in a normal fashion, seconded by Robinson, carried.

Financial Statement 1/31/26: Included in the packet for review.

Other:Old Business

Status of Local Government Contributions: Ramie said the funding request letter approved by the board on December 4th had since been sent or personally delivered, depending on how each representative chose to handle outreach within their municipality. A summary of responses to date was included in the meeting packet. The first response received was from Westfall Township, which declined the request. Additional context appeared in an article in the Pike County Dispatch. According to that, Westfall cited concern that approving the request would constitute donating taxpayer money.

The first stop gap contribution received came from Lackawaxen Township. Engelhardt happened to be attending Lackawaxen's Town Board meeting on the 19th, and township officials handed her the check directly. The second contribution was received from the Town of Delaware following an eloquent presentation by Roeder. That check arrived on January 21st. A third contribution followed shortly thereafter from the Town of Lumberland on January 23rd. In each of these cases, Ramie sent formal letters of appreciation acknowledging the contributions. There was no specific deadline attached to the request, so the effort remains ongoing. Other towns and townships had expressed positive feedback. As of the meeting date, the campaign had therefore raised a total of \$3,000.

The Council will discuss how best to allocate the funds, noting that there are already ideas under consideration. Richardson added that he had personally raised the funding request at the most recent town board meeting in his municipality. He said the board listened attentively but did not offer any immediate response. Dexter noted that he had experienced a similar response in Damascus. Ramie commented that any funding received through this effort is more than the Council had before. Robinson added that Shohola Township had made a commitment, but that the necessary motion and resolution process can take a couple of months to work its way through the system. He said he anticipated that those funds would likely come through within the next month or so.

Distribution of UDC Whistleblower Protection Policy: Ramie said this is essentially the last step of this process. The policy has been posted on our website and Driscoll has been working on sending it out to all contractors, volunteers, and other listed categories of recipients. A spreadsheet of that effort is included in tonight's packet.

38th Annual River Valley Awards Banquet – Sept. 13; Discuss Keynote Speaker Invitation: Ramie confirmed that the date for the banquet had been set for September 13th. With the date and location now confirmed, she wanted to begin planting the seed for discussions about inviting a keynote speaker. While January might feel early to be thinking about a September event, it is not too soon to start considering possible keynote speakers. At the same time, she acknowledged that it can sometimes be difficult to secure firm commitments too far in advance. This is not a request for immediate decisions, but rather an invitation for members to begin thinking about potential speakers and to share ideas as they come up.

Other: None.

There was no Public Comment.

Adjournment: A motion by Roeder seconded by Henry to adjourn the meeting at 8:21 p.m. carried.