Upper Delaware Council
OPERATIONS COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES
August 25, 2026

Committee Members Present:	Jeff Dexter, Ginny Dudko, Aaron Robinson, Al Henry, Larry Richardson
Committee Members Absent:	Cathleen Breen, Harold Roeder
Staff:	Laurie Ramie, Julie Pais
NPS Partner:	None
Guests:	Bill Dudko

The UDC's Operations Committee held its monthly meeting on Tuesday, August 25, 2026. Chairperson Dexter called the meeting to order at 7:34 pm.

Approval of the July 28, 2026 Meeting Minutes: A motion by G. Dudko seconded by Robinson to approve the 7/28 meeting minutes carried, with Richardson abstaining.

Executive Director's Monthly Report: Ramie reported that the UDC submitted its reimbursement request for August expenses, which are higher than a typical month because checks were prepared for the Technical Assistance Grant projects that have been budgeted. The Tusten TAG payment is now being held pending completion of the review discussed during Project Review. This year, the Federal ASAP payment system is scheduled to be unavailable from September 22 through September 30, reopening October 1. Because the UDC would normally draw down funds for September 28, she will need to determine whether to request funds earlier, before the exact amount of expenses is known, or wait until after October 1 and temporarily hold payments. The UDC continues to await approval of its 2027 Cooperative Agreement, which has been pending since early May. Marshall and Kurnath reported at the most recent UDC/NPS staff meeting that approval is nearly complete. The UDC will need to submit the financial budget associated with the 2027 work plan. Ramie has already advised the UDC's bookkeeper of this, and they plan to begin preparing the budget now, so it is ready when requested.

The annual inspection of the UDC office's four fire extinguishers and emergency exit equipment has been completed by Cintas for $300.89. Kerry Engelhardt sent her invoice under the UDC's temporary agreement for freelance substantial conformance review services. Engelhardt completed reviews of two Berlin Township ordinances, resulting in a bill of $675. Our agreement requires written notice of termination, so Ramie will formally close it out since the assignment is complete and payment made.

Pais began work on August 3 and is continuing through the onboarding process. Because Driscoll was unavailable for the current committee meetings, Ramie and Pais handled the additional work involved in assembling the meeting materials, providing Pais with an intensive introduction to the UDC's committee procedures. A few onboarding items remain, including website management training with Dorene Warner when scheduling permits. The National Park Service also offered Pais a field orientation tour of the river corridor. The first portion is completed, while the northern portion will be scheduled.

The UDC is waiting for IT support to install external hard drives and new cloud-based antivirus software on the office computers. Pais also encountered a problem that prevents her from downloading email attachments, and she contacted technical support for assistance. Ramie continues working on the contracting and procurement policy and the UDC funding history white paper.

Under publicity, Ramie reported that the UDC issued six news releases during the past month, covering the summer newsletter, results of the annual raft trip, the hiring of the Resources and Land Use Specialist, announcement of the annual awards banquet honorees, a banquet reservation reminder, and the upcoming September 3 full Council presentation. That presentation, titled "Creating Healthy Allyships with Indigenous Peoples," will be given by a presenter of Lenape descent and will include discussion of appropriate terminology and respectful interaction with Native peoples.

The summer newsletter was delivered on July 29, ahead of its contractual deadline of August 3. Its completion concludes the current contract with Courier Printing, which covers three issues because the UDC publishes the newsletter three times annually rather than quarterly as a cost-saving measure. Ramie will arrange a new printing contract in advance of the combined fall/winter issue, which has a December 7 deadline.

Thirty guests participated in the 38th Annual UDC Family Raft Trip, consisting of 15 adults and 15 children, producing a $750 livery charge based on rates of $30 per adult and $20 per child. Although the UDC normally operates the trip strictly at cost, it generated a small surplus of $71.99 this year because several registered participants cancelled or failed to appear without providing a reason and are not refunded. No complaints were received regarding that policy.

With the Damascus Township website accessibility TAG project now completed, Ramie plans to issue a news release describing the project and how the grant funds are used. A similar release will eventually be prepared for Tusten once its TAG and zoning review process is completed. She also reminded members that the special Project Review Committee meeting is September 8 to review the 2027 TAG applications. Recommendations from that meeting will then be presented to the October 1 full Council meeting for action by resolution. The Town of Deerpark has until September 11 to complete its 2026 River and Shoreline Cleanup Grant project and submit its reimbursement request.

Two anticipated funding payments remain outstanding. The $5,000 Jeff Bank donation, originally announced in early June, has not yet been received. Ramie recently contacted the bank's Vice President to again express appreciation and received assurance that arrangements will be made for the disbursement and associated publicity. The UDC is also waiting for $2,000 in Sullivan County Upper Delaware Litter Sweep funding, for which reimbursement paperwork was submitted promptly after the contract is received in June. County representatives indicated that there is no problem with the reimbursement and that processing the payment takes time.

New Business

Revision Proposal: Draft White Paper on History & Funding of the Upper Delaware Council: Ramie said that there are now three different versions of the white paper on the UDC's history and funding under consideration. Cathleen Breen agreed to prepare another approach to the document and submitted a three-page draft, which is included in the packet, along with Ramie's suggested edits and questions. Ramie acknowledged that developing the paper is a difficult assignment because members have somewhat different philosophies about how much historical background should be included and how best to communicate the UDC's current situation to elected officials and other audiences. Committee members reviewed some of Ramie's proposed edits to Breen's draft. One example involves changing the word "mandated" to "intended" when describing state funding responsibilities because the River Management Plan does not explicitly require New York and Pennsylvania to provide funding. Ramie emphasized the need to be precise and cautious with the language. She proposes additional language to provide greater specificity about the time periods and information covered in the document. Henry recommended establishing a firm deadline for comments and revisions, noting that members need additional time to fully review Breen's new draft alongside the other versions. The Committee agreed that the process should not continue indefinitely without a target for completion. Members decided that final comments can be made by the next Operations Committee meeting, giving everyone time to review and digest the various drafts.

A significant portion of the discussion focused on whether the final product should be a short white paper focused primarily on present-day responsibilities and funding challenges or a more comprehensive document preserving the history that led to creation of the River Management Plan. Richardson favored a concise document that elected officials and board members can quickly read, understand, and use, with a more detailed historical document available separately for anyone interested in learning how the current management structure developed. Robinson strongly emphasized that the approximately ten-year period preceding adoption of the River Management Plan in 1988 should not be lost. He described the years beginning around 1978 as a period of intense local debate and negotiation that ultimately shaped the system in place today. The River Management Plan was not simply handed to the municipalities by the federal government; rather, it resulted from years of work, sacrifice, controversy, negotiation, and participation by residents and officials. He believes current municipal officials need to understand that history because it explains how and why the municipalities assume their present responsibilities under the RMP. Earlier versions of the management approach encountered significant local opposition and some officials who ultimately supported the adopted River Management Plan opposed previous versions. He described the final RMP as the product of a long struggle and compromise, developed over roughly ten years and multiple revisions. He's concerned that this history is not adequately summarized or memorialized in existing UDC materials and could eventually be lost as the people who directly participated in the process are no longer available to recount it. Richardson said that he is scanning older CAC records and uncovering considerable historical material, including documents relating to the proposed Tocks Island Dam and the events that preceded establishment of the Upper Delaware management structure. Robinson said he circulated an article from the *New York Times* dating to 1984 because it illustrates the attitudes and frustrations of local municipalities and elected officials during that period. Ramie mentioned Mary Curtis's master's thesis, "The Aginners," as another particularly useful source for understanding the local groups, disagreements, and turmoil surrounding development of the River Management Plan over the period that Robinson mentions.

Members saw merit in both approaches. One possible solution is to prepare two complementary documents: a shorter white paper or executive-style summary explaining the UDC's current responsibilities, challenges, and funding situation, together with a more comprehensive historical document preserving the background and evolution of the River Management Plan. The shorter version could specifically direct readers to the longer history for

additional information. Regardless of format, committee members emphasized that any document presented as an official UDC product must use language that is careful, accurate, objective, and formally agreed upon by the Council.

Ramie said that Shohola Township has endorsed Robinson's draft version and is considering posting it on the township website. She expressed concern that the draft could inadvertently be presented or interpreted as an officially approved UDC white paper when the Council has not yet adopted any version. Robinson clarified that the document is an individual draft submitted to the UDC for consideration and he had not requested the Supervisors to take any action on it. Ramie plans to contact Shohola to explain that, if the township chooses to distribute or post the draft, it should clearly identify Robinson as the author and state that the document has not been approved or endorsed by the UDC. The committee agreed with the importance of maintaining that distinction while its own review and revision process continues.

Revised Draft UDC Procurement and Contracting Policy: The committee reviewed the 3rd draft UDC Procurement and Contracting Policy, which incorporates comments from the National Park Service. Ramie explained that UPDE Administrative Officer Tara Harbert initially reviewed the draft earlier in the month, and Marshall subsequently provided additional comments Friday. The latest version adds citations to the applicable Code of Federal Regulations (CFR) governing federal procurement requirements. Ramie found nothing objectionable in the additional provisions and says the revisions primarily ensure that the UDC policy properly incorporates the federal requirements applicable to the organization. The revised policy also provides more detailed definitions and standards, particularly concerning conflicts of interest. The previous general statement directing the UDC to avoid conflicts of interest and maintain public trust does not adequately define what constitutes a conflict. The new language specifies that a conflict may exist when an individual has a personal or financial interest in a vendor seeking UDC business, or when a family member, prospective employer, or other related interest is involved. Anyone with such a conflict is required to disclose it and recuse themselves from the procurement process. The policy also expressly prohibits accepting gratuities, favors, bribes, or other benefits in connection with the awarding of UDC contracts. These requirements may appear obvious, but they need to be explicitly stated in the formal policy. A more significant revision involves the procurement thresholds. Earlier drafts establish a threshold of $2,000, which the committee previously discussed increasing to $5,000. After reviewing the federal requirements, she recommended increasing the threshold to $10,000 which is what the federal policy allows. Purchases below $10,000 would therefore not have to go through the more formal competitive procurement process. For purchases between $10,000 and $20,000, the policy requires three written quotes. Purchases over $20,000 move into a more formal process involving sealed bids, which are generally preferred for construction projects, or a formal request for proposals when the UDC is seeking professional or contractual services. The revised draft now provides the necessary legal and federal language without making the policy unnecessarily lengthy or cumbersome. Once adopted, it will become part of the UDC's administrative policies and records. Ramie recommended forwarding this version to the Full Council for formal approval by resolution.

Henry asked whether the National Park Service's review is sufficient or whether the policy should also undergo a separate legal review. Ramie said she does not believe an additional legal review is necessary, noting that the Park Service does not recommend one and that the policy is an internal UDC document. The principal federal concern is addressed by incorporating the applicable CFR citations and requirements. A motion by Henry to send the UDC's Procurement and Contracting Policy to the full council in the form of a resolution for approval, seconded by Robinson, carried.

Town of Tusten TAG 2026-01 Payment Request, $3,000: Held pending the outcome of the Substantial Conformance Review.

Damascus Township TAG 2026-03 Payment Request, $3,000: A motion by Richardson, seconded by Henry, to approve the Technical Assistance Grant payment of $3,000 to Damacus Township, carried.

Personnel Subcommittee: Henry said the Personnel Subcommittee previously considered recognizing staff for the additional responsibilities assumed during the period when the UDC office operated with only two employees. However, after further discussion with the Executive Director, the subcommittee agreed to hold off on any decision until closer to the end of the fiscal year, when the UDC has a clearer picture of its overall financial position. Ramie said that this is the first year the UDC specifically includes Employee Awards as a line item in the budget, providing the necessary authority and funding mechanism should the Council ultimately decide to take such action. A policy is also in place to govern employee awards. The original suggestion arose in recognition of the additional workload handled by the two staff members during the Resources and Land Use Specialist vacancy, but members agreed that it is prudent to determine the year-end budget position before making any commitment. Robinson said the UDC

experienced some financial pressure in the previous year and does not yet know exactly how the current year will conclude.

Summary of Pending Bills 8/25/26: A motion by Henry to pay the monthly bills in a normal fashion, seconded by Robinson, carried.

Financial Statement 8/31/26: Included in the packet for review.

Other: None.

Old Business

Vanguard Transfer and Investment of UDC Funds: Ramie reported that, as previously directed, she transfered the $7,300 donation from the Delaware Riverside Conservancy from the UDC's general fund into the Vanguard account on August 20. The donation had been temporarily held in the general fund while the Council considered whether it might be needed for a specific purpose. Following the electronic transfer, the Vanguard account balance stands at $207,679.48. These funds consist of donations and other non-federal, unrestricted UDC money. The committee discussed whether some of these unrestricted funds could be placed in another relatively safe investment offering a higher return than the approximately 4.6% currently being earned. Henry asked members to consider possible alternatives and submit recommendations to the Chair or Executive Director. The possibility of receiving the anticipated $100,000 in New York State funding is also mentioned as a factor that could improve the UDC's ability to cover future operating expenses, potentially reducing the need to draw upon the unrestricted reserve. Because there is no immediate need to make an investment decision, members agreed that it makes more sense to continue the discussion at the next Operations Committee meeting.

Henry said that when he accesses his personal Vanguard account, the UDC account also appears among his accounts because his personal identifying information is associated with it as UDC Treasurer. Although UDC funds are not being improperly accessed or used, he is uncomfortable having the organizational account displayed alongside his personal investments and wants the connection removed. Ramie said that when she accesses the UDC account, she cannot see the Treasurer's personal accounts, and wasn't aware that he could access the organization's account. Henry asked that the situation be corrected by the end of the calendar year otherwise there will be "repercussions". Richardson said he encountered a similar issue while serving as treasurer for another organization, suggesting that financial institutions sometimes link organizational accounts to the personal credentials of the individual designated as treasurer. Robinson recommended using Vanguard's secure messaging system to formally request removal of Henry's link to the UDC account. The goal is to preserve the UDC account and its funds exactly as they are while removing the personal linkage, rather than taking any action that could inadvertently close, delete, or disrupt access to the organizational account. Ramie agreed to follow up.

Returning to the investment question, Robinson cautioned against pursuing substantially higher returns if doing so would expose the UDC's reserve funds to unnecessary stock-market risk. The UDC is not advocating speculative investments, and he specifically emphasized the importance of protecting the principal. Henry said the current 4.6% return is already respectable, but he suggests researching alternatives such as Certificates of Deposit offering approximately 5% to 5.2%. A CD could potentially provide a modestly higher return while remaining relatively safe, although the UDC would need to consider the required deposit, length of the term, liquidity, and any penalty associated with early withdrawal. The consensus is to research options rather than make an immediate change. Members will investigate available rates and investment products, including potentially placing only a portion of the approximately $207,000 into a higher-yielding instrument while retaining sufficient readily accessible funds for unexpected needs.

Request For Proposals: Graphic Re-design of "The Upper Delaware" and Quark Xpress files: A promotional handout for the RFP prepared by Driscoll is included in the packet. The opportunity is being advertised in three newspapers: the *Pike County Dispatch*, *River Reporter*, and *Sullivan County Democrat*. The announcement was also posted on social media, where it received numerous shares, and was distributed through the UDC's larger email lists so members and contacts can forward it to qualified graphic design professionals. The deadline for proposals is September 21. Ramie said that two proposals have already been received, although no evaluation or selection will occur until the submission period officially closes. After the September 21 deadline, UDC staff plans to evaluate all proposals and bring a recommendation forward so that the graphic design contract can be awarded at the October 1 full Council meeting. The schedule is relatively tight because the RFP calls for all final deliverables to be completed by November 30. The project is intended to help the UDC transition its existing publication materials into Adobe InDesign. The selected contractor will work with Ramie to develop the new publication template, convert the existing files into the new software format, and provide training so staff can independently use the program going forward. She currently has to move between two computers with different files when producing design materials such as the newsletter and annual awards booklet, which includes photographs, text boxes, and other elements

requiring dedicated page-layout software. The goal is to have the transition completed in time to produce the Fall-Winter issue of "The Upper Delaware" newsletter using Adobe InDesign, with that issue scheduled to be completed by December 7. Members are encouraged to continue sharing the RFP with anyone they know who has the appropriate professional graphic design and InDesign experience.

Update on 38th Annual UDC River Valley Awards – Program & Reservations due by 9/1: Ramie reminded members that the September 1 reservation deadline is approaching. Members who have not yet submitted their reservations are encouraged to do so and to remind others who plan to attend. September 1 is also an important internal deadline because she is simultaneously preparing the awards program booklet. This year's awards involve an unusually large number of honorees. Although there are nine award categories, approximately 40 individuals are associated with the various awards, committees, and organizations being recognized. These include recipients connected with the two lifesaving awards as well as several committees and groups, including the Fort Delaware Fife & Drum Corps and the Cochecton Celebrates America's 250th Anniversary Committee. The large number of participants requires considerable coordination to make sure everyone receives the banquet information and reservation materials and that staff obtains the necessary photographs, biographies, and background information for each award category.

Producing the 14-page awards booklet is essentially equivalent to putting together another newsletter because of the amount of writing, photography, layout, and information involved. At this point, 44 people are registered to attend, but responses are still outstanding from several award recipients. She anticipates that additional reservations will arrive close to the deadline. The September 1 deadline is particularly important because the banquet venue requires a firm guest count that afternoon so it can order food. Once that number is submitted, the UDC is financially committed to paying for that number of guests. Assembly Member Paula Kay plans to attend with her husband but Assembly Member Deborah Glick is unable to attend because she will be away for Rosh Hashanah. Invitations also went to Governor Kathy Hochul and State Budget Director Blake Washington. Although she has not yet received confirmation from those offices, New York State returned an acknowledgment indicating that a representative may attend. Preparations are now moving into the final production stage, including submitting the award inscriptions to the plaque company and completing the numerous logistical details associated with the event. A special presentation is also planned for keynote speaker John Conway. Rather than giving him the UDC's traditional framed river valley scene, Dexter proposed creating one of his handcrafted wooden American flags, featuring the Sullivan County 250 insignia in the center. The Fort Delaware Fife & Drum Corps also offered to perform during the event. In keeping with the nation's semiquincentennial celebration, the banquet will feature special red, white, and blue bunting and table decorations, giving this year's awards ceremony an America 250 theme. The 250th anniversary provides a one-time opportunity to make the annual banquet especially festive and memorable.

Other: None.

There was no Public Comment.

Adjournment: A motion by Robinson seconded by Dexter to adjourn the meeting at 8:32 p.m. carried.

Meeting minutes prepared by Stephanie Driscoll, 9/2/2026