

Upper Delaware Council
OPERATIONS COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES
March 24, 2026

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

The UDC's Operations Committee held its monthly meeting on Tuesday, March 24, 2026. Chairperson Dexter called the meeting to order at 7:33 pm.

Approval of the February 24, 2026 Meeting Minutes: A motion by Henry seconded by Robinson to approve the 2/24 meeting minutes carried.

Executive Director's Monthly Report: Ramie said since Katt Judd had resigned from the Town of Hancock UDC Representative position on 2/17, she has not heard anything from the town after she notified them about the vacancy. The process of finding a new representative may be underway behind the scenes, but we don't want too much time to pass without representation. She will follow up again directly with the Town to check on progress and encourage movement on filling the position.

Ramie reported that she had received an email from an individual named Norman Uphoff with a Cornell University email address. He referenced the UDC's dedication of the plaque to former Congressman Matt McHugh and explained that he had been trying unsuccessfully to reach McHugh using an outdated email address. He said that he had been involved in McHugh's initial congressional campaign in 1974 and had spent considerable time in the Upper Delaware region, including Orange, Delaware, and Ulster counties. He also referenced connections to McHugh's Chief of Staff, Marvin Rappaport. As a matter of policy, she does not distribute personal contact information such as email addresses. However, she did contact Rappaport who said the information was credible and contacted Uphoff, who later followed up to express his appreciation for her facilitation and how meaningful it was to reconnect with Congressman McHugh. This highlighted the reach and impact of publicity, as someone from Ithaca was able to discover the plaque and initiate contact. As part of the follow-up, she also sent him our press release announcing the plaque dedication, which included a link to the ceremony, so he could view the remarks and speeches.

The UDC is current on its March expenses after she completed a drawdown from the ASAP account on 3/23. Ramie also handled the annual renewal of the organization's registration in SAM.gov, which is now active through March 4, 2027. She prepared and submitted an SF-424 application to modify the Cooperative Agreement, requesting an additional \$5,000 to cover water safety billboard expenses. Because the Cooperative Agreement is capped at \$300,000, this increase requires a formal modification. The application was uploaded to GrantSolutions on March 9 and awaits approval. She confirmed that she completed and submitted the Federal Financial Report (FFR) covering FY25 quarters 2 through 4 and FY26 quarter 1 on February 24, well ahead of the March 31 deadline. This was done strategically to reduce the number of major deliverables due at the end of March. The next major task—the Performance Progress Report (PPR)—is due by March 31. Given the timing of the UDC meeting on March 31, she is treating March 30 as her internal deadline. The PPR now follows a significantly revised format, under the guidance of the Agreements Technical Representative Carly Marshall, requiring a more structured and accomplishment-based approach. The report must clearly articulate UDC's activities while strictly limiting content to federally funded work. There are prohibitions, including not mentioning any fundraising activities whatsoever even indirectly, such as referencing efforts tied to programs like the Litter Sweep. Instead, only staff time associated with such initiatives can be included. She described the process as nuanced and requiring careful wording to ensure compliance, noting that the report will be subject to higher-level federal review. The goal is also to align the report more closely with the Cooperative Agreement tasks and to establish a framework that supports future annual work plans. The new requirements make the task more challenging, and while Marshall has been helpful in clarifying expectations, this remains a significant and daunting assignment she plans to complete to immediately follow the newsletter.

Work is already underway for the 2027 Cooperative Agreement. Due to federal timelines, the agreement must be approved by May 22, which requires submission in advance. Working backward from that deadline, the agreement

and accompanying 2027 work plan that the UDC must prepare as “Attachment A” and must be ready for review no later than the May 7 UDC meeting. This means that internally, drafts must be completed by mid-April in order to be reviewed at the April 28 Operations Committee meeting. Marshall and Kurnath provided a preliminary 25-page draft of the agreement on March 19, which she has already reviewed, marking it up with questions and comments. Following a meeting to discuss those revisions, Marshall is now updating the draft. A new reporting requirement will be introduced as part of the Cooperative Agreement, a spreadsheet-based evaluation of the effectiveness of the River Management Plan. This will be a new component, similar in concept to the existing code enforcement activity report, and Marshall is currently developing a template for it. In addition, the UDC’s 2027 work plan must follow a new format.

Ramie reported that the Vanguard account was bolstered by a recent \$10,000 donation. The balance is now approaching \$200,000. Due to standard banking procedures, there was a temporary hold on the deposit before it could be transferred into the Vanguard account, but that transfer has now been completed, and the updated balance is reflected in her report.

The spring newsletter, which had an original due date to the printer of March 30, was intentionally completed a week early to accommodate other deadlines. Approximately 54 hours of work went into producing the issue. The cover article focuses on the America 250 semiquincentennial, which required extensive outreach and research across five counties in both New York and Pennsylvania to gather information on local initiatives. The newsletter includes acknowledgment of funding support from the Delaware River Basin Commission and a Sullivan Catskills grant totaling \$1,500. Additional content includes a profile of Delaware UDC alternate Bob Lindquist, updates on the Litter Sweep and summer paddling programs, the bridge abutment status, and coverage of the emergency preparedness seminar. The color version of this issue will be posted online soon. Although the original distribution date was April 13, early delivery of materials to the printer—along with the mailing database—means we expect to receive them earlier. This issue was intended to be the first created using Adobe InDesign, but installation issues on her computer prevented the software from being set up in time. As a result, she reverted to using her old computer and Quark Xpress design software. This required physically switching cables between machines and manually transferring files. Despite the inconvenience, using the familiar system was somewhat of a relief given the already heavy workload. IT support will work on resolving the InDesign issue after current deadlines are met.

Four news releases were issued during the past month, with a fifth effectively added through a press release prepared for the “Destination Hancock” summer magazine, which also supported newsletter content.

Due to the success of the March 11 Citizens Emergency Preparedness Seminar, a second session has been scheduled for June 8 at 2:00 p.m. at the same location, the Tusten Town Hall Community Room. The content will be the same, including distribution of emergency go kits, but offered at a different time and day to reach additional participants.

Henry said Ramie reached out to the Personnel Subcommittee ahead of this meeting regarding compensation time. Due to the significant workload and timing constraints the Executive Director had accrued substantial comp time that could not reasonably be used within the standard two-week pay period, as required by policy. A motion was made by G. Dudko to allow a one-time exception to carry over the unused comp time into the next pay period (or beyond, if necessary), seconded by Robinson. Richardson requested that this would not change policy and that the comp time is unpaid, simply allowing flexibility in when it can be used. Henry agreed. The motion carried.

New Business

River Management Plan Amendment Proposal by Shohola Township: Ramie said this had been referred from the full Council to begin a more focused discussion on the proposal, which centers primarily on the financial aspects of the plan and how funding is addressed moving forward. Members were reminded that background materials outlining the formal amendment process were previously distributed.

Robinson outlined the underlying rationale, framing the amendment not as a drastic or disruptive change, but rather as a corrective action. The argument was that the amendment process exists precisely for situations like this—where something in the plan was either overlooked, has become outdated, or is no longer functioning as intended. In this case, the issue identified was funding. There was a clear sense that the current structure is not sustainable, and that continuing along the existing path would ultimately lead the organization into serious financial trouble. Funding challenges have been discussed repeatedly and were also highlighted in the 2021 Crane report. Without some kind of structural change, the trajectory is not viable long-term. The proposed amendment is framed as a way to bring structure and coherence to the process by anchoring funding discussions within the framework of the River Management Plan itself. Rather than chasing funding in a piecemeal way, the amendment would create a more

formalized, plan-based mechanism that engages all partners under a shared structure. The intent is not to force contributions, but rather to create a framework that encourages accountability and opens the door for more rational, coordinated dialogue among partners. By tying funding expectations back to the commitments already embedded in the plan, the amendment could provide a stronger basis for those conversations. Robinson brought up the idea of developing a “rational budget” for the UDC—one that is based on actual needs rather than constrained by the existing \$300,000 funding level. The suggestion was to consider a zero-based budgeting approach, essentially starting from scratch and building a budget that reflects what is truly required to fulfill the responsibilities laid out in the River Management Plan. There was also discussion of potentially bringing in outside financial expertise—such as a CPA or someone with institutional knowledge like Dick Eckersley—to help develop this more accurate and defensible budget. Programs that once had more robust support—such as Technical Assistance Grants, cultural and historical initiatives, and certain environmental efforts—have been reduced or eliminated. The RMP originally envisioned five staff members, while the organization is currently operating with only three. This gap was directly tied to workload strain, including the Executive Director’s need to work significant additional hours, reinforcing the argument that current funding levels are not aligned with operational realities.

The group began to walk through what initiating an amendment would actually involve. Much of the required groundwork—such as defining the issue, compiling documentation, and identifying supporting analysis—may already be in place. The Crane report, past funding efforts, and existing documentation could all contribute to building the case. For this type of amendment, only a majority vote of the Council would be required to move forward, rather than unanimous approval. Richardson raised a significant concern that has historically accompanied any discussion of reopening or amending the River Management Plan: the risk that doing so could have unintended consequences at the federal level. Specifically, he’s concerned that once the plan is opened and brought before Congress or the Department of the Interior, it could expose the entire framework to reconsideration. In a political climate that is unpredictable, there is a fear that instead of securing additional funding, the process could potentially weaken—or dismantle—the existing structure. While some felt this scenario might be unlikely or overly complex to implement, others emphasized that it remains a real risk that must be carefully weighed. Robinson said this is a “fund or die” situation. Richardson said pursuing an amendment carries its own risks, potentially opening the door to outcomes that could be even more detrimental. The NPS has consistently met its funding obligations, but the same cannot be said for other partners at the state level. Would the amendment actually result in increased funding if states or other entities still choose not to contribute?

Breen said since Congress ultimately controls appropriations, she feels that gaining political support would be critical to any successful outcome. Without that engagement, there is concern that even a well-developed amendment could stall or fail at later stages. There are 13 towns, along with two states, as voting members, and a majority would be sufficient to advance the amendment. Even if the towns were supportive, lack of support from the states could still limit the effectiveness of any changes. Robinson said that the greater risk may actually lie in inaction. If funding continues to decline and the UDC becomes unable to fulfill its responsibilities, there could be consequences at the local level, including the possibility of towns reconsidering their participation altogether. He framed the amendment not just as an opportunity, but potentially as a necessary step to preserve the integrity and function of the River Management Plan itself.

A motion by Henry seconded by Robinson to bring the amendment of the River Management Plan proposal by Shohola Township to the full council for further discussion carried.

Pike/Wayne Conservation Partnership 5/7 Legislative Breakfast – Reserve by 4/24: Ramie directed members to the event flyer in the packet. In previous years, participating organizations would create display posterboards. However, this year the organizers are simplifying things by asking each organization to provide just a one-page flyer instead, thereby reducing participation costs.

The registration fee for the event is \$20 per person, with an RSVP deadline of April 24. The event itself is scheduled for May 7 and will be held at the new Delaware State Forest facility. Ramie asked who from UDC would like to attend/how many tickets should be reserved. She said the event is worthwhile for the networking opportunities it provides. It is a valuable setting for informal but meaningful conversations. Last year, Robinson spoke to Representative Jeff Olsommer at this event which resulted in our Harrisburg meeting. Traditionally, the UDC Chairman attends this event when available with Ramie. There was agreement to reserve two spots. Ramie emphasized this event is not open to the public.

Status of 2026 UDC Contributions: Ramie said to date, the UDC has received \$10,300 in individual contributions for 2026. That total remains at \$4,000 for municipal member stop gap funding, with contributions received from

Lackawaxen, Delaware, Lumberland, and Shohola. The Town of Highland has reportedly approved funding, but that \$1,000 has not yet been received. The Delaware River Basin Commission committed a total of \$2,000 in sponsorship funding, allocated as \$500 for four separate programs previously described.

For the current year, \$1,195.51 has been raised for the 6th Annual Upper Delaware Litter Sweep so far. However, those funds have already been offset by expenses, specifically the cost of T-shirts totaling \$2,992.50. Despite that, because the program carried over seed funding from the previous year, the current balance remains in the positive at \$747.50. Driscoll said that Sullivan County Legislator Nadia Rajs, who has been a consistent supporter of the litter sweep, has once again committed a \$2,000 contribution from her district funds.

Summary of Pending Bills 3/24/26: A motion by Henry to pay the monthly bills in a normal fashion, seconded by Robinson, carried.

Financial Statement 3/31/26: Included in the packet for review.

Other: None.

Old Business

Sexual Harassment Prevention Policy Mandatory Training Enforcement Began 3/5: Driscoll said Section 7 of the UDC Bylaws has been enforced since the full council meeting on 3/5. Any UDC representative or alternate who has not completed the Sexual Harassment Prevention Training will see their mileage and monthly stipend frozen and will not be able to participate at meetings. She reached out to the 4 individuals to let them know.

Notification for 2026 River & Shoreline Clean-up Grants Program: Ramie said this had been left somewhat open at the previous meeting. At that time, the Council had expressed interest in waiting until later in the year to assess financial conditions before committing to the program. However, a decision or at least guidance was needed in order to communicate clearly with the towns and townships. Participating municipalities rely on this program as they begin planning their seasonal operations. For example, the Town of Lumberland typically enters into contracts for bi-weekly river patrols, while the Town of Deerpark begins its Hawks Nest cleanup efforts around Memorial Day. Without clarity from UDC, these municipalities could be placed in a difficult position—either delaying their planning or moving forward without knowing whether funding support will be available. She stressed that remaining silent or undecided at this stage could be irresponsible, as it leaves partners exposed to unnecessary uncertainty.

The UDC currently has over \$273,000 remaining in its federal account through the end of the year. Given recent additional revenues that were not previously anticipated, the organization may be in a position to proceed with the program—at least in some capacity. She also reminded the group that the program's costs have historically been relatively modest. In 2025, for instance, the total expenditure was \$4,515.89, supporting two participating municipalities. She suggested proceeding with the program but establishing a spending cap for the year. This approach would allow UDC to notify municipalities that the program is moving forward while also setting clear expectations about the level of available funding. It was seen as a practical compromise. Members discussed a \$4,500 cap. This number was seen as both familiar and manageable, reflecting recent program activity without expanding commitments. Ramie said that since the program's inception in 2014, UDC has distributed over \$56,000 through these grants, underscoring its long-term value and impact, and highlighting its direct contribution to maintaining the cleanliness of the river—one of the organization's core priorities. A motion to notify municipalities that the program will proceed for 2026, with funding capped at approximately \$4,500, and allow for adjustments later in the year if additional funds become available by Robinson seconded by Henry, carried with Richardson opposed. Ramie asked if the \$4,500 figure would include the \$500 from the Delaware River Basin Commission designated for this program along with the \$4,000 in UDC funds? Members said yes.

“Sullivan Catskills Awards Tourism Grant to UDC”: Ramie said a copy of the UDC's press release on the \$1,000 grant we received is included in the packet.

Other: None.

There was no Public Comment.

Adjournment: A motion by Roeder seconded by Henry to adjourn the meeting at 8:56 p.m. carried.