Upper Delaware Council
OPERATIONS COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES
October 28, 2025

Committee Members Present:	Jim Rodgers, Al Henry, Ginny Dudko, Aaron Robinson, Harold Roeder, Larry Richardson, Jeff Dexter
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, October 28, 2025. Chairperson Rodgers called the meeting to order at 6:59 pm.

Approval of the September 23, 2025 Meeting Minutes: A motion by Henry seconded by Roeder to approve the 9/23 meeting minutes carried.

Executive Director's Monthly Report: Ramie said she withdrew $20,972.07 from the ASAP account on 10/27 to cover October expenses, leaving $62,527.93 available through the Cooperative Agreement end date of 12/31/25. We received a memo on 10/1 confirming the lapse in annual federal appropriations to the NPS, stating, "Access to NPS sites and employees will be very limited beginning October 1, 2025, until further notice. Recipients must refrain from providing services under such agreements, ensure that any sub-recipients comply with this notice, and otherwise minimize costs … Some financial assistance agreements are not dependent on additional appropriations, access to NPS sites, or substantial involvement of NPS personnel. Performance of grants in this category may continue during the lapse in appropriations." Ramie said we are lucky that NPS funded us through the calendar year. She will prepare the SF-424 application for the next agreement and finalize both the Federal Financial Report (FFR) and Performance Progress Report (PPR) for the period January 1–December 31, 2025. The UDC's bookkeeper isn't sure right now if the report will be a 15-month period or not. She looked it up and found the reports need to be submitted by 4/30/2026. The UDC's Vanguard account has a balance of $163,542.94 as of 9/30/2025.

The UDC's small group policy with MVP Health Care was recertified on 10/21 at the monthly premium rate of $1,377.15 (a 6.34% increase) for one NYS employee effective 12/1. They will find out the premium rate by Highmark Blue Cross/Blue Sheild for one PA employee to be effective on 1/1/26.

Staff observed the installation of the bronze plaque honoring former Congressman Matthew McHugh on 9/23 and donors' acknowledgement nameplate on 9/25 at the Big Eddy Observation Deck by Tom Coacci and crew. Ramie drafted and delivered introductory remarks for the 9/26 dedication ceremony. Driscoll arranged for, uploaded, and posted the ceremony recording by UPDE's Visual Information Specialist Jasmine Leung and set up food and beverages for the luncheon reception at the UDC office. Engelhardt assisted with supplies for both. Ramie collected speeches from the ceremony participants, provided copies to media upon request, issued a news release with photos on 10/1, and sent McHugh copies of all the publicity and a link to the dedication video as of 9/30. The UDC donated the $128.10 balance of the $4,000 donor project fund ($2,000 from Sullivan County Legislator Nadia Rajsz and $2,000 from Devin Corrigan of Narrowsburg) to the Narrowsburg Beautification Group to maintain the deck area.

Four news releases were published: "UDC Development of Communications Plan Process to be Presented at October 2 Meeting", 9/24; "New Plaque Honors Congressman McHugh for his Upper Delaware Legislation", 10/1; "Towns Complete River & Shoreline Clean-ups", 10/2; and "UDC Awards Technical Assistance Grants for Delaware, Damascus, and Tusten Projects", 10/16. She also issued a news release for UDSB, Inc.: "Hundreds Join Region-Wide Scavenger Hunt to Explore Upper Delaware Scenic Byway" on 10/7 with two photos. We continue to regularly post UDC news and relevant regional notices on social media, respond to information requests from reporters, and forward articles of interest to the UDC membership.

The Town of Tusten FY25 TAG approval is pending a substantial conformance review to release the $9,740 payment. The UDC approved three FY26 awards valued at $9,000 ($3,000 each) via a 10/2 resolution, as follows:

Delaware (Callicoon crosswalk study); Damascus (municipal website); and Tusten (revise zoning ordinance). A news release was issued on 10/16. Mid-term Progress Reports are due by 2/22/26 and project completions are due by 8/21/26. A news release was issued on 10/2 publicizing the 2025 River & Shoreline Clean-up Grant project completions. An update was provided at the 9/25 Skinners Falls Bridge Virtual Public Meeting that a Memorandum of Agreement is being drafted for cultural mitigation purposes. We will await a request for additional information or a decision on the UDC's 4/30 submission to PennDOT and the FHWA of a proposal to establish a new historic preservation and interpretation grant program as the UDC's proposed Skinners Falls, NY-Milanville, PA Bridge mitigation project.

Donations received since last month's report: 10/1 from Meg McGuire, *Delaware Currents* publisher, $84 check as the equivalent of purchasing two tickets for the 2025 River Valley Awards that she was unable to attend. Ramie announced that *Delaware Currents* will be ending in December of this year due to funding challenges. In our thank you letter for the donation we wrote *"We are very sad to learn that the withdrawal of financial support led to this difficult decision to end your passion project. Delaware Currents' excellent journalism and powerful editorial voice will be missed in the watershed as an independent news source. Our only consolation is that we at the UDC had the opportunity to honor you and your Currents team with Special Recognition at the 2024 River Valley Awards. Please remember that the well-researched articles and your projects such as "A Flight Along the Delaware River: Our History, Our Watershed" documentary have created a permanent legacy of achievement. We are certain that you have more to offer and wish you the best of luck in whatever you opt to do next."*

A list of meetings and documents is included at the end of her written report for review.

New Business

UDC Funding Task Force Update: Creating a Development & Communications Plan: Ramie said she and Robinson went to Harrisburg on 10/8 and had a promising, productive meeting with members of PA legislation and administrative branches; DCNR Secretary Cindy Adams Dunn, Deputy Secretary for Parks and Forestry John Norbeck, a representative from Senator Lisa Baker's office, PA Representative Jeff Olsommer, UDC Commonwealth representative Tim Dugan, a DCNR staffer, Robinson, and herself. The value of funding the UDC took no persuasion, they only discussed how it could be done. They provided concrete suggestions on how to approach the situation and what to emphasize in a request. She commented that it was impressive to be in a room where everyone is on your side working toward solutions. Later we will discuss a letter drafted to Governor Shapiro, following the advice given during this meeting. Robinson said he's been to a lot of meetings like this, and the fact that it wasn't a matter of "if, it was how" was impressive. He learned that the logistics of funding a 501(C)3 through a line item is difficult with a state budget. They are set up for government agencies, etc. We are a unique animal, but it can be done. Adams Dunn said it is doable. He thought that overall, the meeting went well; everyone came in well prepared. There is no PA budget right now, so that is an obstacle. He saw Olsommer last week at an event who said they are at a gridlock with the budget. Once there is a budget in place he plans to get together with Olsommer again. Community grants might offer an opportunity to apply for some one-off funding. Maybe we can get one of those grants to cover some deficiency. If it can't go to a township, maybe it can be passed onto the UDC.

Ramie said Dugan had briefed everyone in advance by providing information on the UDC. We updated materials in folders she left for everyone at the meeting with new visitation statistics from 2024 and any changes that have happened. She asked the committee when they think we should send the letter to Governor Shapiro? We could keep the momentum going and respect everyone's advice by sending it now, or we could wait until the PA budget is finalized so they don't put our issue to the side with their own issues. She has asked Dugan's advice, but hasn't heard back yet. She doesn't want to seem tone deaf by sending the letter now it it's inappropriate. Richardson said on the NY side a while back, there was some discussion about trying to get money through the Department of Environmental Conservation's budget. They thought it would be easier to get an approval from the DEC to issue funds than it would be to get a direct line in the budget as a 501(c)3. It's good we have someone in PA for advocating us with Dugan. Robinson said it was a long meeting and no one tried to kick them out. Ramie agreed, at almost an hour and a half. Robinson said he didn't feel like he had to speed up dialogue. Henry said we should send a letter sooner than later. Everyone is getting paid in PA, they just don't have a budget. In light of the fact that we sent a delegation to PA, why delay sending the letter? Rodgers said we could send the letter now, and again when the budget is passed.

B. Dudko asked how long we had with NY during our meeting in Albany with Assembly Member Paula Kay and Chair of the Committee on Environmental Conservation Deborah Glick? Ramie said after we were called into Glick's office, about 20 minutes ahead of their next meeting. Kay was the closing speaker at the Upper Delaware River Rendezvous. She asked She requested copies of key UDC documents to assist her advocacy in Albany. Ramie provided Kay with the 1988 MOU signed by the DEC Commissioner and a 1993 Executive Order issued by Governor Mario Cuomo, both confirming the state's commitment to UDC cooperation. Kay said these documents will be very helpful to her. We are also still working with Friends of the Upper Delaware River (FUDR) after they came to us with the gracious offer to make a joint funding request to NYS. We made sure with Kay that it was the right approach to take. Kay said yes, that she is fully on board with that idea and would support both situations; NY likes to see collaboration. The funding would go through FUDR and they would split it with the UDC. They are looking to increase funding for the Upper Delaware River Network (that puts on the Upper Delaware River Rendezvous) for next year and adding on $100,000 for the UDC. We will see how that goes.

Ramie said Chuck Hoffman called earlier today a little confused about the complete silence after his and David Lillard's presentation on the UDC's Development and Communications Plan at the 9/4 UDC meeting. Ramie said the council gave that same silence after hearing the Crane report. The Funding Task Force would oversee the plan's development, but hire an expert to execute the steps. We need to get back to the task force on what to do next. While we are hopeful for other funding, we need to diversify. A copy of a 6-12 month Communications and Development Plan timeline (generated through ChatGPT) is included in the packet. Richardson said he's heard that stunned silence more than once. We spent a lot of money on the Crane report while now you can ask ChatGPT to do the same thing and it would come up with the same result. We aren't sure exactly what we need to do, but we don't have the means to hire someone to do it. The UDC staff hasn't had the opportunity or time to do it either. Driscoll said she would be willing and happy to look into searching for a grant to help fund the plan. Maybe freshening up the UDC's presence and getting a younger generation interested would benefit us. Robinson said since he's been on the UDC for Shohola, he always viewed our purpose as executing the River Management Plan (RMP). The concept of fundraising is an overwhelming task. The representatives aren't here to spend a lot of time fundraising. It's sad we have to go down this road. There used to be a more intense focus on what the RMP is. A lot of the representatives don't have the time; we're lucky if a representative takes the time to read the RMP. It a volunteer operation, but a lot of work; just the monthly responsibility to look over information and make decisions. Members are involved with budgets; he can't grasp the extra work involved to fundraise. Richardson said the root of the problem we have now comes from the inception of the RMP. This organization was set up to be staffed with technocrats. They never thought funding would be a problem. Tasks were supposed to mesh together. We never needed people on the council savvy on funding. Rodgers said his own interest is the mission statement: "Land, Water, People".

Henry said being on the task force, there might be some misunderstanding. The plan doesn't advocate that the staff or board needs to raise money, it's to hire someone to do it. It saddens him to think about using any means that comes from the legislature. If we are going to do this, we have to figure out where the money is going to come from and what kind of return we'll get on investment. He understands that they are not asking anyone on the council or staff to go out and ask for donations. Executing this plan is going to cost money; are we willing to do that? It's a gamble. There are grants from the PA Department of Community and Economic Development that we've gotten in the past. Ramie said an issue with that is getting money from one state and using it in another.

G. Dudko said Richardson is correct. According to the RMP, it wasn't intended for the staff or representatives to have to raise money to be here. It was intended for government agencies to support the UDC. She was a school teacher, and teachers were never intended to raise money to support that. We know what the problem is. What do we do, nothing? Who will take over if the UDC goes away? The NPS.

Ramie heard back from one of the two foundations we applied to for funding, the Gerry Foundation. Former Congressman McHugh's Chief of Staff Marvin Rappaport had facilitated this opportunity for the UDC. Unfortunately, they decided to pass after reviewing our $20,000 grant proposal. They were very complimentary in their letter which she read to the committee. The computer upgrade was included in that grant proposal. Rodgers said after 10/14, computers are vulnerable that aren't running on Windows 11. Robinson said he knows someone receiving the extended security services from Microsoft; it would keep us secure if we enrolled at around $60 per machine. Richardson said it's cheap enough protection. A motion by Robinson, seconded by Richardson to extend the Windows 10 security through Microsoft at the estimated $60 per machine, carried.

Draft Letter: PA Support for Cooperative Management of the Upper Delaware River: After extensive discussion on the letter in the previous topic, a motion by Henry, seconded by Robinson, to send the PA support for cooperative management of the Upper Delaware River letter to Pennsylvania Governor Josh Shapiro carried.

Local Government Member Contributions to the UDC: Robinson said he envisions the UDC having a shortfall this year, just like last year, in our funding. Health insurance alone just went up. Before he brought it up with the UDC, he asked the Shohola Supervisors if they would be inclined to donate $1,000 to bridge the gap, if other municipalities did the same. That could potentially be $13,000. All three Supervisors in Shohola said yes, agreeing that the municipalities are better off having a functional UDC than not. They understand that they need the UDC. He brought it up during budget time and they committed to the $1,000 donation if needed. That small amount is nothing to a town/township. Rodgers said he could bring it up at his next town board meeting where they will be discussing the budget. Richardson said he would pitch it as $1,000 yearly. Ramie asked about timing; would this be for 2026? Robinson said he asked his supervisors for this fiscal year. Henry said we could ask Ramie to write a letter for representatives to give to their town/townships. Richardson said he isn't interested in giving a letter first. He'd rather gauge how they felt first. A motion by Henry for a letter to be drafted for review before the November 6th UDC meeting, seconded by Robinson, carried. Robinson said you don't need to give the letter to your town/township if a representative preferred to handle it a different way, but it would make it a unified ask.

Draft Whistleblower Protection Policy: Henry said this draft policy is loaded with unnecessary language. He thinks a Whistleblower Policy for the UDC is crazy. It's a staff of three people and a board. They've never had a problem before. This should be shelved. Ramie said this policy is not optional; it's part of our Cooperative Agreement with NPS going forward. Henry said it should be briefer then. Richardson said we could give it to ChatGPT to shorten. Engelhardt said it's already pretty short, while Ramie said the length is irrelevant since it will be added to our existing administrative policies. Henry asked Ramie if she would be the Compliance Officer? Ramie said yes; the consequences for committing an offense could include termination. She took this from non-profit examples and added language from the Code of Federal Regulations that Carly Marshall at NPS had provided her to research. Henry said it seems too much. Ramie said that's why it's a draft. Henry asked if there is an example in the Cooperative Agreement? Ramie said the new Cooperative Agreement will be done January 1st. A Whistleblower Protection Policy needs to be in place by then. Henry recommends sending comments to Ramie by the next full council meeting (11/6).

Reimbursement Remuneration for UDC Participation: Ramie said the 2017 Policy for Member Participation states: *"Reimbursement remuneration for Upper Delaware Council participation shall be set at $35.00 per meeting attended, with a roll call vote being taken. Eligible meetings are the monthly or specially-called meetings of the entire Upper Delaware Council and three existing, standing committees: Water Use/Resource Management Committee; Project Review Committee; and Operations Committee. Participation on the three standing committees is voluntary but the membership for each will be established at the start of each calendar year for the purpose of establishing a voting quorum. The meeting participant may be either a representative or an alternate representative; however, in instances where both a representative and an alternate for the same local government are in attendance, only the voting member will be eligible to receive reimbursement."* Richardson said he's stunned we haven't enforced this policy. That's the whole purpose of the policy and we should be enforcing it as written. G. Dudko said she and B. Dudko have both been getting paid for being at meetings, and they don't need to be. B. Dudko said they would both attend regardless since it's their way to keep up on all the issues directly. The meeting logs provided to the bookkeeper will be changed going forward.

FY 2026 Newsletter Quote from Courier Printing: A copy of the quote was included in tonight's packet of $2,352 per issue ($7,056 total) for 7,500 copies. Ramie said we would take the quote to full council via resolution next. She reduced the quantity by 1,000 copies which is a $429/year savings. A motion by Robinson, seconded by G. Dudko to send this quote to the full council for approval carried. Richardson said we should consider reducing the newsletter to two times a year instead of three. Robinson said we could send that to full council for discussion. Ramie said it's incredibly difficult to squeeze information into three issues from what used to be a quarterly publication, she couldn't imagine squeezing it all into two every six months. Rodgers said he appreciates a paper version, but we could go fully digital. Henry asked if this is available electronically? Is there any way to see how many people are clicking on it via our website? Driscoll said not that she knows of. Henry said if it goes out online too, we could

think about cutting it down to two issues. If we found out we needed to cut an issue for financial reasons, we could modify the contract. Engelhardt said she think there's value in having a print newsletter. If we wanted to transfer to electronic only, we'd need to push that hard first. Driscoll does a great job with the one-page e-newsletter every first of the month, though we haven't gotten any sign-ups since the initial conception. We should be advertising that in the paper newsletter. It is great to send out the newsletter in its own special way. It could use a graphic re-design. Richardson said we could ask people for a small donation as a subscription.

ChatGPT Monthly Subscription: Driscoll said she knows we discussed this previously, but the more she's used ChatGPT, the more she realizes what more could come with the paid monthly subscription (of $20 per month) to help produce the minutes. G. Dudko asked how much time it would save her to have this subscription? Driscoll said maybe half a day. G. Dudko said that's more than enough time saved for $20 per month. A motion by Henry to subscribe to ChatGPT for a monthly subscription of $20 per month, seconded by Roeder, carried.

Summary of Pending Bills 10/28/25: A motion by Henry to pay the monthly bills in a normal fashion, seconded by Roeder, carried.

Financial Statement 10/31/25: Included in the packet for review.

Other: None.

Old Business

Federal Government Shutdown Impacts on the UDC: Ramie said if we get to November 4th, this will officially be the longest shutdown in history. The last was 35 days during President Trump's first term. There appears to be no movement. The National Parks are not officially shut down, yet federal personnel aren't allowed to work. We had received the memo on 10/1 that if we don't rely on NPS property or personnel to function, we can go ahead with business as usual. We've had to develop a closure plan for the UDC under funding delays/shutdowns in the past. If we get toward the end of December and nothing is happening, we will need to discuss it. We'll keep it on our radar and hope it ends soon.

NPS Record Training Update: Driscoll said there isn't much to update. She was supposed to schedule a meeting with UPDE Administrative Officer Tara Harbert and Community Planner Carly Marshall for late October, but that obviously hasn't happened with the government shutdown. Once she's able to meet with them she can schedule a meeting with UDC staff to move forward. Ramie said NPS employees will be overwhelmed with backlogged information when they get back. Driscoll agreed.

Other: None.

There was no Public Comment.

Adjournment: A motion by Robinson seconded by Roeder to adjourn the meeting at 7:46 p.m. carried.

Minutes prepared by Stephanie Driscoll 11/4/25