

Upper Delaware Council
OPERATIONS COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES
September 26, 2023

Committee Members Present: Harold Roeder, Dennis Bernitt, Al Henry, Aaron Robinson, Fred Peckham (Zoom), Ginny Dudko, Jeff Dexter
Committee Members Absent: Andy Boyar, Larry Richardson
Staff: Laurie Ramie, Kerry Engelhardt, Stephanie Driscoll
NPS Partner: Lindsey Kurnath, Don Hamilton (Zoom)
Guests: Bill Dudko, Ruby Rayner-Haselkorn- River Reporter

The UDC's Operations Committee held its monthly meeting at the UDC office in Narrowsburg, N.Y. on Tuesday, September 23, 2023. Robinson called the meeting to order at 7:59 pm.

Approval of the August 22, 2023 Meeting Minutes: A motion by Henry seconded by G. Dudko to approve the amended August 22 meeting minutes, carried. Ramie said the amendment was for the Vanguard account balance.

Executive Director's Monthly Report: Ramie reported that September 30th is the end of Fiscal Year 2023 and all of the federal allocation plus \$272 has been spent, with a refund coming of around \$220 from the incompatible expansion mic. We started out with a surplus of \$14,000 for the end of the year and in the last month we've been deducting valid expenses, coming close to the \$300,000 budget. The balance of federal funds needed to be withdrawn by Monday, which on that day at 6pm they closed out the system for the Fiscal Year. The next step is filing annual reports; the FFR (Federal Financial Report) and the PPR (Performance Progress Report) for the Fiscal Year period of Oct. 1 – Sept. 30. The deadline to submit those is January 28, 2024 to the NPS through Grant Solutions. A few building maintenance projects were completed for Fiscal Year 2023, including: pressure washing of the building, carpet cleaning and landscaping. Robinson and Henry had replaced the exterior lights and a new flag was installed.

Ramie said there were 121 guests in attendance at this year's River Valley Awards, which is a great turnout. Being satisfied as we always are with Central House as a venue, we have booked it for next year for Sunday, September 22, 2024.

Five news releases were issued this month. We are very active on our website and social media, not only for our own activities but for other community events.

Engelhardt will be attending the Delaware River Watershed Forum this coming Thursday and Friday (9/28 & 9/29) in Wilmington, DE. There was a deadline of September 8th for any of our voting members and staff to sign up for the Water, Water Everywhere Conference that is on October 24 & 25. We've had 4 sign ups for both in person in Hancock and by Zoom. We also paid for the \$50 co-sponsorship for that event as well. Ramie reminded everyone about the presentation the UDC will be giving in conjunction with the NPS and the National Parks Conservation Association at that conference on Oct. 24 at 2:30pm.

We received an invitation to host a Sullivan County Leadership Class. This is the Sullivan County Chamber of Commerce Foundation that provides adult learners from local organizations and businesses tours around Sullivan County to find out what kind of assets and resources are in the area. They started including the Upper Delaware as part of their curriculum a few years ago and will be here on October 17th

for about an hour and a half. Ramie had reached out to the Delaware Highlands Conservancy and the NPS to co-present during the class. Unfortunately, NPS cannot attend. Packets will be put together with any literature anyone would like to include.

New Business

Draft Letter to NY and PA Governors re: UDC Emergency Funding: A copy of the letter was included in the handout. Ramie worked with solicitor Jason Ohliger to make sure information in the letter was accurate. She provided samples of past correspondence to Governors and various officials from over the years. Ohliger wrote a short and pointed letter to emphasize the Executive Orders and the commitments that they represented to funding the council. He thought we should send high quality images of the Upper Delaware River with the letter, thinking it may catch more attention. Since we plan to send the letter by certified mail, Ramie asked how he wanted to send the photos. He thought we could include framed photos, but Ramie said that would look like a gift and elected officials are not allowed to accept gifts over a certain monetary value. Ramie thinks the strong letter coming from an attorney will speak for itself. A motion by Henry to send the letter to NY and PA Governor offices was seconded by Dexter. Robinson suggested we attach the 1986 letter from Congressmen McDade, Gilman and McHugh. Ramie asked if that would support Federal funding more and Robinson said it does, but it emphasizes the perpetuity of the UDC. It gives the sense of intent to keep the organization going. Ramie said we will be attaching the Executive Orders and Pennsylvania Code as well. Henry modified the motion to include the 1986 letter. The motion carried.

Fiscal Year 2023 Final Expenses: Ramie said we had spent \$300,272 dollars, which will be about \$72 over once we receive the refund for approximately \$220 from the expansion mic return. Henry thanked the staff for having to deal with the craziness of Federal budgeting and the tracking. G. Dudko thanked Kurnath for getting the money released ahead of Fiscal Year 2024 in case of a government shutdown. If there is a government shutdown, we are already funded for which Ramie also thanked Kurnath for.

2023 UDC River & Shoreline Cleanup Grants Payment and Final Report: A handout was included in the packet. Ramie said both towns that we provided grants for had higher costs than what they estimated when they applied on April 21st. We have gone with the theory that if we have it in the budget, we would compensate them for exactly what they spent. We took over this River & Shoreline Cleanup grants when the NPS was not able to fund these types of programs anymore. This is a service that the UDC provides to participating towns and townships. She said in the case of Lumberland, they had kept their same rate of \$1,100 for their contractors since the beginning of this program in 2014 and had raised by \$300 this year, which in her opinion seems fair. In Deerpark's case, when the number was quite a bit off from what they estimated, Ramie asked for an explanation. Highway Superintendent Ed Hughson had said they required a second truck after the Independence Day cleanup and 3-4 town employees at each cleanup, rather than the original 2. The Town of Deerpark provided 30-40 pages of documentation including time records, labor costs for employees and truck and supply fees. Both towns sent photos this year, which Ramie was thankful for. She recommended the council approve a motion to pay the actual costs. The ultimate cost was \$7,040.13. Henry asked if that was figured into the budget. Ramie said yes. A motion by Henry to pay Lumberland and Deerpark the actual costs of their expenses for the River and Shoreline Cleanup Grants, seconded by Roeder, carried.

Fiscal Year 2024 Newsletter Quote: A copy of the letter that was sent to Courier Printing with deadlines for Fiscal Year 2024 was included in the packet. Ramie said the fall/winter issue would be the start of the new contract. Courier Printing handles the printing of 8,500 copies as well as the mailing services. The quote for next year is the exact same cost that we are paying this year. Ramie recommends a resolution to approve the quote at the full council meeting on Oct. 5. Motion by Bernitt, seconded by Henry, carried.

Ramie said she did change the deadline dates of the fall/winter issue, being too close to the Thanksgiving holiday, to November 27th.

Summary of Pending Bills 9/25/2023:

Motion by Henry seconded by Bernitt to approve the bills and pay them in the normal fashion carried.

Financial Statement 9/30/23:

Robinson stated that the financial statement report is offered for individual review. Robinson asked about the interest on the Vanguard account. Ramie pointed him to the included handout.

Other: None.

Old Business

Approval of Guidelines for UDC Tablets: A copy of draft guidelines was included in the packet. Driscoll asked if anything needed to be added or changed. Henry asked how many tablets were ordered and Driscoll said 10. Ramie said we also ordered protective cases and styluses. We were planning to distribute everything at the October 5th meeting since we are waiting for some accessories. Robinson asked if Driscoll was going to assign the log-ins and passwords. She replied she will set all of the tablets up for everyone to be able to sign in with their personal emails. Dexter thinks we should add to the guidelines: not to add any other software. Henry asked to add that the council can make changes to the guidelines at any time. Driscoll agreed to updated the guidelines for the October 5th meeting.

Advocacy for UDC State Funds: Ramie said we have been asked to look into our options for funding. The letter we asked our solicitor to draft was one aspect of that, and we still wanted to explore what else we could do as part of this campaign. There was discussion about putting together a Request for Proposals to send to lobbying firms to research what would be permissible for our type of structure and how to go about it. Ramie isn't sure who she would send that to. She started to look into that, and reached out to the Coalition for the Delaware River Watershed and Friends of the Upper Delaware River (FUDR) who have been successful getting federal and state funding through various means. The advice she has gotten back so far are to rely on non-profit conservation organizations to advocate for us, going through the New York State Association of Towns and the Pennsylvania equivalent, PSATS, and ask them how they do advocacy and if they have a firm they use, and reaching out specific lobbying firms that are for hire. Ramie thought the committee would want to send out the letter written by Ohliger to see what the response was before moving forward to another step. If anyone has any specific ideas, please let her know. Robinson agreed, we should see what the actions are from the letter.

Other: None.

There was no Public Comment.

Adjournment: A motion by Roeder seconded by Henry to adjourn the meeting at 8:30 p.m. carried.