

**Upper Delaware Council
OPERATIONS COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES
September 24, 2024**

Committee Members Present: Aaron Robinson, Al Henry, Fred Peckham (Zoom), Larry Richardson, Jeff Dexter, Christine Martin (Zoom), Ginny Dudko, Rebekah Creshkoff (Zoom)

Committee Members Absent: None

Staff: Laurie Ramie, Kerry Engelhardt, Stephanie Driscoll

NPS Partner: Carly Marshall

Guests: Bill Dudko

The UDC's Operations Committee held its monthly meeting on Tuesday, September 24, 2024. Chairperson Dudko called the meeting to order at 7:02 pm.

Approval of the August 27, 2024 Meeting Minutes: A motion by Robinson seconded by Richardson to approve the 8/27 meeting minutes carried.

Executive Director's Monthly Report: Ramie reported that we withdrew \$45,837.13 on 9/20 to comply with the Automated Standard Application for Payments (ASAP.gov) planned temporary shutdown to federal funding recipients on from 9/21-10/1 to close the books for Fiscal Year 2024. This funding will cover the September abstract of bills to date (pending one payroll, associated taxes, and retirement contributions for the pay period ending 9/27), leaving a \$0 balance in the UDC's federal account. Next, we will request the addition of the approved \$75,000 allocation for the Fiscal Year 2025 1st quarter (10/1/24-12/31/24) to the ASAP account after 10/1.

Ramie said she expects to receive a draft proposal for the new NPS-UDC Cooperative Agreement that will cover 1/1/25-4/30/29 for the Council to review by mid-November. The UDC will need to prepare a Five-Year Work Plan and required SF-424 documents to submit to NPS for approval. Kurnath is working on a more streamlined Cooperative Agreement. Richardson said the 5-Year Plan was put together to show what we are supposed to be doing and, if we had the funds, what we could be doing. He fears that if you go with a reduced plan, tasks will be affected. Ramie said we could do that through an appendix, with priorities upfront, instead of a change to the plan itself. The 5-year plan is for the tasks that are achievable with the funding amount of the cooperative agreement. The UDC is saying that these are the things you will do with these funds. You don't want to come to the end of an agreement period having not accomplished what was stated would be accomplished with those funds. Other tasks that cannot be accomplished with that funding amount can be included in the plan, but should be separate. Robinson asked if when doing the new 5-Year Plan would be a good time to bring up the stagnant Federal funding, since this is the agreement that establishes the payment to the UDC? If we agree to the \$300,000 that we've been receiving, then that's all we will get. Is it appropriate to negotiate? Henry agrees, that would be an appropriate time to negotiate. He urges the UDC to send Congressman Cartwright a letter about our funding. He promised that funding would be sought, but we've heard nothing from him. It is an election year and his slogan is "I work for you." G. Dudko added that Senator Oberacker was here and said he would help us, but we haven't heard from him either. Henry said a letter should be sent to all. No other letters have been answered, but if the figures are in writing, and it's an election year, let's see if they can get it done. Richardson said we will need to have a separate meeting or workshop to discuss funding. Ramie said we could wrap that all into the River Management Plan (RMP) refresher session that was previously discussed. We had tabled the RMP refresher conversation until the October full council meeting. Format wise, we could section it off into "the history of the RMP"; "working relationships"; and "the future over the next 5 years". Henry asked when the 5-Year Plan gets submitted? Ramie said it starts on 1/1/25. It needs to be approved by the UDC and sent back to the NPS. We are due to receive the Cooperative Agreement from NPS by mid-November and by the end of December 2024 it needs to be executed and approved. Henry said that doesn't give us much time; as soon as we receive it, we should come up with a workshop. Robinson commented that the visitor statistics are great and that may grab the attention of one of the Congressmen we send a letter to. G.

Dudko said the workshop can be at any time; we don't have to wait to receive the Agreement from the NPS. Ramie said yes, the Cooperative Agreement is a document that we receive to make sure it meets our expectations. The document itself does not need to be in hand to start the 5-Year Plan process development. Robinson said with \$300,000 the UDC can't adequately perform the tasks in our previous 5-Year Plans. Richardson said, five years from now we may be eliminating some of our activities. Robinson said with the three employees the UDC has and personnel costs, the surplus gets less and less each year. The government has had the expectation of added costs from inflation. They know how it affected their budgets; they can't argue against an increase. Henry said we may have to cut substantial conformance reviews from the UDC tasks and the NPS can't take over that task. Robinson said that is one of the primary functions of the UDC. Henry said we are probably only doing 10-20% of the things we need and should be doing. The biggest tasks are the ones that include the towns and townships, but eventually we won't have enough staff to do any of it. Marshall said NPS can contract reviews for participating towns. Henry said, not according to the RMP. Marshall said she has read the plan, and disagrees. That is not the way it was set up. Henry said he disagrees. Marshall said the NPS is not prohibited from doing reviews. The NPS is contracted with the UDC to do the reviews together. G. Dudko asked how the committee wants to get together to discuss the 5-Year Plan? Henry asked if something in October would work? Ramie said we have brought in a facilitator before, and done weighted voting. G. Dudko asked if we would rather do one workshop then a bunch of nights? Maybe it would be better to do it in just one day. Engelhardt asked if it would have to be on a weekend? Many of the council members are retired, so perhaps we could have it on a weekday? Ramie said a survey can be done to find out what members would like to do. Martin asked, wouldn't the Cooperative Agreement be to us by mid-November? Wouldn't we have to wait until then? Ramie said our 5-Year Plan is the UDC's to develop and the Cooperative Agreement is coming in November from NPS. The workshop concept and RMP refresher will be discussed at the October full council meeting.

Ramie will start working on the annual Federal Financial Report (FFR) and Performance Progress Report (PPR) for FY 24 that must each be submitted to NPS by 12/29/24. The UDC just received approval of its FFR for 10/1/21-9/30/22 (Fiscal Year 2022) via GrantSolutions on 9/20.

Ramie said the Vanguard account balance as of 8/31 was \$138,136.92. She said, keep in mind that includes \$3,400 of Upper Delaware Litter Sweep dedicated funding since 8/7.

UDC staff participated in the 9/13 "A Day on the Upper Delaware River" Roundtable Luncheon and Raft Trip, hosted by the Delaware River Basin Commission at the UDC office. UDC staff set up a UDC exhibit at the River Valley Awards on 9/22. A presentation by the UDC was requested for the 2024 Leadership Sullivan class, 11 a.m. at the DVAA office in Narrowsburg on 9/25, hosted by the Sullivan County Chamber of Commerce Foundation; 9/26-27 Engelhardt will attend the 12th Annual Delaware River Watershed Forum at Wind Creek in Bethlehem; on 10/16-17 the first Annual Upper Delaware River Rendezvous, Villa Roma Resort in Callicoon will be held. The UDC is a sponsor, poster session exhibitor, and Ramie is a panelist, with herself, Engelhardt, Driscoll, V. Dudko, B. Dudko registered to attend.

Four news releases were issued in the past month: "UDC Announces Honorees for 36th Annual River Valley Awards", 8/28; "UDC Grants Support Tusten Open Space Plan and Damascus Emergency Brochure", 9/5; "UDC to Host Oct. 3 Upper Delaware Interpretation & Education Program", 9/20; and "River Valley Awards" (2 photos and captions), 9/23. Ramie facilitated a live Radio Catskill interview on 8/29 with Alex Garcia-Maldonado on the UPDE Oral History Project. She was interviewed on 9/3 by the *Sullivan County Democrat* for an article on NPS Upper Delaware tourism statistics. She was then again interviewed by Jason Dole on 9/9 for a recorded WJFF program on the UDC Awards Ceremony and WJFF Community Awards. The *River Reporter* requested information on the Cushetunk Settlement and Northern Snakehead for articles, which we were happy to provide. A short article on the UDC with photos on was provided 9/16 for a new Upper Delaware River Watershed Network electronic newsletter that Friends of the Upper Delaware River are preparing. UDC staff stays up-to-date on social media posts.

An additional \$185 worth of donations from "Big Eddy Narrows" map posters and UDC t-shirts was deposited on 9/23.

New Business

Final Report on 2024 River & Shoreline Clean-up Grants: A handout is included in tonight's packet summarizing how the 2024 River & Shoreline Clean-up Grants turned out. These were approved back in May at a

certain funding level and both applicants ended up underspending at \$1,565.32 less than what was allocated. The Town of Deerpark did everything they planned to do, with the town donating dumping fees this year. They put 2 to 3 employees on the job and cleaned up on after Memorial Day weekend, Fourth of July, and Labor Day weekend. It was interesting that as the year went on, the cost of the cleanups got less expensive. There was probably less litter each time, which is great. The Town of Highland held a one-day cleanup on Sunday 9/8 in conjunction with Kittatinny's annual clean up. A lot of volunteer labor was donated so the cost basically came down to the rental of the dumpster at \$720. The cleanup took place by raft from Minisink Ford to Barryville. Ramie reviewed both documents and both supervisors have signed off on the reimbursement payment requests. This report is just informational as each town has already been paid. It also includes a cumulative tally of the \$51,923.72 that the UDC has disbursed through this program since 2014.

Fiscal Year 2024 Budget Status: Ramie said we are at the point of "pinching pennies" as to not go over the amount we are allocated. Our bookkeeper worked with her to determine that we will have a small balance of \$3,120 surplus. She had sent the Personnel Subcommittee a memo earlier today with the proposed amount each staff member would receive as a performance bonus from that surplus, minus FICA taxes, as per the council's directive. She asked everyone to please get back to her ASAP as the intention is to include that amount with the final paychecks for FY24. A motion by Henry, seconded by Robinson, to fulfill the recommendation sent to the Personnel Subcommittee, carried.

Summary of Pending Bills 9/24/24: Ramie said the abstract included in tonight's packet is as of today. There are blanks on the second page since there is one more payroll to be done, etc. The bookkeeper will need to finalize this on 9/30. A motion by Henry to pay the bills in the normal fashion, seconded by Robinson, carried.

Financial Statement 9/30/24: Included in the packet for review. Ramie said it is more lengthy than normal since it is the end of FY 24.

Other: None.

Old Business

State and Federal Funding Updates: Ramie said she is in the process of setting up a meeting with a representative from American Rivers who Chuck Hoffman had connected her with to discuss UDC funding strategies and advocacy. Hoffman currently lives outside Washington D.C. and has remained interested in UDC issues since he served as the organization's consultant in the 1980s. Once that meeting is confirmed, she will let board members know. Richardson asked if Hoffman would be interested in being the facilitator for the 5-Year Plan workshop? In the past, Buck Moorhead had facilitated but Hoffman was here in the early days when the RMP was being created. G. Dudko said if he's been watching and keeping up with the UDC, he might be interested.

36th Annual River Valley Awards Report: G. Dudko wanted to thank the staff and everyone involved in the banquet this year. She commented that it was a wonderful event, as always. Ramie said she started notifying the award recipients as soon possible after the 8/23 nominations deadline. All of the information for the souvenir booklet needed to be in by 9/10 to get it to the printer by 9/13 which required a quick turnaround of researching and writing. She commented that we have gotten a lot of kudos over this year's banquet. She received a call today from Special Recognition award recipient Ian Pammer's grandfather Al Frangipane who was impressed over how well the banquet was put together and expedited in the presentations it was. He never expected it to be as interesting as he said it was. He thought all the recipients were given their fair credit, while given time to speak themselves afterward.

Ramie thought Keynote Speaker PA Director of Outdoor Recreation Nathan Reigner did a great job. He had no notes and was still able to deliver an engaging speech. Driscoll had videotaped it.

G. Dudko asked how the guest count of 133 this year has compared to other years? Ramie said it is a bit all over the place, based on timing and the recipients. This year with Fort Delaware being associated with two associates receiving awards, they shut down that day and paid for all their staff and volunteers to attend, around 25 people. Past counts from the last 5 years were 94 guests in 2019, 140 in 2021 which included 2020 honorees due to the COVID cancellation, 91 in 2022, and 121 in 2023.

Central House is always excellent to deal with. Going forward, they asked for an RSVP deadline of two weeks in advance. After COVID getting food deliveries and staff scheduling have proven to be more difficult. It will be hard for us to give a number by then since a lot of people don't commit until the last minute, but we will have to cut it off at a certain date and estimate from there. Henry suggested we could look into holding a raffle with a prize as a fundraiser. Ramie said that would require applying for a Games of Chance permit.

E-newsletter and UDC Email Updates: Driscoll showed a mock up "email updates"/monthly newsletter via screenshare. She asked if anyone has anything that should be added? Currently, there are UDC monthly updates, NPS and Partner News updates, a link to the latest newsletter, and a featured photo, and our social media pages listed. Ramie asked if we could add the availability of UDC t-shirts and Big Eddy Maps. Driscoll said yes, that's a great idea. Ramie added that we could put links to the latest minutes on the page as well. Henry said we could send this to the Supervisors. Driscoll said she would like to get the first UDC e-newsletter out in October.

Other: Richardson said that over the years the UDC has sponsored a number of programs, and he remembers sponsoring one at the Tusten Town Hall on ZBA training courses. In NYS you are required to get four hours of training, but to find that training is hard to do. Cohecton pays a small amount to the Planning Board and ZBA members that do get the four hours of training. It would be a service if the UDC could arrange and fund that. If there was someone from the Pace University Land Use Program willing to do it, that could cover NY and PA. Ramie said Pace charges a tuition. Richardson said it would be a good investment to cover the cost. Robinson said he recently attended one in Pike County, PA, and it covered a lot of stuff he already knew. There will be people wanting to attend at all different levels of knowledge. Richardson said maybe it could be a split session? It's something we should talk about more.

There was no Public Comment.

Adjournment: A motion by Richardson seconded by Robinson to adjourn the meeting at 8:03 p.m. carried.