



Upper Delaware Council

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UPPER DELAWARE COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

February 1, 2024

The Upper Delaware Council held its monthly meeting on Thursday, February 1, 2024. Chairperson Dudko called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m. Roll call followed reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.

Attendees:

Town of Deerpark- Ginny Dudko, Town of Hancock- Fred Peckham (Zoom), Town of Highland- Christine Martin, Damascus Township- Jeff Dexter, Town of Fremont- Jim Rodgers, Town of Delaware- Harold Roeder Jr., Town of Cohecton- Larry Richardson, Shohola Township- Aaron Robinson, Berlin Township- Al Henry, Lackawaxen Township- Doug Case, Town of Tusten- Evan Padua, Town of Lumberland- Nadia Rajs, Delaware River Basin Commission- Kristen Bowman Kavanagh (Zoom), National Park Service- Carly Marshall, New York State- Ryan Coulter (Zoom)

Absent:

Westfall Township- Michael Barth, Commonwealth of Pennsylvania- Tim Dugan

Staff:

Executive Director- Laurie Ramie, Resource & Land Use Specialist- Kerry Engelhardt, Administrative Support- Stephanie Driscoll

Media:

Peter Becker- Tri-County Independent (Zoom)

Guests:

Bill Dudko-Town of Deerpark; John Pizzolato- Town of Highland; Jane Varcoe; Linda Dexter; Jonathan Dexter; National Park Service- Jessica Weinman (Zoom); Don Schmalzle; Cindy Schmalzle; Sherry Barnes; Larry Barnes; Mike Edison

Swearing-in of 2024 Officers by Town of Deerpark Town Justice Michael J. Worden: Chairperson Dudko introduced Town of Deerpark Town Justice Michael J. Worden. Worden, who retired from the City of Port Jervis Police Department after 22 years of service as an officer, detective, and sergeant, is also the Town of Deerpark Historian, an award-winning true crime author, speaker, paranormal researcher, and TV commentator. He has served as one of two elected Town Justices for the Deerpark Town Justice Court since 2022. There was a round of applause to welcome Worden.

The 2024 elected officers: Chairperson Ginny Dudko, Vice-chair Jeff Dexter, and Secretary/Treasurer Alan Henry; took their oaths during a swearing-in ceremony officiated by Worden.

Richardson introduced the new Town of Fremont Representative, Jim Rodgers.

Dudko thanked Robinson for his leadership through 2023, Henry for filling the role of Secretary/Treasurer for the past nine years, and Dexter for Vice-Chairing with her for 2024. She also thanked the rest of the council for everything they do.

Approval of January 4, 2024 Minutes: A motion by Padua seconded by Rajs to approve the January 4, 2024 meeting minutes carried.

Public Comment on the Agenda: None.

Committee Reports: There were no questions regarding previously distributed minutes: Project Review 1/23 (Larry Richardson), Operations 1/23 (Ginny Dudko). *1/16 Water Use/Resource Management meeting cancelled due to weather.*

Status Reports:

Delaware River Basin Commission: Bowman Kavanagh said at the last meeting she gave an update on the workshops the DRBC are working on with the Pennsylvania Emergency Management Agency. The dates have been confirmed for those workshops and she posted them in the Zoom chat, along with the direct link to the workshops. (Plan Implementation and Grant Development (PIGD) DAY 1 Workshops: March 11: Carbon/Luzerne*, March 12: Lehigh/Northampton*, March 13: Bucks*, March 18: Virtual (all counties). PIGD DAY 2 Workshops: April 23: Carbon/Luzerne*, April 24: Lehigh/Northampton*, April 25: Bucks*, April 29: Virtual (all counties) [**hybrid meeting*]) (https://www.nj.gov/drbc/programs/flood/PEMA_MiddleDelawarePIGD.html).

She gave dates for some upcoming meetings: On Wednesday, February 7th at 1:30pm is the First Quarter Public Hearing, and on Wednesday, February 14th is the Water Management Advisory Committee Meeting.

NYS Dept. of Environmental Conservation: Coulter reported that staff is busy this time of the year writing reports and technical briefs. DEC is working on the upcoming Annual Work Plan and Seasonal Plan. If anyone knows of people interested in seasonal work, those jobs will be posted within the next couple of months. He's also heard there will be openings for full-time employment, especially in the biology field throughout the state. They are starting to issue a lot of fish stocking permits in the region with spring around the corner. He will report on the Long Eddy and Highland Accesses later on the agenda. He congratulated the new 2024 UDC officers.

Pennsylvania Dept. of Conservation and National Resources: Absent.

National Park Service: Marshall reported that work will be commencing soon at Milanville. That building will be getting a new roof, siding, and windows. There are two seasonal Park Ranger positions open currently, one being a Spanish speaking position. One application period closes tomorrow, February 2nd, the Spanish speaking position period closes February 5th. There is also an opening for Administrative Assistant with an application deadline of February 15th.

UDC Executive Director: Ramie welcomed Town of Fremont Representative Jim Rodgers to his first meeting for 2024, returning to the board after previously serving as a Town of Fremont alternate from November 2004 to January 2013.

She reported that the Lackawaxen River did not win the Pennsylvania River of the Year, being one of three finalists in the competition. The Allegheny River was selected as River of the Year by Pennsylvania Department of Conservation and Natural Resources (DCNR) and Pennsylvania Organization of Watersheds and Rivers (POWR). It was a public vote that took place with the Lackawaxen River receiving 4,740 votes, the Youghiogheny River 7,212 votes, and the Allegheny River winning with 8,307 votes. It was the most contested race they had in terms of the number of votes cast in total. Title of 'River of the Year' comes with promotion funding, and river events such as a sojourn, among other things.

There were some items recently circulated that she wanted to bring to the council's attention, in case any members missed the emails. Last Friday (1/26), she had finished the Performance Progress Report (PPR) that was due to the NPS for Fiscal Year 2023. That has been submitted and she will convert the 22-page report into a more digestible, public version through a press release. Yesterday (1/31) she circulated via email the application for grants through the Delaware Watershed Conservation Fund. Those applications are due by March 21st and the email included the information and details about the types of projects that can be funded and the matches required. Supervisor Steve Adams from Damascus Township called this morning to get some advice on a proposal they are considering submitting. She hopes the municipalities will take a look into the grant to determine if it fits their needs. It is a minimum grant request of \$75,000 up to \$1.5 million per proposal. There is a one-to-one match for three out of the four programs. She sent that information to the 13 towns and townships as well. This morning (2/1) she shared a follow-up article

by the *River Reporter* on the submerged vehicle in the Delaware River. Padua had shown a photo of the vehicle at last month's meeting. The vehicle is now out of the water, done under the Environmental Protection Agency's supervision.

Along with last month's elections for the full council, each of the committees elects a Chairperson and a Vice-chairperson. Dudko will serve as Chairperson of the Operations Committee with Robinson as the Vice-chair, meeting on the 4th Tuesday of the month. Richardson will remain the Chairperson of the Project Review Committee with Dexter as the Vice-chair that also meets on the 4th Tuesday of the month. The January Water Use/Resource Management (WU/RM) Committee meeting was cancelled due to bad weather and the vote will take place at the next scheduled meeting, the 3rd Tuesday of the month, February 20th.

There was no presentation tonight, in lieu of our swearing-in ceremony. On March 7th, Driscoll arranged for a demonstration of a High-Definition Stream Survey by Trutta Environmental Solutions. Henry helped set up a presentation by the President of the Board of the PA Fish and Boat Commission, William Gibney of Honesdale, on April 4th. He is also the Commissioner for the Commission's 7th District that represents 8 counties. On May 2nd we will hear from NPS Superintendent Lindsey Kurnath on the Upper Delaware Scenic and Recreational River (UDSSR) staffing structure; what vacancies they may have, how they are organized in terms of divisions, where they are this year compared to last year, and what her and the NPS's vision is to support the needs of the UDSRR. Almost a year ago last March we heard from the PA Director of Outdoor Recreation Nathan Reigner. Ramie passed around a full-page article from the *Tri-County Independent* about Reigner and the job he's doing. As part of his presentation last year, he had said he'd like to get the position permanently established within the DCNR. The article explains how the position has been permanently added as an office within the DCNR with 3 staff people.

The calendars of UDC meetings, activities, and deadlines were included in the packet. Marshall had inquired about setting up monthly meetings between NPS staff and UDC staff to see what projects are new, what each staff is working on, compare schedules, look at meetings, and talk about any common issues or concerns. Ramie believes this is valuable and appreciates Marshall bringing that up. On February 14th the DRBC's Water Management Advisory Committee is scheduled to meet. The Upper Delaware River Watershed Plan Committee is holding a public meeting in Sullivan County on February 28th (location to be determined) and a public virtual hearing on March 5th. The Wayne County Commissioners will hold a public hearing on February 22nd about the update to the Comprehensive Plan. On February 23rd Mid-term Progress Reports are due from our 2 Technical Assistance Grant (TAG) recipients; the Town of Tusten and Damascus Township. On February 28th Ramie will attend the Project Advisory Committee meeting for the Skinners Falls Bridge. The deadline for "The Upper Delaware" spring newsletter is March 25th. March 8th is the SAM.gov registration renewal deadline. And on March 29th is when our current federal funding allocation expires. We were funded in advance by the NPS through March 31st and she is currently waiting for instructions on what length of time she needs to apply for with the next financial assistance package. We will also be soliciting applications from the towns/townships for 2024 River & Shoreline Clean-up Grants in March.

Ramie was asked by the Town of Deerpark Town Clerk Flo Santini to share that our previous Town of Deerpark UDC Representative through 2011-2021 and retired Town of Deerpark Deputy Supervisor David Dean is being honored by the Town of Deerpark Republican Committee as their 2024 Republican of The Year. He will be recognized at the Annual St. Patrick's Day dinner on March 17th at the Erie Trackside and Manor in Port Jervis. She passed around a flyer for the event, and it will be posted on our social media.

Robinson asked if the UDC or a town/township pursued a grant from the Delaware Watershed Conservation Fund that pertains to the River Management Plan (RMP), could they use federal funds as the match for funding? Ramie said it has to be a non-federal match.

New Business:

- a. **4th Annual Upper Delaware Litter Sweep Dates and Logistics:** Driscoll reported that staff met on Monday, January 29th to go over Litter Sweep details. With Earth Day being April 22nd, the dates proposed would be April 20th-28th, allowing two weekends for clean up dates. Ramie said letters have been written and signed to distribute to towns/townships to establish a Litter Leader for each community. We don't have the capacity to find volunteers for each community, so we rely on a person or group stepping forward from each town/township to handle that. The UDC handles the coordination, publicity, scheduling, permitting, disposal information, and provides the supplies through fundraising, among other things. Engelhardt has offered to look for grants through Sullivan 180's beautification program and Poconos.org (the Pocono Mountains Vacation Bureau). Ramie hopes there may be some discretionary funding from Sullivan County again. Driscoll said the Litter Leader letters will be sent out Monday. Ramie said there is a \$2,315.60 balance in the separate Litter Sweep bank account, so we're fortunately not starting from scratch. Driscoll also mentioned that Eric Hinkley has generously offered his time and artwork as a donation for the t-shirt graphic. His deadline is March 1st.
- b. **Updates on Long Eddy Access Refurbishment and Highland Access Debris:** Photos were shown of both the Long Eddy and Highland Accesses starting with Long Eddy. Coulter said the Long Eddy Access is a small DEC parcel of 1 to 2 acres of land. They tried to create an entrance and exit that would make maneuvering drift boats and trailers easier. Underneath both the entrances and exits, proper drainage was installed and gravel was placed along the perimeter of the property with a split rail fence. A wooden DEC sign and "trailer parking only" signs still need to be installed. The markers for parking are raised pressure treated lumber, which is something unique to this parking lot and a new design. Another common feature of the DEC's access sites are the invasive species disposal boxes. There is also a small kiosk to hang the rules and regulations of the access. Padua applauded the planners and engineers who worked on the refurbishment of the Long Eddy Access. DEC had a small amount of space to work with and they were able to create a functional parking lot. He commented that the parking lot is simple and well designed. Coulter thanked him.

Coulter had received from the UDC pictures of the debris washed ashore at the Highland Access. He asked the council if in the upcoming months more debris would pile up and if he should wait until maybe after the colder months to request a clean-up? Members said absolutely. Coulter said he will send out the work request then as soon as it seems reasonable. Pizzolato added that there are some signs to install at the Highland Access on behalf of the NPS. He believes NPS plans to pull work permits to do some clean-ups as well during spring. Padua said there used to be a road that went down to the river, where it is now a smaller paved area. How will a machine be able to get down to clean-up? He thinks the design should have been better thought out. In one of the photos, it shows large boulders in front of a few of the parking spots, presumably added for aesthetic. You were able to park at least 30 cars and school buses at this parking lot, and now with the boulders there are about 8 parking spots available. He believes it's less functional than it was before it was re-done. He mentioned there was a sign from construction that was nailed to a tree at one point, that was almost washed away in the river. He removed the sign before it became litter. Padua said his statement from last month's meeting was misinterpreted by local newspapers that said you couldn't drive down to the Highland Access because of debris. What he actually meant was that you can't drive down because of the new design. Weinman commented that she thinks they did a great job with the design of the Highland Access and parking lot. She thinks a skid-steer can easily get down to the river to clean up debris, and that there is an appropriate number of parking spots. She congratulated the Town of Highland for improving that site. The NPS will continue to work with the Town of Highland to keep the access clean and thanked Coulter for working with the town as well. Coulter said all the DEC accesses along the river have a recurring maintenance schedule. If someone notices any accesses not being maintained, let him know and he'll make sure the proper equipment gets there to clean it.

- c. **2024 Upper Delaware BioBlitz Sponsorship Request:** A letter from the coordinator of the 2024 BioBlitz Steve Schwartz is included in the packet. Ramie said he is requesting that the UDC contributes to this year's event to be held at the Highlights Foundation Retreat Center in Boyds Mills. Engelhardt is a member of the Steering Committee and they have a great roster of team members and leaders signed up already. The Wayne County Community Foundation is the Fiscal Agent this year. In previous years the UDC has supported with a \$500 donation to contribute to the public event that will be June 29th. We also had an exhibit table in 2014 and 2016 when both those BioBlitzes were held at Ten Mile River Boy Scouts Camp property in Tusten. For 24 hours scientists will study every living organism on the property to get an ecological snapshot of the biodiversity. Ramie recommends the UDC does support the 2024 Bioblitz with a \$500 donation. G. Dudko said it fits with the UDC's mission. Henry asked if it's normal for an event like this to cost \$10,000. Engelhardt said yes; in fact, it may be a little less than normal since food is a lower cost this time. The tents are a big cost, since they have to be so large. A motion by Henry for the UDC to donate \$500 to the 2024 Upper Delaware BioBlitz, seconded by Dexter, carried.
- d. **Other:** None.

Old Business:

- a. **Supporting Organization Request for 'Orange County's Last Remaining Wilderness':** Ramie said this was referred to the WU/RM Committee, but since that committee didn't meet last month, it was referred to tonight's full council meeting for decision. January 4th's presentation was by Director of Conservation Kyle Sanduski from Orange County Land Trust (OCLT) seeking voluntary easements to assist with protection around the Hawks Nest area. Supporting this initiative would involve the UDC signing on as a supporting organization and would give permission to OCLT to display our logo and website link on savethewilderness.org once launched. Rodgers asked if there was any other commitment financially? Ramie said no; there was a handout on the initiative in the packet. Robinson said the UDC's support would be limited to the corridor. We shouldn't extend our endorsements beyond that. We could put a statement in our support. Ramie said that may be cumbersome to have a disclaimer displayed with our logo on their website. Robinson asked how we've handled a situation like that in the past? Henry said the UDC told Christine Foland from the Lackawaxen River Conservancy that we would support the Lackawaxen River becoming a Wild and Scenic River, even with parts not within the corridor. Ramie said we haven't taken action on that yet as no one has asked for our formal support. Henry said we just gave a \$500 donation to a BioBlitz that isn't within the corridor. He asked if OCLT requested any financial support? Ramie said no, only displaying our logo and website link on the initiative's website. She thinks having the UDC's logo on the site would be beneficial to the UDC as well. Richardson said he doesn't have a problem supporting it since it deals with a watershed that drains into the Delaware River. A motion by Dexter to support the OCLT's 'Last Remaining Wilderness', seconded by Rajszyk, carried.
- b. **Sexual Harassment Prevention Training and Conflict of Interest Statements Due:** This is a reminder to complete the Sexual Harassment Prevention Training and hand in the answer sheet by the next full council meeting on March 7th. At that meeting we will have an interactive discussion; a requirement of the training. And if you have not completed the Conflict-of-Interest statement, this is a reminder to do so.
- c. **Other:** Henry said the council owes Robinson a round of applause for his job well done as Chairperson in 2023. G. Dudko also thanked the NPS and the UDC staff for their 2023 work.

Public Comment: There was no public comment.

Adjournment: A motion by Robinson seconded by Roeder to adjourn the meeting at 8:13 p.m. carried.