

## **UPPER DELAWARE COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES**

### **July 7, 2016**

The Upper Delaware Council held its monthly meeting on Thursday, July 7, 2016 at the Council office in Narrowsburg, NY. Chairperson Fred Peckham called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. The Pledge of Allegiance and roll call followed.

In attendance: Town of Hancock-Fred Peckham, Town of Fremont-Jim Greier, Town of Cohecton-Larry Richardson, Town of Tusten- Susan Sullivan, Town of Highland-Jeff Haas, Town of Lumberland-Leigh Sherman, Town of Deerpark-David Dean, Damascus Township-Jeffrey Dexter, Berlin Township-Alan Henry, Lackawaxen Township-Judy Kuhn Conklin, Shohola Township-Aaron Robinson, Westfall Township-Mike Barth, State of New York-Bill Rudge, National Park Service-Carla Hahn. Staff in attendance: Executive Director-Laurie Ramie, Resource Specialist-Pete Golod. Also in attendance: Virginia Dudko, Deerpark alternate, Katt Judd, Hancock alternate, Andy Boyar, Highland alternate. Absent: Town of Delaware, Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, Delaware River Basin Commission. Media: Dave Hulse, Peter Becker. Guests: Heather Jacksy, Freda Eisenberg, Eugene Wolff.

**Presentation by Heather Jacksy, Associate Planner for Sullivan County Division of Planning and Environmental Management: Local Waterfront Revitalization Plan for the Upper Delaware River Corridor:** Peckham introduced Jacksy who had prepared a PowerPoint to show to those in attendance. Jacksy noted that the plan has been put together over the course of five years. Jacksy explained that a Local Waterfront Revitalization Program consists of a planning document prepared by a community, and the program established to implement the plan. This was funded by the NYS Department of State. She added that while they tried to look at the river corridor as a whole, they really had to focus on the New York side. The Plan that's been developed was designed to sew together plans and on-going work in the Upper Delaware River Region and "take a picture" of what's going on in the area. Jacksy noted that there are a lot of groups and individuals conducting work in the region. Jacksy spoke of the public outreach conducted during the development of this Plan. She noted that over the course of the five years, a lot of coordination began to happen. The critical issues to come out of the research and public outreach include: Hamlet and Main Street Revitalization; Preservation of natural resources; Balancing property rights, economic development and preservation; and Finding the best way to brag about what we have to offer. Jacksy stated that the balancing of interests was important to many of the people that were spoken to. Jacksy referred to the page outlining the structure of the plan in the handout she provided. She stated that the main focuses to come out of a workshop session held were: Economic Development and Tourism; River Access; and Arts, History and Culture. Jacksy spoke of some of the initiatives that have come out of the development of this Plan. The basis for some of the initiatives is to help people find what we have here. One of those initiatives is Trailkeeper.org, she stated. Trailkeeper.org is a one-source outlet for hiking trails and public lands in Sullivan County with easy-to-read, easy-to-access maps and facilities information and guides to hiking safety. River signage is another initiative that is underway, Jacksy stated. The purpose is to help people find their way around and to help them understand what is public and also to create a vernacular look. Branding and Marketing is yet another initiative. Jacksy noted that during the development of this Plan, National Geographic developed a great website that highlights the region.

Jacksy stated that the next steps are to maintain and grow momentum. She hopes that members will take a look at the document which she believes will be on-line in a couple of weeks or so. She encourages people to use that document as a resource.

Henry asked about the status of the signage for the bridges. Jacksy told him they are manufacturing signs for four of the bridges. They are working with NYS DOT on these signs and upon the recommendation of Andy Boyar, the signs will contain the river miles on them. Henry questioned if a visual test of the signs was done from the river for legibility. Jacksy said that was done.

Sullivan said much talk is taking place lately regarding views due to the proposals of commercial solar farms in the area. She asked if viewshed analysis had taken place recently. Hahn said training on viewshed analysis took place at Delaware Water Gap approximately two years ago. She said that Shohola UDC Alternate Pat Jeffer and former Resource Specialist Travis O'Dell represented the UDC at that training. Hahn said that no such analysis has taken place in the Upper Delaware.

**Approval of June 2 Meeting Minutes:** A motion by Dexter seconded by Henry to approve the June 2 meeting minutes was carried unanimously.

**Public Comment on the Agenda:** None

**Committee Reports:** Committee reports were provided based on the meeting minutes. They were: June 21 Water Use/Resource Management by Henry on behalf of Vice-chairperson Pat Jeffer and June 28 Operations by Peckham. Ramie noted the Project Review minutes have not yet been distributed as Odell left on vacation two days after the meeting. Ramie provided a report on the June 28 Project Review meeting based on her notes.

### **Status Reports**

**Delaware River Basin Commission:** The DRBC was absent, however, the hydrologic report was provided. The NYC Delaware River Basin Storage as of July 1, 2016 was at a combined capacity of 90.8% with Cannonsville at 87.9%. Also provided in members' packets was a press release dated June 21 titled, "DRBC Reminds Everyone About the Value of our Water Resources and to Use Water Efficiently."

**NYS Dept. of Environmental Conservation:** Rudge reported that their Acting Commissioner Basil Seggos was unanimously confirmed by the state Senate and has become the 15<sup>th</sup> Commissioner of the New York State DEC. He added that Region 3 Regional Director Martin Brand has been promoted to Deputy Commissioner. He said he will be missed in the region. Kelly Turturro has been appointed as Acting Regional Director.

Rudge referred to the June 30<sup>th</sup> press release titled, "Governor Cuomo Launches New Tourism Initiatives at First-Ever Catskill Summer Challenge" provided in members' packets. During this event, he made many announcements regarding grants and funding sources. This Catskill Challenge activity was an effort to give many of NY's elected officials and prominent outdoor writers an opportunity to experience the Catskills firsthand through a number of scheduled events. Most of the events hosted by the NYS DEC took place at the Mongaup Pond Campground which is located in the Catskill Park. Others events also took place at the Villa Roma Resort and Catskill Fly Fishing Museum. Rudge stated that the Governor and select invitees rafted on the Delaware River from Roebling Bridge to the Minisink Campground. The event kicked off at the Bethel Woods Center for the Arts, he added.

Rudge noted that the New York State Bald Eagle Conservation Plan has been completed. The Plan describes the historic status, restoration efforts and current status of the bald eagle in the state and provides guidelines for future management actions. A draft of the plan was released in February 2015, inviting the public to comment. More than 120 comments were received, and the final plan addresses the comments and input received. The final Plan and additional information on bald eagles can be found on DEC's website at [www.dec.ny.gov/animals/74052](http://www.dec.ny.gov/animals/74052). Referring to the handout, Dexter noted that it recommends certain distance buffers from the eagles. He questioned what happens when eagles build their nests near people. Rudge stated that the agency goes by the thinking that if the eagles chose that location, they must be

comfortable with it. Where they select a more remote site, the key is to protect the character of that site until the critical phase of raising the young is over.

**PA Dept. of Conservation and Natural Resources:** No report in the absence of Representative Tim Dugan.

**National Park Service-Upper Delaware:** Hahn noted that Sean McGuinness, Vidal Martinez, Dave Forney, Sandy Schultz, and Mary Curtis all send their regards to everybody since she had recently been in touch with them for research.

Hahn stated that the Governor's Catskill Challenge was a "challenge". She said that some people didn't realize that the National Park Service had a function in the area or that the Roebling Aqueduct was owned by them. She said it all did come together and was a good event.

Hahn reported that the NPS had some significant issues at Skinners Falls this past week. She said that camp counselors were acting up and the Park Service is under staffed. She noted that the camp counselor issue may require some more discussion.

Hahn noted that there was a drowning rescue at Narrowsburg and also a rescue by a civilian at Skinners Falls.

Hahn said they are working on a cultural landscape inventory for the Delaware Aqueduct area that is nearly finished. She hopes the completed report will be released in the near future. The cultural landscape inventories guide the NPS in the future in regards to projects that they undertake near that cultural resource.

Hahn said the Park Planner position announcement is closed. She said she has received five resumes for best qualified people. She said more information will forthcoming.

Hahn said that the BioBlitz held on June 25<sup>th</sup> was a very good event although sparsely attended due to competing events.

Hahn said that NPS Chief of Maintenance Loren Goering will present on the Roebling Bridge repairs at both of the July 13 New York-Pennsylvania Interstate Bridges informational meetings scheduled for that day. The meetings requested over a year ago will provide an opportunity to review the scope, schedules, and detour logistics for rehabilitation and replacement capital projects involving seven interstate bridges projected for now through 2020, she added.

Boyar questioned if the individuals that were rescued were wearing properly fitted life jackets. Hahn said she is unsure about one of the individuals, but that the other was not wearing a life jacket.

Boyar said he attended the BioBlitz after hearing Don Hamilton speak about it at the last Water Use/Resource Management Committee meeting. He asked members if they know what makes up the greatest animal biomass in this river. He told them it is freshwater mussels and said the BioBlitz was a great program and so worthwhile attending.

Hahn reported that the Park Service will be holding a public meeting to provide information on the work that is to be conducted on the Roebling Bridge. More information will be shared when it becomes available. She noted that a permit had been issued for a crew to film a commercial for Jaguar on the Roebling Bridge. The crew was scheduled to be on location between 10 a.m. and 2 p.m., but did not arrive until much later in the afternoon due to the weather.

**UDC Executive Director's Report:** Ramie showed and narrated some photos from Governor Cuomo's Catskill Challenge events held on June 29<sup>th</sup> and 30<sup>th</sup>. She said she issued a UDC news release on June 30<sup>th</sup> to highlight the Upper Delaware River segment as mention of the Delaware River had been left out of the Governor's press release. She shared her frustration of the erroneous mentions of the Hudson Valley in that release instead. Ramie shared details of the raft trip. Richardson commented that he is "thrilled that the Governor found his way to the Delaware." He added that back in the "hey-day" when the hotels were big in Sullivan County, this area was known as the Catskills. A brief discussion regarding the issue of identity for this area as it is located in between the Poconos and the Catskills took place.

Ramie said next Wednesday, July 13 the NY and PA DOT's will hold the bridges meetings at the Tusten Town Hall. The 3:30 p.m. meeting will be for municipal officials and emergency service responders; and the 6:30 p.m. meeting will be for the general public, Ramie added. She said it is a fantastic opportunity to meet with both sides to learn of their schedules and upcoming projects. Hahn suggested anyone attending bring up the issue of poor detours. Ramie said capital construction projects over the next

five years will be discussed at this meeting. The bridges included in this five year schedule include Port Jervis-Matamoras, Pond Eddy, Narrowsburg-Darbytown, Skinners Falls, Cochection, Callicoon, and Kellams-Stalker. Ramie shared a copy of an advertisement from the July 2<sup>nd</sup> edition of *The News Eagle* which said "Construction of the new Pond Eddy Bridge will begin July, 2016. The New York side of the Delaware River will close to boat traffic this season, with the Pennsylvania side to remain open. The existing bridge is to remain open throughout the project. Minimal local traffic delays are expected. For any questions, contact PennDOT at 570-963-4013." Hahn said that announcement was in the paper as a requirement of the Special Use permit issued by the NPS. She added that the contractor for that job is D.A. Collins Company. The contractor for the repairs to the Skinners Falls Bridge is Leeward Construction, Hahn reported. They also will be required to issue a pre-construction announcement.

Ramie referred to the June 17 letter from NYS DOT in regards to the Bouchouxville Trail Signs request sent to the NYS DEC by the UDC on March 15 to help people find this trail in the Town of Hancock which leads to Jensen's Ledges. The Town supported this request with their own letter. We had received an acknowledgement from DEC Regional Director Keith Goertz on April 28<sup>th</sup>. This current letter confirms that six signs are being manufactured and lists the locations for their installments.

Ramie referred members to the July 5<sup>th</sup> news release titled, "UDC Welcomes Public on Aug. 7 Raft Trip" provided in their packets. She said that reservations for this trip are requested by July 29<sup>th</sup>. The 2016 river section to be paddled is a 10-mile stretch from Skinners Falls to Ten Mile River. Landers' River Trips will provide the rafts, paddles, life jackets, safety instructions, and shuttle transportation. The UDC's deeply-discounted group discount rate is \$26 for ages 13 and up, and \$16 for ages 5-12, she added. This trip is a good way to promote stewardship of the river. She asked members to spread the word about the trip, noting the registration form is posted on the UDC website.

Ramie reported that we have opened our 2017 application round for Technical Assistance Grants. Applications are due by August 29. She stated that since 1988, the UDC has awarded \$809,325 to help subsidize 240 non-construction projects. A special meeting of the Project Review Committee will take place on September 13<sup>th</sup> to review submissions.

Ramie referred members to the July calendar of UDC Meetings, Activities, and Deadlines provided in their packets. She said a schedule of events for the NPS 12<sup>th</sup> Annual Zane Grey Festival to be held on July 16<sup>th</sup> was also included in the packets. She reported that Golod would be representing the UDC on July 18<sup>th</sup> for the Kittatinny River Clean-up. Staff will have booths at the Zane Grey Festival on July 16<sup>th</sup> and Narrowsburg Riverfest on July 24. Quarterly meetings to take place in July are Common Waters Partnership on July 13 and D&H Transportation Heritage Council on July 27<sup>th</sup>. The NPS 100-Mile Paddle days continue on July 9 and July 30. Ramie noted that the Town of Delaware will be holding a solar workshop on July 12. A presentation on the Leadership Sullivan Corwin Farm Clean-up project will be given at the August 4<sup>th</sup> full Council meeting, Ramie reported.

Ramie reported that the Upper Delaware Scenic Byway designed and ordered 1,000 biodegradable, American-made litter bags for distribution on the NPS 100-Mile Paddle and anti-litter awareness. She showed one to members. Richardson suggested the Byway may want to consider handing out the bags at the UDC Raft Trip.

**Old Business:** Robinson mentioned that the UDC has not received a response to the March 22<sup>nd</sup> letter sent to U.S. Senator Schumer requesting assistance in finding funding sources to improve emergency communications for the public along the river. A May 25, 2016 response was received from NYS Senator Bonacic stating that funds for this have been omitted in this year's state budget. Robinson said that Senator Schumer was recently in the press pushing for improved cellphone communication in upstate New York.

Greier suggested that air horn blasts should be considered in conjunction with sirens for use in public notifications of reservoir-related emergencies. Ramie said it was suggested that a different tone be used for river related emergencies.

Judd questioned what is happening with the proposed improvements at the Long Eddy access. Rudge said the current status is that the State of New York is working on acquiring property from the Delaware Highlands Conservancy. Jacksy stated that the owner of Dedeco International, Inc. has erected a fence around their parking area creating an issue for town businesses. Rudge said one of the goals of NYS is to try and help with the parking issue in that area. He thanked her for that information.

Ramie reported that in regards to the Lordville Road, Town of Hancock UDC Alternate Katt Judd had received correspondence from the constituent outreach specialist for PA Representative Sandra Major stating that the Wayne County PennDOT maintenance manager has advised that the Lordville Road (SR 1023) is not on any pavement schedule but they will resolve any immediate hazards that exist and will send information when they have it.

**New Business:**

**Draft Letter to NYC DEP: UDC Comments on NYC DEP Emergency Action Plan Seminar:** Ramie noted that this letter is firstly to thank the DEP for allowing Henry and Peckham to attend the June 10<sup>th</sup> workshop held at Hunt's Landing Best Western in Matamoras, PA. She thanked the two board members for attending and Henry for providing written notes, adding that she appreciated their active role. The letter primarily requests that the NYC DEP and its safety partners explore establishing a supplemental notification system that would incorporate the use of fire department sirens to alert the public of river flooding danger through a customized tone or frequency blast. The letter also requests copies of the Dam Emergency Action Plans for in-house reference purposes only. Ramie reviewed the cc list with members. It was suggested to add the US Senators to that list. A motion to send the letter with the addition of the US Senators was made by Henry and seconded by Dexter. Rudge reported that Emily Lloyd has recently stepped down as the Commissioner of the NYC DEP. The updated information for the Acting Commissioner can be found on their website, he added. A vote was taken and the motion passed.

**Other:** Barth spoke of the boat launch in Westfall Township on land owned by the state that washed out many years ago. He said the Township has tried many times by letter to have the state work on it. He said the launch is located on LaBarr Lane on the Pennsylvania side of the river near M&S Facilities across from the Westfall municipal building. Barth asked for suggestions to bring attention to this issue. Henry said it is a Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission access. It was noted that it is located south of the bridge and outside of the designated river corridor. Henry suggested that the Township contact the Fish and Boat Commission. Hahn noted that their maintenance department is currently very understaffed.

Dean reported that there were two motorcycle accidents on the Hawks Nest over the weekend, one of them fatal. He said he was on the Hawks Nest when one occurred and described the scene to members. He said he is looking for ideas on how to minimize exposure to the people who are not on motorcycles and just want to enjoy the vista. He noted that the inconsideration shown by certain people on motorcycles is horrifying. He said there has to be some way to control the situation better. The Deerpark Town Board is looking to have an officer at that location all the time. Peckham suggested the installation of speed cameras that would photograph license plates and then give tickets. Barth spoke of the riders that speed back and forth numerous times. Dean said he is concerned about the loss of innocent lives as a result of those exhibiting risky behavior. Haas suggested exploring having the speed limit reduced on that section of Route 97. Henry recommended contacting the New York State Police to ask them for their opinion. Peckham suggested installing signs warning that area is monitored for speed, Dean said he would appreciate any suggestions that members could provide him with.

Henry said he heard on a local radio station Mark Ruffalo tell people to drink the water of the Delaware River. He feels this should be corrected. Ramie said that public service ad is for the Delaware Highlands Conservancy's Clear Choices Clean Water campaign.

**Public Comment:** Dave Hulse said he wanted to thank the National Park Service. He said on weekends he runs the interpretive center for the D&H Canal Linear Park in Summitville, NY. It is Sullivan County's only indoor canal related operation and he feels it is important for the county. A model of the Delaware Aqueduct was made in the 1980's and the center has been trying to get it to their center for a couple of years. This has been accomplished. The public is coming in and enjoying it.

A motion to go into Executive Session at 8:50 p.m. for the purpose of discussing Personnel issues was made by Richardson, seconded by Greier and carried.

A motion to come out of Executive Session at 9:02 p.m. was made by Peckham, seconded by Henry and carried.

A motion to accept the recommendations of the Personnel Subcommittee in regards to Personnel was made by Greier, seconded by Henry and carried.

**Adjournment:** A motion by Dexter seconded by Sullivan, to adjourn the meeting at 9:09 p.m. was carried unanimously.

*Minutes prepared by Cindy Odell 7/20/16*