

**Upper Delaware Council**  
**OPERATIONS COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES**  
**March 26, 2024**

Committee Members Present: Harold Roeder, Al Henry, Fred Peckham (Zoom), Ginny Dudko, Larry Richardson, Roger Saumure, Christine Martin (Zoom), Jeff Dexter  
Committee Members Absent: None  
Staff: Laurie Ramie, Kerry Engelhardt, Stephanie Driscoll  
NPS Partner: Lindsey Kurnath, Carly Marshall  
Guests: Bill Dudko

The UDC's Operations Committee held its monthly meeting on Tuesday, March 26, 2024. Chairperson Dudko called the meeting to order at 7:03 pm.

**Approval of the February 27, 2024 Meeting Minutes:** A motion by Robinson seconded by Henry to approve the 2/27 meeting minutes carried.

**Executive Director's Monthly Report:** Ramie renewed the UDC's annual registration in the U.S. federal government's SAM.gov (System for Awards Management) program through 3/6/25, ahead of the 3/8 expiration. On Friday 3/22 Ramie was notified that the NPS Agreements Technical Representative would be on leave for the last week of March and hadn't reviewed our Application for Federal Assistance for FY 24 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup> Quarters (4/1-9/30/24) and will be returning to work on 4/1. NPS UPDE Administrative Officer Tara Harbert inquired with that individual's supervisor whether the UDC's funding allocation would be delayed. He advised that the UDC funding is a priority for NPS and would make sure it's on the top of that person's 'to do' list when they return. It should take a few days to process the modification, and he asked Harbert to preemptively prepare, but not submit, the paperwork required to expedite it. Ramie appreciates everything Harbert is doing to help with the process. She withdrew the amount to cover our March abstract of bills on 3/25, leaving a balance of \$26,729.60.

*The Upper Delaware* newsletter Spring issue is in the hands of Courier Printing who will print, fold, and label our 8,500 copies, bring the pre-classified sorted mail bags to the Callicoon Post Office for bulk mailing, and deliver our extra copies to the UDC office on or by 4/8. This issue tallied 50.5 hours to complete, including compiling an outline of contents, arranging interviews, assigning two articles, requesting information, doing research, selecting and manipulating photos, formatting and designing the 12-pages, writing, and sharing the draft for staff to proofread. Driscoll will send the updated mailing database to Courier Printing by 3/27 and will post the issue to the website.

Five news releases were issued for the month of March: "Sponsor Roebling's Aqueducts Event by March 20", 2/29 (for D&H Transportation Heritage Council [DHTHC]); "UDC Seeks Municipal Proposals for River & Shoreline Clean-ups" 5/4; "Upper Delaware Scenic Byway Offers Grants for Culture & History, Vistas, Signs, and Butterflies" (for Upper Delaware Scenic Byway [UDSB]), 3/21; and "UDC to Host April 4 Meet and Greet with PA Fish and Boat Commissioner and Director", 3/22. The Western Sullivan Public Library did a tribute to former NPS Historian Mary Curtis for Women's History Month and asked Ramie to provide UDC archival photos of Curtis. Curtis was part of many organizations in the Upper Delaware region and was responsible for most of the National Register of Historic Listings. Roeder said Curtis did a lot of oral history recordings of people.

Driscoll booked the 36<sup>th</sup> Annual Family Raft Trip with Lander's River Trips so Ramie could include the information in the Spring 2024 UDC newsletter. The itinerary will be Ten Mile River Access to Lander's Minisink Base on 8/4. Guests will park and check-in at Minisink between 9-10am and the trip will cost \$29 for adults, and \$19 for children aged 5-12. Advance reservations are due by 7/26. A press release will be issued closer to the 7/26 deadline.

On 3/8 we received and approved the t-shirt proof for the Upper Delaware Litter Sweep. Driscoll ordered 350 t-shirts in various sizes.

4/19 is the deadline for River & Shoreline Clean-up Grants. We already have one town that has applied. There was a new person in the position who normally puts the application together and called with some questions. We will see what other applications come in and the Operations Committee will review them at the 4/23 meeting with a resolution at the 5/2 UDC meeting for awards. The clean-ups need to be completed by 9/10.

There is an article in the Spring 2024 newsletter about Lisa Glover's donation of 50 copies of the "Big Eddy Narrows" contour map. The maps will be available for a \$20 donation to the UDC and will include a Glover's blog article to explain the maps' development. UDC t-shirts are always available for a \$15 donation through UDC events, website, public requests, and the Equinunk General Store as a PA sales outlet as another fundraiser.

#### New Business

**4<sup>th</sup> Annual Upper Delaware Litter Sweep Donations:** Ramie said UDC staff keeps a donation log for the Litter Sweep for organizational and information purposes. We are taking a soft approach asking for donations since we started this year with a healthy balance. Anything we receive will allow the UDC to further the event in future years. She reported that the UDC has had 7 donors that have collectively raised \$4,280.50. The majority of that amount came from Sullivan County Discretionary Funds donated by UDC Town of Lumberland Representative and Sullivan County Legislator Nadia Rajsz with District 2, Sullivan County Legislator Cat Scott with District 5, and Sullivan County Legislator Matt McPhillips with District 1; allocating \$1,000 each. Driscoll and Engelhardt put together the information with supporting documents for contract approval, although the vote did already take place to approve the funding. We also received a donation of \$500 from the UDSB last night (3/25), \$250 from the Delaware River Basin Commission (DRBC), \$250 from Econo-Pak/North American Packaging Company, \$100 from Grace Church of Callicoon, \$100 from Perk's Welding in Port Jervis, and \$50 from Brenda Farmiloe who will join the Litter Sweep in Cochecton. With the balance we started with in the dedicated Litter Sweep account, that brings the current balance to \$6,564.10, before purchasing t-shirts and supplies for this year.

At last month's UDC meeting, there was a question if we should sell our excess Litter Sweep t-shirts for donations. Ramie said she thinks we will be getting some larger groups this year; we may need more shirts for volunteers and should hold off on marketing the t-shirts for sale. In years past we have extended the Litter Sweep dates as well. B. Dudko asked how many t-shirts we ordered last year. Driscoll said 300. B. Dudko asked how many are left. Driscoll said around 40/50.

Ramie said our next step is to solicit volunteers. Driscoll's interview with WJFF Radio Catskills is coming up in the next couple of weeks and will hopefully bring more attention to the Litter Sweep and its need for volunteers. Dudko thanked the UDC staff for arranging everything and making the UDC Litter Sweep happen.

**Tuition Request for 3<sup>rd</sup> GIS Course through Penn State World Campus:** Engelhardt said the certificate program she was interested in completing requires a total of 4 courses. She has currently completed 2 of the courses and is looking to take her next course this summer: GIS Database Development. The courses are held online weekly, with assignments. Henry asked Ramie if there was an allocation for training in the budget. Ramie said yes, in the 3<sup>rd</sup> Quarter budget she included \$3,146.00 for training in anticipation of this course. A motion by Roeder to approve the tuition request for Engelhardt's 3<sup>rd</sup> GIS Course, seconded by Henry, carried.

Dudko commented that Engelhardt has been doing a great job for the UDC with her skills and knowledge. Ramie added that Engelhardt efficiently incorporates these courses into her schedule and she thinks they are very useful.

**Annual Performance Appraisal due for Executive Director for 4/21 Work Anniversary:** Ramie said the Personnel Committee typically shares an evaluation form amongst themselves for the review. Henry asked if Personnel Subcommittee members could meet a half hour ahead of the full council meeting on 4/4 at 6:30 pm at the UDC building. Everyone on the Personnel Subcommittee agreed.

**Summary of Pending Bills 3/26/2024:** Motion by Henry seconded by Robinson to approve the bills and pay them in the normal fashion carried.

**Financial Statement 3/31/2024:** The statement was included for review in the packet.

**Other:** None.

Old Business

**State and Federal Funding Updates:** Ramie said the committee asked for this topic to stay on the agenda.

Unfortunately, she has no updates to report since last month. Kurnath had sent her the status of NPS FY24 Budget. Kurnath said the president had signed it last week. Congress chose not to fund any requested increases for National Parks for “Critical Responsibilities” where the UPDE/UDC request would sit or the three new NPS units created this year. They were told to expect the same for FY25. Kurnath said it could still be a good exercise to prepare a request detailing what the UDC is unable to do because of its static funding.

**Transfer of UDC Funds to Vanguard Investment Account:** Henry had suggested putting some of the UDC funds from the Jeff Bank account into the Vanguard account. Ramie said she had spoken to UDC bookkeeper Mike Poska and he said would feel comfortable keeping at least a typical month’s worth of bills readily available. Robinson said he thinks that would be more than enough in the Jeff Bank account; the rest could be accruing interest. It’s not that hard to pull it out of the Vanguard account and one month would give ample time if needed. A motion by Henry to let Ramie and Poska decide what would be the best amount of UDC funds to invest, seconded by Dexter, carried.

**UDC/NPS Water Safety Project Funding Expenditures:** Ramie said the majority of the \$5,000 of pass-through funding coming to the UDC through NPS is going toward the billboards for Water Safety, starting in May. The cost of the billboards through Adams Outdoor Advertising is \$4,425, leaving \$575 left over. The NPS Water Safety Committee (which Driscoll is part of on behalf of the UDC) would like to spend the remaining balance on the Loaner Life Jacket Station signage from Harrison Signs in Tyler Hill, PA totaling \$540. Ramie displayed what the signs would look like; 24x36 inch single sided, powder coated, yellow, 1/8-inch aluminum laminate. Kurnath said that the UDC logo should be added to the sign as a project partner. They will look into adding the logo if the signs haven’t been made yet, or adding a sticker to the signs. A motion by Henry to approve the balance of the pass-through funds go toward the Loaner Life Jacket Station signage, after adding the UDC logo, seconded by Richardson, carried.

**3/8 NYSHTA Catskills Legislative Networking Breakfast:** Ramie attended this event at the Resorts World Catskills on 3/8. She said last year when she attended there were several representative from U.S. Senate and Congressional Districts. This year Senator Peter Oberacker and Assemblywoman Aileen Gunther were the only officials in attendance. Senator Oberacker acknowledged Assemblywoman Gunther’s accomplishments in her tenure in office. Ramie was happy to get a photo of a literal pat on the back Senator Oberacker gave to Assemblywoman Gunther for all her hard work in light of her retirement. Assemblywoman Gunther said Governor Hochul had put in \$58.5 million in the NYS budget for tourism and she considered that to be a healthy budget. Ramie quoted Gunther: “Sullivan County has turned around in so many ways because we have invited people into our community, and they stay.” She said she is retiring, but does have another 10-months to serve and that she realizes how important tourism is to each of the communities. There is a collection of sales tax on short-term rentals included in the FY2025 Executive Budget. They are not new taxes; they are just not currently being collected. Vacation rentals would need to submit their share to the state. They spoke about the Tourism Promotion Matching Grants program, trying to restore \$3.5 million to that through lobbying efforts. They discussed the New York Junk Fee Protection Act; Senate has introduced a bill to clarify conspicuous pricing practices regarding mandatory fees, meaning all fees would be disclosed prior to booking a hotel room letting you know upfront what the surcharges are. The NYSHTA is against the bill, saying that other states aren’t required to do that. Another bill the NYSHTA is developing is to lower the amusement rides operator age to 16, to allow more parks to have more rides open.

A motion by Henry to send a ‘thank-you’ letter to be sent to Assemblywoman Gunther for her 20-year career, while reiterating our message about UDC funding, seconded by Richardson, carried. Richardson said to keep in mind that Gunther still has time to make the decision to help with UDC funding.

**Sexual Harassment Prevention Training Follow-up:** Ramie said Henry had reached out to her about the Sexual Harassment Prevention training. Henry said that every member of the UDC should have to do the training, not just some of the members. There needs to be a standard added to the bylaws, and if a member doesn't complete the training, they shouldn't get their stipend for the meetings. Ramie said she could send out Henry's suggestions he shared with her, since he does have some good points. Henry said she could send out his suggestions. Richardson agrees with Henry; if you work at a business, you would need to complete the training. Ramie said we will also accept proof of completion from a person's place of work or other organizations. Robinson said he's of the Jewish faith and for Yom Kippur he recites the Principles of Living, which cover sexual harassment. Would that exempt him? Richardson said that doesn't come from any legal entity, so it wouldn't really count since there's no certificate of completion. Engelhardt said the training addresses state law and when you're required to report harassment. She understands his point on moral and ethics, but it has some technical dimensions as well. Robinson said it's another way to get the same information. Henry said once his suggestions are sent out, it can be discussed and some kind of solution could be reached. Ramie said in the past, she has suggested doing the training at a UDC full council meeting, but some felt that would add too much time to the agenda. Richardson thinks that's the way it should be done.

**Applications for River & Shoreline Clean-up Grants due by 4/19:** Ramie said this is just a reminder. Martin said she mentioned it to the Town of Highland; they might have someone interested.

**Other:** Richardson said the NPS was trying to get volunteers to transcribe the oral history tapes that Roeder referenced earlier that NPS Historian Mary Curtis had made. Kurnath said they are trying to get them online, but it needs to be a certain level of accessible online. They are working on it. Roeder said NPS needed permission from the people recorded to transcribe the tapes. Dudko said couldn't the next of kin give permission if the interviewees were deceased? Roeder said yes, he thought so. Ramie said the UDC had received a list of people to reach out to and helped with that.

Robinson said he had sent Ramie photos of the Deerpark St. Patrick's Day dinner where Dave Dean was honored as Republican of the Year. He said it was a great dinner and honored Dean for all the hard work he's done. Dudko offered remarks about his service to the UDC and his love of the river valley.

**There was no Public Comment.**

**Adjournment:** A motion by Roeder seconded by Dexter to adjourn the meeting at 8:05 p.m. carried.