



# Upper Delaware Council

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## UPPER DELAWARE COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES March 5, 2020

The Upper Delaware Council held its monthly meeting on Thursday, March 5, 2020 at the Council office in Narrowsburg, NY. Chairperson Richardson called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m. and roll call followed.

In attendance: Town of Cohecton- Larry Richardson, Town of Hancock-Fred Peckham, Town of Lumberland- Nadia Rajs, Town of Tusten- Susan Sullivan, Town of Deerpark- David Dean, Town of Fremont- Jim Greier, Damascus Township- Jeff Dexter, Berlin Township- Alan Henry, Lackawaxen Township- Doug Case, Town of Highland- James Gutekunst, Shohola Township- Roger Saumure, State of New York- Bill Rudge, Commonwealth of Pennsylvania- Tim Dugan, National Park Service- Jessica Weinman, Staff in attendance: UDC Executive Director- Laurie Ramie, Secretary- Ashley Hall-Bagdonas. Absent: Westfall Township- Michael Barth, Town of Delaware- Harold G. Roeder, Jr., Delaware River Basin Commission- Steve Tambini. Media: Peter Becker- Tri-County Independent, Linda Drollinger- River Reporter. Guests: Jennifer Claster- NPS, Sharon Davis- National Parks Conservation Association, Jennifer Porter, Brandi Merolla, Dan Paparella- Town of Tusten, Ginny Dudko- Town of Deerpark, Andy Boyar- Town of Highland, Cheryl Korotky.

**Presentation by Jennifer Porter and Brandi Merolla: “The Tusten Community Food Scraps Composter/Digester”:** Town of Tusten Councilwoman Brandi Merolla introduced herself as Chair of the Energy Committee for the last nine years. Last year the Energy Committee was happy to meet with Jennifer Porter. Porter came to them with a proposal to write a grant for a food scrap composter/digester for the NYS DEC and they received \$138,100.00. It’s fully funded and all of the work is going to be volunteer via about seven people. The Energy Committee went to see the Honesdale composter/digester at Wayne Highlands School District. That model is called “the Rocket”. Porter researched and realized “the Rocket” required too many man-hours to operate it and it produces composting mulch. The unit that Porter found was a better fit for the Town is called the HORSE; it’s an acronym for High Solids Organic Waste Recycling System with Electrical output. You’re allowed up to two tons a month of food scrap waste and it produces liquid or flake fertilizer or biogas. Porter is the Vice-President of Gershman, Brickner, and Bratton, a national solid waste management consulting firm. As a sustainable development leader, she has more than 18 years’ experience in governments and private sector sustainability initiatives including the development and evaluation of solid waste management, recycling, and composting programs. Earlier in her career, she was a conservation program coordinator for more than six years with the City of Portland’s Office of Sustainable Development. She is originally from the Scranton area and now she lives in Narrowsburg with her husband Scott, who will also be a key part of the project, and her three children. Porter said her husband has been connected with Cohecton and this County for many years.

The name of the grant is HORSE Microdigester, Model AS25 and Food Rescue Program for the Town of Tusten. Their objectives for the grant were to increase food rescue and food donation for the food insecure; install HORSE Microdigester, Model AD25; increase food waste diversion from businesses and residents, and train the Tusten Energy Committee for Year 2 project maintenance. Porter thanked the UDC for signing a Letter of Support for the project last year. She said this is the first project of this kind in this region and it’s a great opportunity. Part of the grant was to partner with Impact Bioenergy based out of Seattle. They produce a piece of equipment that is like a shipping container. All of the activity of the processing is inside the container and it goes faster, it’s anaerobic. 40% of food in the country is wasted. It either doesn’t get to be eaten or thrown away once it’s used. There are several issues: cost, energy impacts (methane), transportation. The idea with the HORSE is it’s local and keeps the scale down to a point where you think about it as a piece of equipment like a tractor; it’s not a huge piece of



infrastructure. It's an opportunity to take the food waste and create a probiotic plant food and renewable biogas which can be used for heat and power. The idea with the HORSE unit is it's done with the microbes without air; it's the anaerobic digestion process. It allows it to process much quicker which is great for a community like Tusten or a business (brewery, coffee shop, grocery store, etc.). Impact Bioenergy has two units; the HORSE and the larger NAUTILUS. The Town will be at 25 tons a year. You can scale them to make them bigger. In terms of the granting agency, the DEC, the size of the HORSE is not required to have a registration process. The next level would be the permit but they do see the benefit of being in the system. You can go onto the DEC website and see a map of locations where these are operating. DEC is the granting agency and also the permitting agency if required. In terms of economics, there's a lot of savings. It depends on who you are in the system; if you are the restaurant or the Town you might not see the dollars immediately. In the life cycle of how it moves through the system, there's a lot of savings and potential to have economic value. This gives them a chance to take something that would regularly go out of the county to a landfill in the middle of NYS. They will have better use for this material, reduce costs, improve soil, and demonstrate the idea of a circular economy. They have two ways people can help in the Town. They have a group of interested businesses. The HORSE is set up to have the material added to it twice a week. It's not a daily process. Second, they would like a public point of information and allow for people to use it. They would like to have a booth at Narrowsburg Farmers Market which gives them instructions on bringing their material to the Farmers Market. They also have thought of having a way of filling containers with the plant food at the market. Impact Bioenergy has several installations dating back to the last decade; most are West Coast-based. Microsoft has one available on their campus. Porter shared a recent Washington article from 1/28/2020 close to the headquarters of the Impact Bioenergy about the marketing to the island farm community about the use of the plant food. Porter said those conversations have been started with those on the Tusten Energy Committee. If the machine is operating at its full 2 tons a month and 1,000 pounds a week, it will produce 100 gallons of the probiotic plant food per week. She said if they could get one farm partner to do crop testing and partner with Cornell she thinks that would be a huge opportunity for a case study. Porter said it's anything organic, not just food scraps, meat scraps and green waste are allowed. There is a size limit. They don't want to have large shrubs. Maintenance is minimal. Porter said as they are dividing up the project she is dealing with the management side. There is an outreach group, and Porter's husband is working with the Operations. The presentation included a brief question and answer period. You can contact Merolla at [b.merolla@tusten.org](mailto:b.merolla@tusten.org) and Porter at [jporter@gbinc.com](mailto:jporter@gbinc.com). Many answers to your questions can be found at <http://impactbioenergy.com/>. The unit would be located by the Town Highway barn next to the solar array. It will be up and running July 2020. Richardson thanked Porter and Merolla and presented them with Upper Delaware Council lapel pins.

**Approval of February 6<sup>th</sup> Meeting Minutes:** A motion Peckham seconded by Dexter, to approve the February 6<sup>th</sup>, 2020 meeting minutes was carried.

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

**Committee Reports:** Committee reports were provided based on the meeting minutes. They were: Feb. 18<sup>th</sup> Water Use/Resource Management by Boyar, Feb. 25<sup>th</sup> Project Review by Dean and Feb. 25<sup>th</sup> Operations by Richardson.

### Status Reports

**Delaware River Basin Commission:** The Hydrologic Conditions Report from 3/2 was provided in the meeting packet. The reservoirs in NY are at 91.1% capacity.

**NYS Dept. of Environmental Conservation:** Rudge reported that NYS DEC just released a draft revision of their Unit Management Plan for the Beaverkill Campground which is just outside of Livingston Manor. The public comment period is open until 4/15/2020. They are holding a public meeting in Livingston Manor in the Town Hall on 3/24/2020 from 6-8 p.m. You can also learn about the plan on their website: [http://www.dec.ny.gov/docs/permits\\_ej\\_operations\\_pdf/beaverkilldraftump2020.pdf](http://www.dec.ny.gov/docs/permits_ej_operations_pdf/beaverkilldraftump2020.pdf). Rudge said they are also looking forward to presenting the Habitat Management Plan for the Mongaup Valley Wildlife Management Area at the next UDC meeting. Rudge said in the next week look for a press release on a State Trout Management Plan with some interesting proposals. He urges us to pay attention to that because trout fishing is so important. He thinks the most significant proposal is to open the season when it's normally been closed for catch and release. From October through April you would be able to fish but you wouldn't be able to keep it. They are trying to reduce the number of special regulations they have for specific waters if they can to make it easier for the angling public. Peckham said he



thinks the public anglers are their own worst enemies because it gets crowded and they are getting pushed down towards Lordville and Callicoon. He said there are now areas that were never catch and release. He sees it on the West Branch. Richardson said don't take away the kids' chance of catching a trout. Richardson said he noticed last year there was a dramatic decrease in the amount of Purple Loosetrife he sees around. He believes the state introduced biological controls. Rudge said yes, there's a beetle that can control it and they've had great success. It's been a very effective program.

**PA Department of Conservation & Natural Resources:** Dugan said in the Commonwealth of PA it's budget season. The Governor made his proposal recently. Of interest to DCNR was the potential addition of 25 rangers across the Commonwealth. He believes 8 will be to Forestry and 17 will be to State Parks. State Parks have a much higher user ratio with there being 120 State Parks. Coverage per acre for a State Forest Ranger is about 10,000 acres a person. There is an increase of usership in outdoor recreation across the nation as well as in PA's public lands. Having Rangers there for public contact, interpretation, assistance and emergency etc. is important. Also addressed in the budget there are some adjustments and augmentations from the Governor's General Fund to account for timber revenues coming in low and gas royalties coming in under budget. In the budgeting process, they try to forecast what timber values and gas royalty fees will be to augment the budget two years in advance and as the market has changed, as it does. Their timber prices are down. Dugan said their mission is to continue to provide wood products to the market regardless if they are paying a high or low rate. This week their seasonal staff came back as they are heading into their busier work season. Fire season is here and spring is the peak. Overall, looking at the extended forecast temperatures are going to stay moderately warm, and precipitation is about average. They just had their annual refresher training for fire safety today. The Spotted Lanternfly (SLF) quarantine was just extended by the Department of Agriculture and you can find that information online. It does not touch Pike County. It's still at Monroe County but it expanded up towards Wilkes-Barre and out towards Central PA. Richardson said it hasn't been a harsh winter. Are SLF eggs monitored? Dugan said SLF won't be impacted by a northeastern PA climate because their native range is just on the other side of the globe essentially where they have the same climate conditions that we have here. The Hemlock Woolly Adelgid is one that is impacted by severe cold. Last winter and the winter before we had the polar vortexes. When you have a period of weather that stays below 25° for multiple days in a row it does have an impact on Hemlock Woolly Adelgid and probably some other pests. Dugan said they have observed Hemlock vigor improving. There are also a series of biocontrols out there.

Last year Dugan spoke about the State Forest Resource Management Plan; the subset of that is their District Forest Resource Management Plan. It is a guiding document with a shelf life of 7-15 years depending on what changes in their region or across the Commonwealth. The District Forest Resource Management Plan is complete and available for review on their website. Dugan is waiting for their Annual Management Activities Plan to be approved and will forward a copy to Ramie. That shows what they are doing in the Forest District at a local level over the year. Henry asked if Dugan said there was an option to hold off on timber sales until the market rebounds? Dugan said correct, when the market gets depressed or even like last year very wet. Dugan said they have a high standard for their timber sales and the loggers can't get in; they get stuck in the mud. Dugan said they start to give free extensions to the contract because it's mutually beneficial. They don't want them to have to tear up a site and they don't want to get stuck in the mud, etc. When the market drops out a buyer has 18 months to remove that wood. If something happens you do work with the operators because they can't exist and manage their forest without operators. Dugan said their Secretary at the Department level have been working on two fronts with the logging industry with Worker's Compensation Insurance and also training and education to make logging and timber harvesting market more appealing and easier to enter for younger people. Dean asked if the lack of frost on the ground impacts the presence of heavy equipment for skidding logs, etc.? Dugan said yes, he had one sale in their district where they intended to come in after deer season and they had to wait. He drove some of their state forest roads today. Some are ok and others, where there's downslope or steep, were spongy.

**National Park Service-Upper Delaware:** Acting Superintendent Weinman said they are closer to getting their permanent Law Enforcement position announced. The NPS Human Resource Department is starting to slow down with seasonal hiring and will be able to focus on that. Once that is finalized Weinman will inform UDC. NPS will be attending the Skinners Falls Bridge meeting on Sunday. NPS will also be involved with the Upper Delaware Sweep. NPS is now preparing for Canal Days which is happening in April. They are also starting to prepare for their seasonal orientation.



**UDC Executive Director's Report:** Ramie reported that we received access to the balance of our Fiscal Year 2020 federal funding through the NPS Northeast Region contracting officer's execution of the Cooperative Agreement Modification 14 to release it on 2/25. After the funding was credited to our online account two days later, Ramie was able to withdraw \$73,338.20 to reimburse the UDC for its expenses from the end of November through our February bills. That leaves us with a balance of \$189,160.89 for the remaining 7 months of this fiscal year through 9/30.

As an update on our job vacancy, we began re-advertising for the UDC Resources and Land Use Specialist position after finding out on 2/21 that the candidate to whom we had made an offer accepted another job that didn't require re-locating. The new application deadline is 3/16.

Also due by 3/16 are nominations for our 32<sup>nd</sup> Annual Awards Ceremony that will take place on 5/3 at Central House Family Resort in Beach Lake. Ramie provided a flyer in the meeting packet. At next month's meeting, we'll hand out our formal banquet invitation letters that will list this year's slate of honorees. Reservations will be due by 4/24. Our keynote speaker will be PA Rep. Jonathan Fritz.

In addition to planning the Upper Delaware Litter Sweep that is just seven weeks away and having our spring newsletter due to the printer in two weeks, we are also working to finalize the Project Review Workbook update and developing a proposal for the Five-Year Strategic Planning Retreat. The PR Committee got a glimpse at the cover and formatting from Dorene Warner on 2/25 and were pleased by the direction that is taking. After the print version is ready then comes the online version. Then we will have a roll-out to orient everyone in the use of this guide. With regards to the Five-Year Plan, our Operations Committee selected the date of Saturday, 5/30, from 9 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the Damascus Manor Community Center. We appreciate Linda Dexter, the president of that board, graciously offering it to us free of charge. The people invited to that are all the UDC representatives, alternates, as well as their governing bodies, the NPS, PA, NY, and the DRBC. We are currently exploring facilitator options. In both cases, we've been offered assistance from the NPS and National Parks Conservation Association (NPCA) for their experience with planning, logistics, and funding such projects. Ramie, Weinman, and Claster met earlier today with Sharon Davis and Halle Van der Gaag from NPCA to share updates.

Ramie provided two handouts regarding two Upper Delaware bridges. A meeting called by the NYS DOT for local officials and emergency response agencies took place yesterday to discuss next year's major rehabilitation of the Cohecton-Damascus Bridge. Ramie and Dexter attended that meeting. It's a precursor to a public open house that DOT will hold. The main question at this meeting was whether there will be an off-site detour, meaning the bridge would be entirely closed during the time of construction because a new deck is being installed. The other option is staged construction. If they do staged construction with one lane open, it's about 6-7 months of construction and closing it would be about 2-2 ½ months. They received feedback from the emergency community that a 22-mile detour could be life-threatening in an emergency. The people in attendance took a poll and preferred the option of the staged construction because we have the added complications of the Skinners Falls Bridge not being available to people as well. Richardson has arranged to have NYS Senator Jen Metzger visit the Skinners Falls-Milanville Bridge on 3/8 to learn about the impacts of the indefinite closure on the river valley community. The second handout was the final Skinners Falls Bridge Joint Position Statement of which we will provide a copy to the senator.

Ramie said we are very appreciative of our team of PA legislators for facilitating our Commonwealth grant for the UDC and its member Townships. There was also an influx of funding coming into Wayne and Pike Counties through Local Share Account grants that Ramie wanted to highlight from a *Tri-County Independent* 1/25/2020 article. The revitalization of the Hankins Pond Dam which had been the subject of UDC award to the Wayne County Commissioners last year will receive \$76,500 to turn that Mount Pleasant Township property into a recreational, historical site now that the county owns it. Shohola Township is getting \$50,000 to buy two emergency generators and Westfall Township will receive \$190,625 to build a 5,000 sq. ft. maintenance garage among other recipients including a Downtown Honesdale Revitalization Plan and a Wayne-Pike Workforce Alliance regional branding program. This funding is generated through gaming revenue collected from the Mount Airy Casino.

Lastly, looking at the March calendar Congressman Cartwright sent us a notice about the Northeast PA Funding Webinar that the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation will hold on 3/11. Ramie forwarded that information to our



PA townships and representatives; if anyone else would like that information please ask Ramie. Next month, we have a presentation by NYS DEC Biologist Kevin Clarke on the Habitat Management Plan for the Mongaup Valley Wildlife Management Area. The WU/RM Committee renewed its request to Adam Bosch for an NYC DEP update on the Cannonsville Emergency Notifications System Improvements on 5/7; Ramie is waiting to hear back. We've received copies of "Threats to the Forest: Insects, Plants and Diseases" by the Northern Tier Hardwood Association and PA Dept. of Agriculture's Hardwoods Development Council for which we've been offered a presentation that Hall-Bagdonas could arrange. Another potential presentation is by the Community Preservation Coordinator for the Eastern Region of the PA Historical and Museum Commission as suggested by Cluster.

### Old Business

**Upper Delaware Sweep Update:** Paparella reported that we had our planning sessions yesterday. He wants to get a press release out next week to get the details of the event more concise. A deadline will be set for groups that are interested in organizing their own local litter sweeps to sign up and give us an idea of how many volunteers they may have by the end of the month. Via the questionnaire he sent out, Facebook, and verbal responses we are at a little over 300 people that have said they are interested in participating. For sponsors he has secured donations from National Parks Conservation Association (NPCA), Upper Delaware Scenic Byway (UDSB), Barryville Chamber of Commerce, and others have shown interest. Paparella will provide them with a list of expenses. For any organization interested in tabling at the closing event at the Narrowsburg Union on 4/25; the idea is for it to be a big sustainability fair. NPCA will be there. Paparella asked the board to share the press releases with their Town/ships. If members or alternates know of organizations in their Town/ships that are doing a litter sweep please have them reach out to Paparella so he can coordinate: [paparelladan15@gmail.com](mailto:paparelladan15@gmail.com). Richardson said he was at the planning session yesterday and NYS DOT brought up the issue that if you are going to pick up litter along an NYS highway you need to have a permit in place. One of the requirements of that contract is you have to have some entity with insurance. We found out today that UDC's insurance could cover that event. All we have to do is provide a Certificate of Insurance along with the permit application to NYS DOT. A Motion for UDC to provide a Certificate of Insurance by Case seconded by Rajsiz carried. Paparella thanked everyone that attended the March 4<sup>th</sup> planning sessions.

**PA DCED Grant Update:** Ramie provided a press release in the meeting packet that was sent out last night to make the formal announcement that DCED grant was approved. The press release gives an overview of which projects will be pursued for the \$100,000. Ramie said we are tremendously grateful to Representative Fritz as our Legislative Sponsor with tremendous support from Representative Mike Peifer and PA Senator Lisa Baker. Ramie said we now have the fiscal responsibility of administering the grant. It is done through an online process. Ramie set up a separate bank account. Once the enrollment program is fully set up then the \$100,000 will be deposited into the DCED bank account and Ramie can start to disburse the funds. As mentioned at previous meetings there is also an audit of this project. The contract period starts retroactively to 7/1 to coincide with the start of PA's fiscal year through the end of 2021.

**Other:** None.

### New Business

**Motion to Authorize Opening Bank Accounts for PA Grant and Litter Cleanup Project:** Richardson read the proposal. Motion by Rajsiz seconded by Gutekunst to Authorize UDC Executive Director Ramie to open two separate and temporary checking accounts at Jeff Bank as follows: "PA DCED Contract #C000073340" and "Upper Delaware Litter Cleanup", and to approve Executive Director Ramie as the signatory for all disbursements and UDC Secretary-Treasurer Al Henry as the signatory on the Jeff Bank corporate resolutions for these accounts carried with 13 votes.

**Draft Letter to NPS re: Substantial Conformance Recommendation for Highland River Access Class II Significant Project:** A handout was provided in the meeting packet and also sent out in advance. A Motion by Rajsiz seconded by Sullivan to approve the draft letter to NPS carried with one abstention by Gutekunst.

**2/19/2020 Draft Position Paper on Utility-Scale Solar Energy Systems:** Richardson said this was agreed to in the Project Review Committee and sent here for action by the full board. A Motion by Henry seconded by Dexter to

approve the 2/19/2020 Draft Position Paper of Utility-Scale Solar Energy Systems carried with abstentions by Gutekunst and Peckham. Ramie said Roeder was unable to attend but did relay that the Town of Delaware voted “yes” on this issue.

**Other:** Ramie said today we received a Letter of Concurrence to the Letter of Interpretation UDC submitted as our recommendation to the NPS. This deals with the three other forms of Renewable Energy we’ve been debating; utility-scale wind, geothermal, and hydropower. Richardson said it’s been a long time coming and he thinks we can be pleased as a group that we’ve made these steps. Ramie said to her knowledge, this is our first Letter of Interpretation since the 1986 Plan was adopted.

**Public Comment:** Boyar said he heard a comment denigrating the activities of anglers. He said we are blessed to have a world-class fishery in this river and we are blessed to be custodians of the Upper Delaware Wild and Scenic Recreational River which includes the recreation of fishing. In his opinion, fishing has positive impacts on this entire corridor. It generates money in lodging, sporting retail, and restaurants and bars. It’s a multimillion-dollar economic engine and talking it down generates zero. Boyar said, “I hope we don’t forget that our mission is to optimize the resource that is shown on the river.”

Paparella said fishing is a huge draw for locals and visitors alike. Paparella has a concern with extending the trout fishing season. He wonders if that will increase pressure on the population to the point that it ends up hurting it. Rudge said just to be clear, the extension that they are proposing is catch and release. Paparella worries even though it’s catch and release many people don’t know how to handle a fish. Rudge said to Paparella his perspective is good and he’s not discounting that. He said that Paparella should comment when the Draft Plan comes out. Rudge said they have held public meetings on this. One in Newburgh covered most of this region. They will value written comments just as much as any given at a public meeting.

Dean asked Rudge if there have been any studies on catch and release mortality rate. Rudge said yes, there was an extensive study in other parts of the country. Rudge said the consensus that their Biologist came to was there was no significant impact on the population. He said we do have some waters that are catch and release in the summer and they’ve had success with those. As you can imagine the chances of a fish surviving on a catch and release river in the winter when released are much greater. Dean said he thinks that anyone that fishes enjoys it, has respect for their corridor, and understands that there is a right way and wrong way to do this. He thinks most people that practice this are cognizant of that. Rudge said years ago it was not uncommon for people to catch 50-100 trout. We’ve since developed regulations to prohibit that and there is a creel limit. They found in recent years it’s flipped; the average fisherman doesn’t keep any of the fish they catch. They found their creel limits are not being affective because most people never fill them.

**Adjournment:** A motion by Rajs, seconded by Greier, to adjourn the meeting at 9:00 p.m. was carried.

*Minutes prepared by Ashley Hall-Bagdonas 3-12-2020*