



# Upper Delaware Council

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## UPPER DELAWARE COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES February 4, 2021

The Upper Delaware Council held its monthly meeting on Thursday, February 4, 2021 via Zoom. Chairperson Dexter called the meeting to order at 7:03 p.m. and roll call followed.

In attendance: Town of Delaware- Thomas Dent, Town of Fremont- Jim Greier, Town of Cocheton- Larry Richardson, Town of Tusten- Susan Sullivan, Town of Highland- Andy Boyar, Town of Lumberland- Nadia Rajsz, Town of Deerpark-David Dean, Damascus Township- Jeff Dexter, Berlin Township-Alan Henry, Lackawaxen Township- Doug Case, Shohola Township- Aaron Robinson, Delaware River Basin Commission- Kristen Bowman Kavanagh, State of New York-Bill Rudge, National Park Service- Joseph Salvatore. Staff in attendance: Executive Director-Laurie Ramie, Resources and Land Use Specialist- Shannon Cilento, Secretary- Ashley Hall-Bagdonas. Absent: Westfall Township- Michael Barth, Town of Hancock- Fred Peckham, Commonwealth of Pennsylvania-Tim Dugan. Guests: Ginny Dudko-Town of Deerpark, Roger Saumure- Shohola Township, Evan Padua- Town of Tusten, Cody Hendrix- NPS, Don Hamilton-NPS. Media: Linda Drollinger- River Reporter, Peter Becker- Tri-County Independent.

Ramie said Peckham's fiancé, Cheryl Korotky called and said he is in Intensive Care at Our Lady of Lourdes Hospital in Binghamton. Ramie asked all to keep Peckham in their thoughts. Korotky said she would update staff and said he was in critical but stable condition as of this afternoon.

**Approval of January 7<sup>th</sup> Meeting Minutes:** A motion by Rajsz seconded by Boyar, to approve the January 7<sup>th</sup>, 2021 meeting minutes carried.

**Public Comment on the Agenda:** None.

**Committee Reports:** There were no questions regarding the following meetings. They were: Jan. 19<sup>th</sup> Water Use/Resource Management, Jan. 26<sup>th</sup> Project Review, and Jan. 26<sup>th</sup> Operations. Dexter said the Water Use/Resource Management minutes were emailed out and Hall-Bagdonas relayed she had an abbreviated schedule the last week and was working on finishing up the 1/26 Project Review and Operations minutes.

### Status Reports

**Delaware River Basin Commission:** Kavanagh said the Subcommittee on Climate Change is holding its first Climate Change Forum in partnership with the Partnership for the Delaware Estuaries biennial Science and Environmental Summit. As part of that, the Our Shared Waters Program is going to provide scholarships for 10 High School science teachers. With that scholarship, teachers can attend the Climate Change Forum and also share the sessions with their students. The deadline to apply is 2/15. Kavanagh said she wanted to share that scholarship opportunity for anyone that may want to attend and or use as a resource for their students. She said it's a unique opportunity and there will be a lot of climate science experts, not just from within the Delaware River Basin but from other parts of the country. Their First Quarter Public Meeting is 2/10 the next one will be 3/10. The Water Advisory Committee which Ramie sits on will meet 2/25. There is an opening on the Toxics Advisory Committee for someone in the Agricultural Sector. They also have a few openings on that Advisory Committee in the stakeholder areas of Industry, Fisheries or Environmental organizations. All meetings can be found on the DRBC website: <https://www.state.nj.us/drbc/meetings/upcoming/>. Dexter noted he did not have the hydrologic conditions in his printed handout. Reports may be found at <https://www.state.nj.us/drbc/hydrological/reports/> Hall-Bagdonas

said she would forward the scholarship information regarding the Climate Change Forum to members and provide Dexter with the hydrological conditions. Referencing the Hydrologic Conditions Report Kavanagh said the reservoirs are at or above the median and flow was near normal.

**NYS Dept. of Environmental Conservation:** Rudge said he has nothing to report tonight but is glad to join the group.

**PA Department of Conservation & Natural Resources:** Absent.

**National Park Service-Upper Delaware:** Superintendent Salvatore said one of the biggest things right now is finding a new Facility Manager. He wants to hire someone that's savvy and understands fund sources in Washington D.C. He said they would like one before Spring. He said funding is always an issue. They are an aging Park Unit and people are retiring left and right. When they do, they receive pay-outs which is dipping into the bucket of funding.

Salvatore said he wants to bring up how he likes to do business. He said he is as laidback as can be but at the same time he wants his staff respected and he wants to conduct business in a professional and civil manner. He said recently we had a meeting and he felt like his staff was a little disrespected. Salvatore said he doesn't want to answer for his predecessors or apologize for them. He wants to move forward and do business in his own manner. He wants to do it the best he can with all of our interests as a partnership. He said he doesn't want to get into specifics but if you deal with him you will see that he sits back and listens a lot. Just because decisions were made prior to Salvatore's arrival doesn't mean they will be permanent. Sometimes they will change and sometimes they will be permanent. He won't make rash decisions. He will sit back and listen to what the UDC and his staff has to say.

Hendrix said the Shippensburg University GIS Tool is almost complete. He requested they give a presentation at the 2/23 Project Review meeting. The tool is 95% completed.

Hamilton said this is their funding proposal writing time of year trying to get additional funding for studies they would like to have done here.

Kavanagh asked if Hendrix could give a brief description of what the Shippensburg GIS Tool was? Hendrix said it identifies the boundary lines of the corridor. If we have any complaints that are called in, Park Rangers can see what Town/ship it belongs to. It gives the topography, all river accesses, NPS properties and is an overall great tool for the public. Cilento said she was present when Shippensburg presented their beta test to the UDC about two years ago and asked Hendrix if they were going to have zoning districts as a layer? Hendrix said yes, it has the most up-to-date zoning maps on each town/ship. Cilento suggested doing a Zoom Training for local Planning and Zoning board members.

**UDC Executive Director's Report:** Ramie said Adam Bosch notified us on Sunday that he would need to postpone his planned presentation tonight to provide an "Update on New York City Dam Safety Notifications" after a conflict arose with attending a public hearing tonight elsewhere in watershed. He apologized and told us to re-book it for 3/4 instead.

Ramie said our membership is remaining quite consistent for 2021. The only update we've received from local reorganizational meetings has been the Town of Fremont appointing Pam Reinhardt from the Upper Delaware Chapter of Trout Unlimited as its alternate representative, in place of Sullivan County Legislator George Conklin. As a reminder, we need to receive completed annual Conflict of Interest forms back from every representative and alternate. Please return those to Hall-Bagdonas by email or in the stamped envelope she provided.

Regarding Federal Funding, we submitted our request to the National Park Service on 1/15 to access the \$225,000 balance of our Fiscal Year 2021 funding in the form of a 55-page document of uploaded forms and attachments.

Unfortunately, we continue to experience difficulties with the new federal financial management software system. Administrators and funding recipients don't see the same screens and options, which makes it hard to communicate. Ramie has now provided the same information for the fourth time today and she hopes it was successfully submitted. She said it's frustrating for all of us. The UDC is currently operating on our savings account.

At the 1/19 WU/RM Committee, Ramie reported on the schedule for the Cochection-Damascus Bridge major rehabilitation in response to our request for an update. The contract letting is set for 2/18; DOT expects to award the contract in the first week of April; and construction is likely by the end of May. It will last for two seasons and involve single-lane closures. That caused us to wonder about the status of the Skinners Falls-Milanville Bridge, which has been indefinitely closed since October 16, 2019 after failing an emergency safety inspection. A week later, we received an invitation to join a Project Advisory Committee for the Skinners Falls Bridge. That's a sign of some progress. The invitation specifically states that the two DOTs are seeking input from this committee for a "Planning and Environmental Linkages (PEL) Study to identify potential alternatives that could be evaluated to determine a path forward." The first virtual meeting is being scheduled for later this month. Ramie doesn't know yet who the fellow members are. We asked about the opportunity for additional participation such as from our Chairperson Dexter. The answer back was 'sorry, no', each invited member can designate an alternate but their project consultant says they want to keep it to "a small number to facilitate productive discussions". She added that the DOTs will host a virtual public meeting that will be open to everybody as part of this process. Ramie will be sure to report back.

Cilento and Hall-Bagdonas have scheduled the first organizational meeting for our 2021 Upper Delaware Litter Sweep on Wednesday, 2/17, at 6 p.m. by Zoom. All of the Litter Leaders who have been named so far through our outreach to the 15 river valley municipalities will be invited, as well as all volunteers who are interested in this project. Ramie said we received a pretty good response for Litter Leaders and anyone that would like to fill in the gaps we have are more than welcome to volunteer. A news release for the 2/17 will also be issued by early next week. This date is included on the calendar handout, along with our other meetings, activities, and deadlines for February with a March preview. Cilento said they received an email from the Executive Assistant to the President at SUNY Sullivan because she is interested in rounding up SUNY Sullivan college students to help out with the Litter Sweep.

The Ten Mile River Scout Museum requested our assistance in promoting their upcoming webinar series on river valley topics, so your packets include a copy of their news release which was published in today's *Times Herald-Record*. They start 2/18 with a talk on "Roebing's Delaware Aqueduct and the D&H Canal" by Glenn Pontier, who will also discuss "The Battle of Minisink" on 3/11, followed by Carl Lindsley addressing "Ice Fishing at Ten Mile River" on 3/18. Ten Mile River Scout Museum did also ask UDC if we would be interested in partnering with them for these webinars in the future, if there are topics that would appeal to that same audience of scouts and residents. Ramie said we would be open to that idea saying they have a good network of people from all across the area and that would probably be great for us to get involved with them.

Lastly, our social media following continues to grow. Cilento provided some impressive statistics at last Tuesday's Operations Committee. We encourage you to check out our Facebook page for our first Black History Month post for February. Cilento said it's interesting to highlight some lesser-known stories of Black and African American residents in our river corridor. The first post celebrating Black History highlights professional baseball player George Crowe's time living in Long Eddy. He called the Upper Delaware region home for over 30 years, and enjoyed fishing, hunting, and living off the local land. She read a quote from Crowe: "In these hills, I'm free. . . You've got to have a sense of peace. I get that when I see the sun come over those hills." Cilento said we posted that and a few photos. She thought that was a really cool story and said there are more posts to come with some really neat African American history in the river corridor that doesn't always get told.

Ramie said earlier this week, we offered a link through Facebook to the USGS Delaware River microplastics study report that Don Hamilton had shared with us. He will be reporting on that further at the 2/16 WU/RM Committee and through a follow-up article in our Spring newsletter.

### **Old Business**

**Actionable Items from UDC Five-Year Plan (sample format):** Ramie said we have completed our process for adopting the Five-Year Plan. She said we don't want that document to sit on the proverbial shelf. Staff had the idea

to put together a chart to identify and track the actionable items. The Executive Summary that Buck and Remy Moorhead provided us in the Five-Year Plan had different tasks that were proposed to meet the goals and objectives that we set over the next five-years. Ramie asked members to look at the sample format and provide suggestions. If there aren't any changes Cilento will populate the rest of the information from the Action Items for internal use. Richardson and Sullivan said they thought it was well done. Richardson suggested every six months to update it with the appropriate committees to see how we are progressing. Sullivan suggested when it's time for the six-month review to let the whole council know because she would be interested in hearing what's going on in the different committees not just Project Review on which she serves.

**Other:** None.

### **New Business**

**Town of Highland Zoning Law - Substantial Conformance Recommendation:** A Motion by Richardson seconded by Sullivan to forward the Town of Highland Zoning Law Substantial Conformance Recommendation by Cilento to NPS Superintendent Salvatore carried. Cilento said she wanted to thank the Project Review Committee for their review on 1/26. Her opinion is that the Zoning Law substantially conforms which means the Town of Highland would be back in Substantial Conformance for their Zoning. She said it was a huge effort from Jennifer Claster who worked with the Town of Highland over the past year. Cilento said she has had some really positive conversations with the Town. Boyar said he is relieved that the Town has gotten this resolved and the Town is very pleased. Salvatore said he received a briefing and he was very impressed with the project.

**Draft Resolution 2021-10: Permanent Employee Status:** Ramie said Cilento has completed her six-month probation and said jokingly that we have decided to keep her. A Motion by Henry seconded by Robinson to approve draft Resolution 2021-10 for Permanent Employee Status for Cilento carried.

**Draft Resolution 2021-11: Reaffirming Sexual Harassment Policy for 2021:** A Motion by Henry seconded by Rajsz to approve draft Resolution 2021-11 Reaffirming the Sexual Harassment Policy for 2021 carried. Ramie said on 1/12 we provided a link to a training video that was from the NYC Human Rights Commission. One component is meant to be an interactive discussion. Ramie said this Resolution is reaffirming our policy and lays out that we have a policy on record, a complaint form, and a procedure to follow. Ramie said the order a complaint would go is first to a Supervisor, then the Personnel Subcommittee, then the full Council. Ramie said if you have not watched the video yet, and have some other means through an employer or other organization, that would fully satisfy the requirements as well. All staff have completed the training. Richardson said he thinks we should continue to stress that all members and alternates need to complete this. Dent said he viewed a training video for the Fire Department and would forward that along as certification.

**Draft Letter of Support for Hancock Partners Application:** Ramie said we received a request from the Hancock Partners who are interested in a pretty ambitious improvement project for the Junction Pool River Access in the Village of Hancock. That's the one past the Waste Water Treatment Plant. There's a lack of signage there and it has a few picnic tables and benches but is not too well developed. The Hancock Partners is basically an economic development organization within Hancock. They are going to submit a grant application through the NPS Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program. It's due by 2/22. We have been asked through a letter by their new Economic Development Director, Valerie Senese, to support their grant application. The letter laid out what the project would involve. It includes better signage, a larger parking area, Japanese Knotweed remediation, bank stabilization, green space preservation, a hand boat river launch and a river trail to connect Junction Pool to Fireman's Park. Ramie said we've seen a lot of these come through the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation as administrators of the Delaware River Restoration Grants. It does require a lot of partnerships and in-kind support. Hancock Partners has reached out to the Upper Delaware Scenic Byway (UDSB), Friends of the Upper Delaware River (FUDR) and UDC among others. A Motion by Henry seconded by Richardson to approve the draft Letter of support for Hancock Partners application carried.

**Other:** None.

**Public Comment:** None.

**Adjournment:** A motion by Rajs, seconded by Robinson, to adjourn the meeting at 7:51 p.m. was carried.

*Minutes prepared by Ashley Hall-Bagdonas 2-14-2021*