



# Upper Delaware Council

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## UPPER DELAWARE COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES July 1, 2021

The Upper Delaware Council held its monthly meeting on Thursday, July 1, 2021 at the Council office in Narrowsburg, NY. Chairperson Dexter called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. and roll call followed.

In attendance: Town of Hancock- Fred Peckham (Zoom), Town of Fremont- Jim Greier, Town of Delaware- Thomas Dent, Town of Cohecton- Larry Richardson, Town of Tusten- Susan Sullivan, Town of Highland- Andy Boyar, Town of Lumberland- Nadia Rajs, Town of Deerpark- David Dean, Damascus Township- Jeff Dexter, Berlin Township- Alan Henry, Shohola Township- Aaron Robinson, Westfall Township- Michael Barth, Delaware River Basin Commission- Kristen Bowman Kavanagh (Zoom), State of New York- Bill Rudge (Zoom), National Park Service- Superintendent- Joe Salvatore. Staff in attendance: Executive Director- Laurie Ramie, Resources and Land Use Specialist- Shannon Cilento, Secretary- Ashley Hall-Bagdonas. Absent: Lackawaxen Township- Doug Case, Commonwealth of Pennsylvania- Tim Dugan. Guests: Lorne D. Green- Sullivan County Division of Information Technology Services, Sullivan County Legislator Michael Brooks, Cody Hendrix- NPS Community & Land Use Planner, Ginny Dudko- Town of Deerpark Alternate, Evan Padua- Town of Tusten Alternate. Media: Liam Mayo- River Reporter, Peter Becker- Tri-County Independent (Zoom), Spectrum News (Zoom).

**“Sullivan County’s Wireless Broadband Initiative” by Commissioner and Chief Information Officer for the Sullivan County Division of Information Technology Services Lorne D. Green and Sullivan County Legislator Michael Brooks:** Michael Brooks thanked UDC for inviting them to make this presentation. Brooks is the current Vice-Chairman of the Sullivan County Legislature and a Legislator for District 3, which encompasses the Town of Rockland and the Town of Neversink. They are very excited about this project, especially with COVID highlighting the need for broadband while working from home, in education, real estate, and healthcare. He feels everybody has either experienced this firsthand or knows someone that doesn’t have access to high-speed wireless. Green went to the prior legislature about this prospect to provide wireless broadband to the county, saying Sullivan County is in an enviable position with a lot of county owned towers already in place that broadcast a wireless high speed broadband signal to which people could subscribe to. When they built the the new jail they needed to plan for communications so that if ground based fiber went away for any reason, such as remnants of a hurricane, tornado, or ice storm, they created a point-to-point wireless solution between the government center, the public safety tower at the jail site and the data center at the airport. That got Green lamenting about the fact that he wishes he could do point-to-point to five other communication locations in the Village of Monticello. Point-to-point wasn’t needed anymore; it was an LTE technology similar to cellphone service. If you mount it on a tower, you can broadcast wireless signals and connect to that. For the County’s data needs, you just need a receiver. Once installed you can sell the excess bandwidth to subscribers. It was decided they would do the Monticello tower as a pilot project. When the current legislature came in, expanding it from the Monticello tower to all the county’s public safety towers was born. The project would set up a wireless broadband network across the county, letting individual customers subscribe at rates at or below the market average. Phase 1 would place broadband equipment in 10 pre-existing towers used by Sullivan County for public safety purposes, as well as on two additional towers. This phase would bring broadband to around 65 percent of the county, covering both commercial and residential users. Phase 2 would look to reach between 95 and 100 percent of the county, placing smaller broadband antennae in locations of low coverage where other carriers may not be providing service. The receivers would be mounted at residential locations at heights of around 25 feet; the connection would achieve speeds of between 200 and 400 mbps. Green said it’s a three- to five-year project to get everything done.

Brooks said they have applied for grant funding and set up a Local Development Corporation for the Sullivan County Wireless Broadband Project to market it. He said it's been a slow process with COVID happening last year and the county's share coming out of it. They are looking to sell service first off the tower on the new jail in Monticello. There is no date yet because they are still waiting on securing that funding. As they build out the NYS Rt. 97 corridor, it will benefit the PA side of the river too. The build-out will cost just under \$3 million. There will be no cost to taxpayers though, with intentions for subscriptions to subsidize it fully. A question and answer session followed the presentation.

**Approval of June 3<sup>rd</sup> Meeting Minutes:** A motion by Rajsz seconded by Robinson, to approve the June 3<sup>rd</sup>, 2021 meeting minutes carried.

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

**Committee Reports:** There were no questions regarding the following meetings. They were: June 15<sup>th</sup> Water Use/Resource Management and June 22<sup>nd</sup> Operations. The June 22<sup>nd</sup> Project Review meeting minutes will be available shortly.

### Status Reports

**Delaware River Basin Commission:** Bowman Kavanagh shared that their Third Quarter Public Hearing is on 8/11. The Climate Change Advisory Committee Meeting is on 8/3. The Hydrologic Conditions Report was provided in the meeting packet. There have been a few thermal releases made from the NY reservoirs from the last week or two given the heat.

Bowman Kavanagh said DRBC generally does biomonitoring every two years but were unable to in 2019 because of budget issues. They will be doing biomonitoring this year doing sampling in the Upper Delaware stretch of the river. In that region they have 15 sites located between the Water Gap and Hancock. They will be monitoring for aquatic insects, algae, water chemistry and water habitat quality.

**NYS Dept. of Environmental Conservation:** Rudge said they are making progress with the Mongaup Access improvements. They hope to start work in late July. The project will be tackled in two phases. Phase I is working on reconfiguring the existing parking lot. He thinks they can substantially increase the ability to accommodate more cars by making improvements and changes to the existing lot. Phase II would be to expand the footprint of the lot to accommodate additional cars. The reason why it's a two-phase project is because the second phase requires some environmental review. There are some threatened species that may use some of that land for habitat. Some cultural resources could also be present that they need to be sensitive to. He hopes it would only take a few weeks to complete Phase I and mid to late fall they will tackle the second phase. Rajsz said that site is still packed at mid to late fall. If DEC is onsite and it takes several days, where does the overflow of parking go? Rudge said they've done it in segmented pieces where they limit the amount of space they take up and continue to supply parking. They will be working through the week rather than on weekends.

Rudge said progress is slow on the Barnes Landfill. He would like to give credit to Sullivan County for expressing a willingness to help resolve the issues to better control any leachate that might leave the site and DEC is working with Sullivan County to do that. Rudge said he can't go any further at this time other than to say they are actively working with the County to access the site.

Henry thanked Rudge for the new Narrowsburg Access sign. Rudge said he wasn't aware the sign had been installed by field staff and was happy to hear that news.

**PA Department of Conservation & Natural Resources:** Absent. Ramie said Dugan did give staff an update that the most significant accomplishment is the state budget passed this week for the new fiscal year. There were no noticeable large budget cuts but many departments are in cost-to-carry mode. There were some increases to education and social programs and deposits into a "Rainy Day Fund".

**National Park Service-Upper Delaware:** Salvatore passed out the NPS Work Plan. He asked members to review it and if anyone had questions to provide them to Ramie. He said the biggest thing he wants to address is safety on the river. Just in the corridor we have had four drownings in the last two weeks. He said at the NPS they are doing everything to prevent those. They've seen a trend as these drownings continue of 18–30-year-old males that think they are invincible. A lot of people may swim in a pool or a lake but that's not the same as this river. Salvatore just signed off on a press release today to remind everyone of the holiday weekend coming up and safety. He said often times when they get the toxicology reports back, they find that alcohol was involved. He said the safety of his staff is most important. He has four full-time law enforcement rangers and one part-timer. He tells the Interpretation staff that they can interpret water safety and water recreation but do not engage the visitor. Salvatore said there was an assault at the park unit this week at Mongaup. Someone put their hands on one of the NPS seasonal staff. Salvatore has been doing a lot of research on how to keep staff safe. A lot of the law enforcement rangers have been involved in the search-and-rescue portion and have helped recover some of the bodies and he's concerned about their stress levels. Salvatore said he's been in Afghanistan and Iraq and it never gets easier seeing a dead body. He's bringing in folks for stress management. On 6/29 at around 5:30 p.m. family members called 911 and reported a member in their group had gone under the water and did not resurface. Individuals were camping at Kittatinny Campground and were just wading along the river. Another couple of guys were out in the river and took their life jackets off to see if they could touch the bottom of the river. Two went down and only one came up. That was a 24-year-old Rutgers student lost. Three of the drownings weren't wearing a life jacket, one was and it wasn't properly fitted. Rajsz said these are not local people and they don't understand the gravity of that river. It's a beautiful river but they don't understand there are variable depths, whirlpools, slippery rocks, and you can get hung up on the bottom. Rajsz said the incident that happened on the PA side a 16-year-old swam across the river to get cellphone service and flag down a car. She said this is a tremendous impact on local EMS. Rajsz said we don't want to deter anyone coming and visiting the river but we want to impress upon them the severity of the river and that this river is no joke. Salvatore said they are working on their messaging and continuing to get their messaging out. Rajsz said it was mentioned at a Town meeting that maybe we need panels that disclose how many people died on the Upper Delaware River so it's in their face. Salvatore said they do that at Delaware Water Gap. Salvatore has told his staff to tell river users how many deaths have happened on the river and to wear a life jacket. He said if he has to use a scare tactic to save a life that's what he will do. Barth said a lot of the issue is peer pressure and said maybe NPS can work that into their messaging. Salvatore said he's also trying to build a message around "liquid courage", meaning alcohol and the river. Robinson proposed a simple message like "The probability of losing your life while wearing a life jacket is 0. The probability of losing your life without a life jacket is x." Sullivan said in the past radio stations had public service announcements (PSA) and now the platform is the internet. She suggested having someone doing an online PSA with which that demographic could connect. Henry said the liveries are supposed to do a safety talk. Salvatore said the liveries are getting even more critical with their messaging. He said a lot of this is happening in their backyards and swim beaches. Richardson said the Delaware River is not a pool, pond or lake. The subsurface dynamics of the river can be a killer. Dudko said you always hear don't drink and drive but you don't really hear don't drive and boat. Salvatore said he is also looking to put up sirens and noise lights at the kiosks for people that may get aggressive with staff. He said if people hear a loud noise, they will realize people are watching them and may stop. Salvatore said even with their partners at the National Canoe Safety Patrol (NCSP), they don't have the numbers to patrol the river.

They hired Ranger Kevin Reish's replacement. Reish had a nice write-up in the *Pocono Record*. Salvatore said he would like to bring new Rangers in sometime soon to meet the UDC. Today was Bonnie Sheard's last day and in a week Sheard's replacement will be coming in from Steamtown NPS to do permitting.

Salvatore said he received approval from Washington to sign off on the lease from Ten Mile River (TMR) Boy Scouts Camp. Boy Scouts of America (BSA) said they wanted to edit the lease. They wanted to make sure NPS continues to allow hunting. Salvatore told them 1 ½ months ago edit it with track changes and send it back to him. He said TMR is on his radar and NPS does want a presence at TMR. Visitors want NPS there, they want porta johns. It's a great place to come off the river and take a break. He was over there today and it's getting a little messy. He would like to send staff over to clean it up but he does not feel comfortable if he doesn't have a signed agreement. Robinson said he has a local BSA contact and he would give Salvatore his information. Sullivan said the Tusten Mountain Trail is the only trail on the property that is open to the public. That was agreed to by the BSA, the Town of Tusten and NPS. She doesn't know if that's in writing or ever codified. She said there's not a lot of

hiking otherwise available. Salvatore said he was reviewing the agreement the other day and didn't see that. Salvatore said he's going to keep pushing to get a presence over there.

Boyar said regarding the drownings, we have two good press releases in our packets from NPS and Sullivan County that really explain what's going on. He said unfortunately the message does not get out very well because he has not heard it on the radio. He's seen a few stories in the newspapers. He said he bets if you plotted these drownings, it's almost always when there's a heat event going on. He feels that the liveries giving the talks before river users go out on the water has really helped. He asked what happens with our campgrounds? There are thousands of people in the Town of Highland at campgrounds. He said they aren't reading the *River Reporter* or the *Sullivan County Democrat*. Boyar said they do have frontage on the river and said can we do something more? He suggested making sure press releases go to the liveries so they may be able to post them. He said we need to take the next step. Sullivan asked UDC staff to brainstorm ideas for river safety awareness. Padua said it would be beneficial if NCSP could help train the liveries and their staff how to put on life jackets. Salvatore said NCSP give trainings a couple weekends a year and NPS is invited. He's not sure if the liveries are invited.

**UDC Executive Director's Report:** Ramie included the Sullivan County Legislature's press release in the meeting packets about the recent Upper Delaware drownings. Ramie was speaking with Communications Director Dan Hust today who said that press release has now reached 55,373 people and has had 656 shares which is a record for 2021 distribution of publicity. Hust is setting up an interview with NBC Channel 4 with Jeff and Kaitlin Haas from the Town of Highland so they can elaborate on what they said on the press release. UDC was contacted by Spectrum News to also do an interview tomorrow at 10:30 a.m. and they would like the NPS involved as well. Salvatore said he would participate with Ramie.

Included in the meeting packets are flyers associated with our two major annual events, both of which involve July 23<sup>rd</sup> deadlines. The first is seeking reservations for the 33<sup>rd</sup> Annual Family Raft Trip that will be happening on Sunday, 8/1, with registration at Kittatinny Canoes' Matamoras Base in Westfall Township then shuttles up to the Staircase Access in the Town of Lumberland to float back down the river. The second is seeking public nominations for our 33<sup>rd</sup> Annual River Valley Awards. The banquet, which normally takes place in late April, was postponed to Sunday, 9/12, at Central House Family Resort in Beach Lake. We have confirmation of our keynote speaker, NYS Senator Mike Martucci, and will be issuing a news release about that along with announcing the slate of honorees. Reservations for the banquet will be due by 9/3. Your ideas for all these potential award categories are welcome.

Cilento and Ramie participated in a 6/24 call about a new initiative through the William Penn Foundation to establish up to nine Delaware River Climate Corps programs throughout the river basin. The call was with two representatives from the national association based in Washington DC known as The Corps Network who reached out to the UDC to ask whether we felt there would be community interest in this, and to talk about potential projects and management entities. This Climate Corps would employ young adults to complete environmental service projects that support community and ecosystem resilience while gaining career development skills. Participants are generally ages 18-25 and 135 corps programs have been operational across the U.S. since 1986. They're exploring possibilities now and, if it's feasible, programs could get underway in 2022. We were encouraging and shared resources for their follow-ups, such as NASA's Earth to Sky Climate Conference program here that Cilento has been participating in and the Building Resiliency climate change report produced by the Common Waters Partnership and Pinchot Institute. We will report further on that as we hear more.

This morning, the curator and archivist for the Ten Mile River Scout Museum, David Malatzky, asked Ramie to share with UDC that their new exhibit on the "Geology of the Ten Mile River Scout Camps" is opening on 7/13. It includes an edited version of the UDC presentation by James Leone from the NYS Museum, samples of the rock and sediment features that were found throughout their 12,000 acres, a series of maps, and interpretation of the data which is relevant to the entire region. The museum is located at 1481 Crystal Lake Road in Tusten and will be open daily through the 3<sup>rd</sup> week of August. Their website at [www.tmrsmuseum.org](http://www.tmrsmuseum.org) also offers options for anyone to schedule a visit or take a virtual tour. Call (845) 252-2063 as another option. Malatzky requested our permission to post that 23-minute video on the museum's social media pages and said that the UDC is acknowledged in the exhibit. Ramie will include this information in our summer newsletter.

The 7/28 deadline for that newsletter is one item you'll find on the calendar handout. As a reminder to our three committees, we've asked members to review the lists of Five-Year Plan tasks by one week prior to WU/RM, PR and Ops and provide any comments. In addition to the specific dates listed for meetings, activities, and deadlines, we are observing this month as Plastic Free July, for which Cilento and Hall-Bagdonas contributed to a social media campaign.

Lastly, the staff would like to express appreciation to Robinson for taking on and winning our battle against slow Internet speed and service disruptions here. He knew who to get on the case at Frontier, researched the problem, purchased new equipment at his own cost, installed wiring through the attic, and reestablished our network connections. The improvement has been miraculous.

### **Old Business**

**NPS 6/24 Determination: Town of Tusten Special Use Permit (Steven Miss):** Dexter said this is the standard letter sent over from NPS Regional with an approval for a concurrence on our substantial conformance recommendation.

**Skidders Falls-Milanville Bridge Public Survey Results:** Ramie thought members would find the results interesting. It seems pretty overwhelming that people were in favor of a historic rehabilitation of the Skidders Falls-Milanville Bridge which has been UDC's consistent position as well as many of UDC's partners. She said she hopes it makes a difference to those who are working on the Transportation and Purpose document. Early August should be the next meeting of the Project Advisory Committee. The timeline is somewhat unknown for when a final determination will be made on the bridge but Ramie will keep advocating for UDC's position and will bring back updates to the committee.

**Other:** None.

### **New Business**

**Vote on UDC Long-Term Fiscal Sustainability Plan Proposals:** Ramie provided a two-page of bids received for development of our Fiscal Sustainability Plan. It's a bit of a tight timeframe to be completed by 12/1 because we are using part of our PA DCED grant funding which expires at the end of the year. A Motion by Henry seconded by Robinson to accept Ramie's recommendation of hiring consultant Crane Associates, Inc. Michael D. Crane, AICP at \$17,930 (includes \$1,980 for Economic Analysis via Option 2 Accuracy Test on 1985 Study) carried.

**Draft Support Letter for Callicoon Riverside Park CFA Grant Application:** A Motion by Henry seconded by Rajs to approve the draft Support Letter for Callicoon Riverside Park CFA Grant Application carried.

**Draft Letter to National Weather Service re: Lordville Gage Additions:** A Motion by Henry seconded by Rajs to approve the draft letter to National Weather Service re: Lordville Gage Additions carried.

**Letter to NPS: UDC2021-007 Narrowsburg Union Special Use Permit, Town of Tusten:** A Motion by Henry seconded by Rajs to approve Letter to NPS: UDC2021-007 Narrowsburg Union Special Use Permit, Town of Tusten carried.

**Letter to NPS: UDC2021-008 Great Pine LLC Special Use Permit, Town of Tusten:** A Motion by Henry seconded by Rajs to approve Letter to NPS: UDC2021-008 Great Pine LLC Special Use Permit, Town of Tusten carried.

**Other:** None.

**Public Comment:** None.

**Executive Session (Personnel):** A motion by Dexter seconded by Rajs to go into executive session at 8:41 p.m. to discuss personnel matters was carried. A motion by Richardson seconded by Henry to come out of executive session

at 8:57 p.m. was carried. A Motion by Henry seconded by Boyar to approve a salary increase for Hall-Bagdonas effective October 1, 2021 carried.

A Motion by Henry seconded by Robinson to approve Cilento working for Sustainable Energy Education & Development Support (SEEDS) as long as it doesn't interfere with this job carried.

A Motion by Henry seconded by Rajsz to allow staff to get two hours paid time on 7/2 as per an Early Release authorization by NPS for Independence Day carried with one opposition.

**Adjournment:** A motion by Boyar, seconded by Rajsz, to adjourn the meeting at 9:01 p.m. was carried.

*Minutes prepared by Ashley Hall-Bagdonas 7-15-2021*