Upper Delaware Council
OPERATIONS COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES
September 22, 2026

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

The UDC's Operations Committee held its monthly meeting on Tuesday, September 22, 2026. Vice-chair Roeder called the meeting to order at 7:45 pm.

Approval of the August 25, 2026 Meeting Minutes: A motion by Richardson seconded by Henry to approve the 8/25 meeting minutes carried.

Executive Director's Monthly Report: Ramie said that a full written report would be provided later but offered a brief follow-up on the River Valley Awards Banquet. Before leaving for vacation, she had scheduled a series of daily Facebook posts recognizing each of the award recipients individually. A new post appears each morning at 8:00 a.m., featuring our introductory remarks and photographs of each honoree. The posts will continue through September 25. The UDC has received considerable positive feedback about the awards program, and she is very pleased with how the banquet turned out. Committee members said it was one of the Council's best awards programs to date, with the Fort Delaware Fife & Drum Corps performance receiving particularly positive remarks.

New Business

Allocation of NYS $100,000 Funds to the UDC: Ramie said now that it is understood the NYS funding will require a budget and work plan, the Council will need to determine eligible uses and develop a more specific proposal. One use suggested was allocating approximately $30,000 toward the Technical Assistance Grant program. Ramie also proposed, if allowable under the state funding, using a portion to contract with an experienced financial professional. The person would help establish the accounting structure needed to keep the new state funds separated from federal funding and provide greater financial oversight. Neither she nor the UDC's contractual bookkeeper has experience managing this combination of state and federal funding streams. The UDC's current bookkeeper has indicated that he expects to retire within a few years and that the UDC is his remaining client. Ramie suggested that a new contractor could potentially assume some fiscal and administrative responsibilities, assist with budgeting and financial planning, and possibly help with grant writing and identifying additional funding opportunities. This would also allow her to devote more time to the public relations responsibilities that were combined with the Executive Director position when staffing was reduced in 2012.

Members supported strengthening the UDC's financial planning. Robinson noted that expenses are increasing in significant categories, including utilities and health insurance, and that the organization would benefit from developing a realistic multi-year budget, potentially covering five years, rather than relying primarily on year-to-year comparisons. Robinson stressed the importance of understanding the true cost of operating the organization regardless of the amount ultimately provided by federal or state sources. Ramie emphasized that the position envisions would go beyond basic bookkeeping. She would like someone capable of analyzing financial trends, helping develop budgets, advising the Council on its overall fiscal position, administering funding and potentially assisting with grants. Familiarity with both New York and Pennsylvania funding requirements could also be beneficial if the UDC succeeds in obtaining Pennsylvania support in the future. As for the next steps, the UDC would need to better define the contractor's responsibilities, determine an appropriate level of compensation and confirm whether the expense would be eligible under the $100,000 state allocation. Henry suggested asking the current UDC bookkeeper for recommendations of potential successors while also conducting a formal RFP process once the scope of work is established. The position would be structured as an independent contract rather than an employee position, particularly because the state funding may be a one-time allocation. Henry cautioned that the financial impact would need to be carefully evaluated. A qualified professional would likely cost more than the UDC currently pays for bookkeeping, and unrestricted funds are limited and not reliably replenished each year.

Review Graphic Re-design Proposals: The Committee reviewed proposals received for the graphic redesign of "The Upper Delaware" newsletter. Eight proposals were submitted by the September 21 deadline, with a wide range of pricing. Ramie said the UDC intends to use its $5,000 Jeff Bank donation for the project, although the grant funds have not yet been received. The project is expected to run from October 1 through November 30 and includes developing an updated Adobe InDesign template and training staff to use and maintain it. Driscoll prepared a detailed comparison of all eight proposals, outlining the strengths and weaknesses of each. After reviewing the submissions independently, Driscoll and Ramie agreed on a particular bidder as their first choice and Ramie

explained why. Ramie commented that many of the bidders had clearly taken considerable time to study the existing newsletter and understood that the goal was not to completely reinvent the publication. Instead, the redesign is intended to modernize and simplify production while retaining the familiar identity readers have known since 1988. The project is also intended to establish a more efficient production system and transfer enough InDesign knowledge to staff so that future issues can be produced internally. The recommended contractor proposed a fixed cost of $3,600, which is within the $5,000 project budget. Any additional cost would primarily involve fonts the UDC might choose to purchase, with those costs presented for approval in advance. Breen said the comparison chart did not indicate whether this bidder would also convert the UDC's existing QuarkXPress Awards booklet template into Adobe InDesign, which is part of the requested scope. Ramie said she would clarify that point before the October 1 Full Council meeting. On-site training was also considered important. Some bidders proposed virtual training, but Ramie prefers having the designer work directly with them in person and provide written instructions for future reference.

A motion by Robinson, seconded by Henry, to send the staff recommendation based on the quality and applicability of the bidders work, prior experience with the firm, proposed approach and cost for the graphic redesign of "The Upper Delaware" newsletter to the 10/1 UDC meeting, carried.

Potential UDC Pass-Through Contract with USGS for Barryville Gage: The Committee discussed the possibility of the UDC serving as the contracting organization for continued USGS discharge data collection at the Barryville gage. Ramie said the current cost is $8,700 for one year, which is lower than previously anticipated. Efforts have been underway through Congressman Josh Riley's office and Sullivan County Legislature Chair Nadia Rajsz to assemble outside funding, but the money has not yet been confirmed. Because USGS requires the agreement to go through a municipality or eligible organization, the UDC was asked whether it would be willing to serve as the pass-through entity. The arrangement would involve a standard USGS Joint Funding Agreement beginning October 1. Members were concerned about the extremely short timeframe because USGS expected payment of the full $8,700 and would discontinue the discharge data if funding was not secured. A motion was initially made by Robinson for the UDC to fund the gage for one year, while continuing to seek contributions to reimburse or offset the expense. He stressed the importance of maintaining an uninterrupted discharge record and said that a gap in the data would reduce its long-term usefulness. Richardson questioned committing UDC funds to an $8,700 expense that was not included in the adopted budget, particularly while the Council was discussing broader financial constraints. After clarification that the proposal would apply only to the coming year, the motion was put to a vote but failed with Richardson, Breen, and G. Dudko opposed. The discussion then returned to the original proposal, which was for the UDC to act as a pass-through if the full $8,700 could be secured from outside sources. Ramie clarified that this would not commit UDC funds to the project. If the outside funding did not materialize by October 1, the UDC would not proceed with the agreement, and the discharge data would stop. A motion by Breen, seconded by Richardson, for the UDC to serve as a pass-through contracting organization provided the necessary funds are secured, carried. Ramie was asked to follow up with Town of Highland UDC Representative Christine Martin regarding the status of the funding discussions and, if necessary, contact the congressional and county offices directly to emphasize the October 1 deadline.

Approve Town of Deerpark River & Shoreline Clean-up Grant: $2,010.22: Ramie said that although the UDC had originally approved $4,318.43, the Town of Deerpark's actual expenses totaled only $2,010.22; a savings of approximately $2,308.21. She reminded the committee that the Delaware River Basin Commission had contributed $500 toward the 2026 River and Shoreline Clean-Up Grants Program, further reducing the amount that ultimately needs to be covered by the UDC. Deerpark submitted complete documentation for the project. The Town Highway Department conducted three cleanups, following Memorial Day, Independence Day and Labor Day, and provided detailed records of labor, equipment, trucking and dumping fees, along with individual employee timesheets.
A motion by Richardson, seconded by Breen to approve the Town of Deerpark's final reimbursement of $2,010.22, carried.

Summary of Pending Bills 9/22/26: A motion by Henry to pay the monthly bills in a normal fashion, seconded by Breen, carried.

Financial Statement 9/30/26: Included in the packet for review.

Other: None.

Old Business

Draft White Paper on History and Funding of the Upper Delaware Council: The Committee continued its discussion of the draft white paper on the history and funding of the UDC, with particular attention to preserving the history surrounding the development of the River Management Plan. Ramie reported that she has been reading Mary Curtis's 1988 thesis "The Aginners and Others: A Case Study of Citizen Protest on the Upper Delaware Scenic

and Recreational River" and found several sections that could be distilled and incorporated into the white paper. Curtis's paper describes the difficult and sometimes highly contentious process through which the federal legislation and River Management Plan were developed, ultimately resulting in a unique system emphasizing intergovernmental cooperation, local control and citizen involvement. Robinson said that this historical context is important because the approximately ten-year period surrounding the RMP's development represents a significant part of the UDC's history. He said the River Management Plan should not be portrayed simply as a federal plan, but as one that developed through substantial grassroots participation, negotiation and local involvement. He expressed concern that firsthand knowledge of that period could be lost as those who participated in the process pass away. Using Mary Curtis's research is particularly helpful because it provides an independent historical source supporting recollections from individuals who were directly involved. Ramie will continue reviewing the thesis and related historical materials for information that can be incorporated or referenced. Members also suggested including references to longer source materials so readers interested in the history can pursue additional information. Richardson said that the original purpose of the white paper was to produce a concise document that could be provided to town boards, new representatives and others, explaining both the UDC's current funding situation and the history behind its unique management structure. At the same time, some members agreed that brevity should not come at the expense of omitting the historical circumstances that explain why the organization and River Management Plan developed as they did.

Richardson reported that he is working to digitize a collection of historical materials from the Upper Delaware CAC era and has noticed that several people who participated in the original process are still living. There was discussion of potentially organizing a future event or roundtable inviting former participants and private citizens to share their recollections. Members supported keeping the idea in mind as another way to preserve firsthand accounts of the UDC's history.

Vanguard Account Access: Ramie said that the request to remove Henry from the UDC's Vanguard account access should come directly from Henry, after which she could provide confirmation that the UDC endorses the request if Vanguard requires additional authorization. Henry reported that he is working on the matter and has set a goal of having the account-access issue resolved by the end of the year.

Investment of UDC Unrestricted Funds: The Committee discussed options for earning a higher return on the UDC's approximately $200,000 in unrestricted Vanguard funds. Robinson said the current Vanguard Money Market Fund is earning approximately 3.7%, while available Certificates of Deposit were approaching 5%.
Robinson made a recommendation to invest $100,000 in a three-year CD at approximately 4.75%, place another $50,000 in a two-year CD, and retain $50,000 in the money market account for liquidity. Members discussed early-withdrawal penalties, the amount of readily available cash the UDC realistically needs, and whether it was advisable to lock funds into a three-year term given changing interest rates. The three-year CD under consideration was non-callable, providing a predictable return for the full term. After discussion, the Committee favored a more conservative approach of investing $100,000 in the three-year CD at approximately 4.75% and leaving the remaining approximately $100,000 in the Vanguard money market account with a motion by Henry, seconded by Breen, to that effect carrying. This would increase interest earnings while still maintaining more than $100,000 in readily available funds, which members felt provided adequate liquidity based on the UDC's past experiences.

Other: Robinson asked on behalf of Shohola Township whether the National Park Service has returned unused budget funds at the end of the fiscal year during the past seven to ten years. He is interested in obtaining that information to determine whether UPDE has had unspent funds available while the UDC has continued to face funding constraints. Members recalled that unused funds had been returned during a previous superintendent's tenure, which had caused concern because the UDC's annual funding remained unchanged. The discussion also recalled that the UDC had previously been encouraged to maintain a list of potential projects that could be funded if money became available near the end of the federal fiscal year. The Committee discussed whether a similar approach could be incorporated into the UDC's annual operating or fiscal plan, with potential projects identified in advance so they would already be eligible if year-end funding became available. The Cooperative Agreement and operating plan requirements could limit the ability to add projects on short notice, making advance planning important. Members also acknowledged that unspent federal funds are not necessarily available locally, since funds can sometimes be redirected elsewhere within the agency. It was recommended that the subject be placed on a future agenda and that additional information be obtained regarding the NPS's history of unused or returned funds.

There was no Public Comment.

Adjournment: A motion by Roeder seconded by Robinson to adjourn the meeting at 8:48 p.m. carried.

Meeting minutes prepared by Stephanie Driscoll, 9/29/2026