



Upper Delaware Council

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UPPER DELAWARE COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

February 5, 2026

The Upper Delaware Council held its monthly meeting on Thursday, February 5, 2026. Chairperson Dexter called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m. Roll call followed reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.

Attendees:

Damascus Township- Jeff Dexter, Town of Fremont- Jim Rodgers, Town of Cohecton- Larry Richardson, Town of Delaware- Harold Roeder, Town of Tusten- Cathleen Breen, Town of Deerpark- Ginny Dudko, Town of Highland- Christine Martin, Town of Lumberland- Nadia Rajs, Lackawaxen Township- Doug Case, Shohola Township- Aaron Robinson, National Park Service- Lindsey Kurnath, Delaware River Basin Commission- Beth Brown (Zoom), New York State- Ryan Coulter, Commonwealth of Pennsylvania- Tim Dugan

Absent:

Town of Hancock- Katt Judd, Westfall Township- Michael Barth

Staff:

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

Media:

Tri-County Independent- Peter Becker (Zoom)

Guests:

Town of Deerpark- Bill Dudko, Town of Tusten- Evan Padua, Town of Highland- Michael Keller (Zoom), Linda Dexter, Jane Varcoe, Honorable Jonathan Dunsinger

Affirmation of E-vote for 2026 UDC Vice-Chairperson: Ramie announced the results of an e-vote conducted as of January 23 to fill the vacancy in the Vice-chair position that followed the January 8 election by 15 unanimous votes. Shohola Township Representative Aaron Robinson was elected.

The Swearing in by The Honorable Jonathan Dunsinger, Magisterial District 22-3-04 Justice: Jeffrey R. Dexter (Damascus) as 2026 UDC Chairperson; Aaron I. Robinson (Shohola) as 2026 UDC Vice-Chair; Al Henry (Berlin) as 2026 UDC Secretary/Treasurer took their oaths of office. Dexter presented Judge Dunsinger with a UDC lapel pin in appreciation of his services.

Approval of January 8, 2026 Minutes: A motion by Richardson seconded by G. Dudko to approve the January 8, 2026 meeting minutes carried, with Dugan and Rodgers abstaining.

Public Comment on the Agenda: None.

Committee Reports: There were no questions regarding previously distributed minutes for Water Use/Resource Management 1/20 (Bill Dudko), Operations 1/27 (Jeff Dexter), or Project Review 1/27 (Larry Richardson).

Status Reports:

Delaware River Basin Commission: Brown offered congratulations to the elected officers, saying she was looking forward to working with them and their leadership going forward. She gave a series of updates, beginning with DRBC's regular business meeting cycle. The DRBC held its first-quarter public hearing the previous day (2/4), during which 20 dockets were heard. Written public comments on those dockets are still being accepted through 5:00 p.m. on Monday, February 9. The first-quarter business meeting will take place on Wednesday, March 4 virtually. The meeting will start earlier than usual, at 10:00 a.m. instead of the typical 10:30 a.m. Registration is available through the DRBC website. The agenda is not yet posted but will be released about ten days in advance of the meeting.

New York City reservoir levels continued to sit significantly below the historical median for this time of year, although they remained well above the drought watch threshold. There had been no significant precipitation across the basin over the previous seven days. However, measured snowpack above the New York City reservoirs was estimated to contain approximately 34.7 billion gallons of water, which is a substantial amount of water currently stored in snow. The amount of

ice on the river is significant and the DRBC has been working closely with many partners as concerns continued to build with the persistence of icy conditions. Brown said that port traffic was already being affected. A report in the *Philadelphia Inquirer* referenced a delayed barge shipment of road salt destined for the City of Philadelphia. These conditions are beginning to have real-world logistical impacts on both containerized and non-containerized cargo, as well as on energy generation and other sectors. She noted concerns related to ice buildup at water intakes in the lower basin, including intakes that supply drinking water. The DRBC and its partners were actively coordinating on operational responses, such as manual ice breakup at intake sites, backflushing, and other mitigation measures, to ensure reliable water withdrawals along the Delaware River and, to some extent, the Schuylkill River. She said the salt front was currently slightly higher than the February median, at 75.1 River Mile but this is not a cause for concern at this time.

The DRBC had recently updated a predictive model focused on the formation of frazil ice; a slushy form of ice that had caused concern at one drinking water intake along the Delaware the previous year. The DRBC is working to better understand the conditions under which frazil ice forms and was actively collecting observations to improve those predictions. Overall, much of DRBC's current effort was focused on coordination with the many agencies, utilities, companies, and local and regional governments that could be affected by the ongoing ice conditions.

Brown shared that DRBC staff member Dr. Namsoo Suk would be presenting on ice conditions and the potential for ice jams during a webinar hosted by the Pennsylvania Silver Jackets team, an interagency federal group led by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers tomorrow, February 6. The webinar will be at 10:30 a.m. and would include presenters from across the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania. More information can be found on the DRBC's website.

Brown announced that at the December 2025 UDC meeting, when a request had been made for the DRBC to provide financial support to the Council, she began working with Ramie to bring that to reality. For 2026, the DRBC will be sponsoring three UDC programs and one issue of the UDC newsletter, for a total contribution of \$2,000. She expressed that the DRBC was very pleased to be able to offer this support, noting that while DRBC is a non-voting member of the UDC, it highly values the unique partnership reflected through the organization and is committed to supporting the UDC's work where they can. The DRBC can't guarantee this level of support on an annual basis, but for 2026 the Commission was happy and excited to be in a position to contribute. Her announcement was received by applause.

G. Dudko asked about the ice-related impacts on water supplies downstream and whether similar concerns might apply to communities in the Upper Delaware region. Brown clarified that there had been no impacts from a customer or consumer perspective, stressing that all utilities had continued to meet water supply demands and that the issues to date had been operational challenges only. She is not aware of any similar issues in the Upper Delaware. The region relies on different types of water supply systems and most public water supplies in the UDC portion of the river do not draw directly from the Delaware River in the same way as those downstream.

Robinson expressed appreciation to Brown for pursuing the Council's request for financial assistance. The contribution will be a significant help. Brown thanked Robinson in turn for the acknowledgment.

NYS Dept. of Environmental Conservation: After congratulating the 2026 UDC officers, Coulter reported that the DEC's phones and email inboxes had been extremely busy with inquiries from the public, especially parents interested in taking their kids ice fishing. After several winters where ice fishing was not really viable, there was a lot of renewed interest, which led to questions about safety and logistics. He recalled that when he first started with DEC about 20 years ago, these types of programs were offered more regularly. However, because ice conditions have been so inconsistent in recent years, it has been difficult to reliably schedule those kinds of events. If the current trend continues in future winters, DEC does have some gear and may be able to put together smaller events.

The DEC's Fisheries unit will be attending the Outdoor Sportsman Show in Suffern, Rockland County in a couple of weeks; this significant show had taken time off during the pandemic and is now back. He described it as a worthwhile event for families or anyone looking for something to do over a free weekend.

Looking ahead to spring, Coulter said DEC staff would be meeting with the Catskill Fish Hatchery team in the coming weeks. Stocking season is approaching quickly and could potentially be delayed slightly this year due to the temperatures. There is a new hatchery manager and DEC staff are focused on getting her up to speed and making sure everyone is aligned. Stocking involves a great deal of logistics; the Catskill Hatchery serves Long Island, southeastern New York, and into Region 4, which means staff are frequently on the road and coordinating across a wide geographic area. DEC biologists and technicians are currently focused on work planning, report writing, and setting up schedules for the upcoming year. Outreach events continue to be very popular, which requires careful planning.

Coulter said that he had read UPDE's monthly update in the packet and saw that NPS would be bringing on an intern or seasonal staff person. He encouraged Kurnath to reach out to DEC; there might be opportunities for coordination or assistance.

Coulter said Region 3's Wildlife staff holds a region-wide wildlife meeting every month and that avian influenza had been a regular topic of discussion. He had asked the wildlife manager for a quick update: "Highly Pathogenic Avian Influenza (HPAI) continues to infect birds and mammals across the United States and Canada, including New York State. Since the summer, DEC staff have either confirmed HPAI cases or collected carcasses pending test results. In Region 3, which includes southeastern New York, positive cases have been identified in all counties except Ulster and Sullivan." Coulter emphasized that there is no way to contain HPAI in wild bird populations, as it is carried by free-flying waterfowl and other wild birds such as ducks, geese, and shorebirds. He added that the virus can also infect domestic poultry, raptors, corvids, and mammals.

DEC's Wildlife Health Program continues to monitor the spread and impacts of HPAI statewide and that there is an online reporting tool available for the public to report suspected HPAI mortalities. Because HPAI is now widespread in wild birds and mammals, not every report will result in DEC retrieving animals for testing or disposal. DEC recently hosted a Facebook Live event with wildlife biologist Kevin Hines on this subject.

Martin asked whether wild turkeys were included in the list of affected species. Coulter agreed that wild turkeys could be included and that many species are susceptible. He stressed that if people encounter dead birds, they should stay away from them.

G. Dudko said they haven't heard any coyotes this year and asked if the DEC had any reports on them. Coulter said he had not heard of any reports and that coyotes tend to come and go in cycles.

Pennsylvania Dept. of Conservation and National Resources: Dugan reported that DCNR and the Shapiro Administration had recently announced grant awards tied to applications that were originally submitted in April 2025. The state budget impasse had caused delays in releasing those awards, but the announcements had finally moved forward. He had mentioned at the previous month's meeting that the application window for the 2026 grant cycle is now open, allowing eligible entities to begin applying. Several grants had been awarded in or near the Upper Delaware region, which was encouraging to see. In Wayne County, a park project in Dreher Township received funding. In Pike County, both Delaware Township and Milford Borough were awarded grants, one for a planning project and the other, in Milford, for a park-related historical site project. He commented that it is always good to see grant dollars coming into the region to help move projects forward and improve local communities.

The Pennsylvania Game Commission has released its preliminary hunting seasons and bag limits for the 2026–2027 season. The Game Commissioners recently met and that these proposed seasons and limits are still preliminary, emphasizing that they will not become final until mid-summer.

Dugan said that the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission's trout stocking schedule for the current year has been posted online and is available to the public. Stocking activity typically begins in March, and staff are already preparing for that. On state forest lands, crews have even had to cut through ice to allow stocking of lakes and ponds in previous years. He cautioned that this year could see some delays due to limited access caused by ongoing winter conditions.

Dugan said that while the winter conditions have been challenging, staff and visitors alike are still enjoying the season. Snowmobile trails have been up and running, and despite limited staffing, DCNR crews have been hard at work plowing snow to keep up with storms and make room in case additional snowfall arrives. The area was hit fairly hard this winter, but people are still getting outside and making use of the trails. Ice fishing was strong early in the season, though conditions have since become hit or miss. Some water bodies are dealing with heavy snowpack and slush on top of the ice, while others were wind-swept and remain relatively clear. Those clearer areas, combined with the continued cold weather, have allowed some ice fishing activity to continue.

Dugan said the prolonged cold has been beneficial in one important area: controlling Hemlock Woolly Adelgid. This invasive, non-native pest is significantly impacted when temperatures remain below 25 degrees for ten days or more. The region has experienced not just cold weather, but consistently cold conditions for an extended period, and DCNR is optimistic that this will help knock back adelgid populations. The cold can also cause some negative impacts, such as frost fracturing in trees, but described that as part of natural cycles and said forests are resilient and will rebound.

Dugan let the group know that many Pennsylvania state park units offer loaner snowshoes and cross-country skis. He mentioned Promised Land State Park as a nearby option, noting that the park grooms some trails while also maintaining ungroomed areas for those looking for a different experience. Loaner equipment is available as long as staff are present at the park office, typically during normal business hours this time of year. He encouraged anyone interested in trying winter recreation to reach out to park staff or spread the word to others who might want to take advantage of those programs. He added that DCNR has open positions in Monroe and Pike Counties. Information on those can be found on the DCNR website.

National Park Service: The NPS monthly activity report is included in the packet. Kurnath offered congratulations to the officers and thanked them for stepping up to serve. She reported that the Northeast Region has a new Acting Regional Director, Jennifer Flynn who is currently the superintendent of Cape Cod National Seashore, that she started this week. The expectation is she'll serve in the acting role for about six months. She has already briefed Flynn on what the Upper Delaware Council is and what the group does.

Kurnath said the administration has officially rolled out new branding for America's 250 anniversary. Instead of "America250," the branding will now be "Freedom250." The new logo is included in her report. She pointed the group toward the official website for anyone who wants to follow what the federal government is doing to celebrate the 250th birthday of the United States. In terms of what this means locally at Upper Delaware, the Upper Delaware is not planning to host any unique on its own under that banner, other than making its resources available to support events happening elsewhere. Other parks have stories more directly tied to the Revolution, and that at the park-unit level there's been an expectation that parks like Upper Delaware will be willing to lend staff support in July, especially around July 4th and other summer events.

Kurnath said UPDE is looking to lease housing as part of a pilot program. They successfully justified the need for staff housing at UPDE using National Office Funds. The lack of housing has been one of the biggest barriers to recruiting enough seasonal staff each summer. Unlike many other parks, UPDE hasn't had a housing program, so this would be a new approach. The plan is a lease arrangement, and right now they are actively looking for someone willing to lease them a unit, ideally furnished. There's an official announcement page, and she asked for help getting the word out—whether that means posting the announcement, sharing it locally, or letting them email it through a listserv.

Kurnath said she had read the UDC's letter to PennDOT, specifically about questioning about NPS jurisdictional authority in relation to the Pennsylvania abutment. She hasn't seen PennDOT's response come back to UDC yet and because the process is a little indirect, she offered to provide a shorter summary answer during the meeting, so the group wasn't stuck waiting. This isn't new information, just a clean recap of what had already been shared and what she believed Kearns had documented previously. As her report states: "In response to a UDC's inquiry to PennDOT on the National Park Service's jurisdictional authority regarding the PA abutment of the Skinners Falls-Milanville Bridge; under the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act, the National Park Service manages the Upper Delaware River and must protect its free-flowing condition, water quality, and remarkable values. Federal agencies must evaluate federally assisted water resource projects, defined as projects requiring federal permits, licenses, loans, or grants. The Skinners Falls Milanville Bridge Removal required NPS review as a federally assisted project. NPS determined that best management practices require complete removal of old bridge abutments, piers, and foundations, consistent with NPS Reference Manual 46: Wild and Scenic River."

For 2026, NPS will fund discharge measurement—cubic feet per second—at the Barryville USGS gage below Lackawaxen. Looking at 2027, she said there is only a slim chance NPS will be able to fund it again. She hoped to get an update from USGS and wasn't sure what the prospects were for USGS incorporating the gage into its own funding stream. The group may need to start thinking ahead: if a solution isn't found, there may be an opportunity (or need) for someone else to step up and fund discharge measurement starting in 2027.

Kurnath said that if anyone had driven by the Zane Grey Museum recently, they may have noticed significant ice damming. It appears to be a repeat issue based on documentation they've been reviewing. She described the cause as a perfect storm: heavy snowfall, extremely cold temperatures, and heat leaking from the building, which together are creating damming and significant water infiltration. The leaking has already damaged some of the "friezes" in the museum—specifically the images referenced in the museum study—and they are now working to secure emergency funding. The idea would be to replace the roof this summer if they can find the money, and to install an ice shield and other protective measures to prevent future damming. After the roof issue is addressed, the next phase would be pursuing conservation work to treat the friezes and other water-damaged areas. She promised to keep the group updated as solutions come together.

Dexter asked whether the Park Service guidance on removing structural elements in a water resource applies only to certain situations or also to older abutments that have been out there for a long time, noting that there are more abutments on the river than just the specific bridge situation being discussed. Kurnath said the “best practice” they’re following is removing structural supports associated with a water resource when a bridge is being removed, said the NPS policy guiding that approach is relatively new. In the Skinners Falls Bridge situation, they had to do the Section 7 review quickly, and that this was the guidance they used in that accelerated review. There is no plan to go back and revisit older projects or older abutments already in place along the river. Instead, this guidance is what will be applied going forward, as new projects arise. On the Pennsylvania abutment specifically, NPS understood all along that the PA abutment was not part of the emergency action. It wasn’t included in the work to bring down the New York side or remove the bridge itself. Their intent has always been that the Pennsylvania abutment would be evaluated later, once PennDOT and the Interstate Bridge Commission determine the long-term plan—whether there will no longer be a crossing there, and what decisions the legislatures ultimately make. If it gets to the point where the crossing is permanently eliminated, that’s when the more detailed conversation happens, including concerns about the abutment crumbling over time and causing future problems.

Dexter said there may also be historical value in acknowledging and preserving the fact that the bridge existed; it was built by local people—not by the Commonwealth or the State of New York—and that local people funded its construction. Kurnath didn’t argue with that and instead reflected on the reality of the emergency timeline: if they had had more than six weeks, the evaluation would have been much more thorough—like what happened with the Pond Eddy Bridge project, which took years of review and permitting. In the Skinners Falls Bridge case, they did what they could under emergency conditions, trying to address the immediate risk, and applying the best available policy guidance.

Henry said it looked like “a disaster waiting to happen”—not necessarily the abutment itself, but the approach area. He described an apparent gap—about three feet on either side as you approach the river—covered only with orange snow fencing and noted seeing tracks right up to it. The situation is not safe. He also pointed out how constrained the space is: it’s difficult even for one car to maneuver, and if two cars showed up, it would be a serious problem. While there are no-parking signs, there aren’t clear no-trespassing signs in that immediate area (other than signs on the adjacent properties), so a person could easily step over the rail and walk right up next to the hazard. He said he doesn’t understand why PennDOT, or whoever installed the railing, didn’t add an extra four feet to make it safer. Kurnath said that her understanding was PennDOT may have been mid-project when winter set in and perhaps never got to install the final railing as intended. Henry said there actually *is* a nice railing on both sides and at the end, but it appears to be mismeasured by about four feet, with the snow fence essentially masking the gap. He said it isn’t safe and offered to send her photos. Kurnath welcomed the photos and she would follow up.

Martin asked what kind of annual funding is needed for the Barryville USGS gage. Kurnath said she would need to check, but believed the USGS quote they received was in the range of \$12,000 to \$13,000 per year. Martin asked if NPS can’t fund discharge measurement in 2027, what are the potential funding sources? Are there places the group should be lobbying? Kurnath said that USGS is generally willing to accept money from essentially any entity. Pennsylvania already funds some parts of the gage—river height and other metrics—through Commonwealth funding, but the discharge measurement (the CFS component) is an additional \$12,000 to \$13,000 annually. Kurnath offered to connect Martin directly with the USGS contacts they had been working with so the group could hear more specifics from the source. Martin said that would be great and that she wanted to make sure the Town of Highland is involved too.

Rodgers asked whether the Water Safety Committee meetings were paused “until further notice” due to leadership turnover and committee reorganization. Kurnath said that the Water Safety Committee has been in a real transition: their previous chair, Jasmine Lueng, left in September, and then Ron Babus left in December. They have a meeting scheduled for the following week to talk about next steps. There have also been broader questions about the committee’s purpose and effectiveness—whether the meetings are accomplishing what they should, whether partners’ time is being respected, whether the frequency needs to change, and whether the right people are at the table. This is an opportunity for a “big reboot” of the Water Safety Committee. Rodgers asked if the Water Safety Partners meeting was still planned for spring? Kurnath said yes. Ramie confirmed the date for that is Friday, April 24th. It’s generally at 10:00 a.m., though she wasn’t sure the time was finalized yet. That meeting is usually hybrid, offered in-person at the UDC office and via Zoom. The format is still to be determined.

UDC Executive Director: Ramie said that immediately after Robinson had raised the question at a previous meeting about whether DRBC might have any opportunity to provide financial assistance, Brown reached out

directly to her. Three meetings followed to brainstorm ideas and shape a proposal that align with both organizations' shared missions and values. She thanked Brown for taking that initiative and for the DRBC's contribution. The DRBC will allocate \$500 each to four separate programs, totaling \$2,000. Those programs are the 6th Annual Upper Delaware Litter Sweep, the UDC River and Shoreline Cleanups Program (which currently does not have dedicated funding), "The Upper Delaware" newsletter to help offset mailing and printing costs, and the 38th Annual River Valley Awards. In each case, the DRBC will be acknowledged publicly as a sponsor. This support allows the UDC to free up funds that would otherwise have come from the general budget and redirect them toward operating expenses.

Ramie reported since the last Operations Committee report, there was no change in total given by local governments for stop-gap funding. So far, \$3,000 has been collected, in three \$1,000 contributions from Lackawaxen Township, the Town of Delaware, and the Town of Lumberland. We have also heard positive feedback from other municipalities, but those three are the confirmed contributions received to date since this campaign launched after the December meeting. The 2026 individual donations list has officially been restarted, and as of January 22, one contribution of \$300 had been received from the Dr. David, Morris, and Gertrude Robinson Charitable Trust, family connected to Aaron Robinson. She reminded the group that by the end of 2025, UDC had raised approximately \$27,000 through individual donors and organization.

The upcoming Citizens Preparedness Training Class is scheduled for March 11. Driscoll reported that when she last updated the group, there were only three people registered. As of today, that number had jumped to 47. Originally capped at 50, registration capacity has been increased to 70, and every registered participant will receive an emergency go-bag. The Community Room at the Tusten Town Hall can hold up to ~100 people, so they will continue monitoring numbers as the date approaches and may expand capacity further if needed. Walk-ins will be welcomed, since there will likely be some no-shows; those open slots can then be filled on site, and additional go-bags will be distributed accordingly. Captain Kilner will be visiting the venue tomorrow to review the space and determine setup needs. Ramie thanked everyone for the strong turnout. There had been real concern about whether they would reach the 50-person minimum required to hold the class, especially given that some Sullivan County sessions had been canceled previously. The fact that UDC reached that threshold comfortably is impressive. We will continue to encourage registrations.

Ramie reported that PennDOT has named a successor to Rich Roman as District 4 Executive. The new appointee is Jonathan Eboli, effective February 14. District 4 covers a six-county northeastern region that includes Pike and Wayne Counties. According to the PennDOT press release, Eboli joined PennDOT in 2010 as a Civil Engineer trainee and worked his way up through the district. Most recently, he served as Assistant District Executive for Maintenance since 2020 and has also held temporary Commonwealth-level assignments, including Chief Engineer for Highway Administration.

Ramie offered a reminder for representatives and alternates who have not yet submitted their 2026 Conflict of Interest forms to do so and return them to Driscoll. New lapel pins had been distributed, and anyone who had not yet received one could pick one up after the meeting. She directed attention to the February and March calendars included in the packet, which outline upcoming meetings, activities, deadlines, and assignments. Looking ahead to presentations, she announced that on March 5, Adam Waterbear DePaul from The Lenape Nation will present on the Rising Nation Journey, a four-year recurring event that travels the length of the Delaware River and is scheduled again for this summer. He will also discuss tribal issues more broadly. She reminded everyone that the April meeting has been moved earlier—to March 31, a fifth Tuesday—so as not to conflict with Passover. A presentation is planned for that evening by the DRBC on water resource impacts from AI data centers. She asked Brown whether that presenter had been confirmed. Brown replied that she had not yet finalized the specific individual but hoped to do so soon. Ramie said the presentation itself is happening; the only question is which DRBC staff member will deliver it. Additional presentation topics are being explored, including archaeological and geological studies and a turtle assessment, with Tom Kearns at NPS.

New Business:

- a. **Resolution 2026-01 (Amended): Authorizing Signatories for the Council's Bank Accounts in 2026:** A motion by Henry to accept amended Resolution 2026-01 to authorize signatories for the UDC's bank accounts in 2026, seconded by Rajszyk, carried.
- b. **Resolution 2026-04: Reaffirming a Sexual Harassment Prevention Policy for 2026:** A motion by Henry to accept Resolution 2026-04 reaffirming the sexual harassment prevention policy for 2026, seconded by Rajszyk, carried. Ramie said Driscoll will send an email tomorrow with a link to the NYS Dept. of Labor Sexual Harassment Prevention Training video and required answer sheet to all UDC members. If you have a certificate from another organization or work, please send that to Driscoll for credit.

- c. **Draft Letter to NPS: Summer Recreation for Children (UDC2026-02), Lackawaxen Township:** Engelhardt explained that the campground is proposing to replace a very old structure—nearly 100 years old—that has been used as a staff sleeping cabin. The replacement structure would be slightly larger but built on essentially the same footprint. What triggered review was visibility: although the new cabin would not significantly expand the use, it would be visible from the river. Because of that visibility, the project requires a Conditional Use Permit. The Project Review Committee had voted to recommend a finding of substantial conformance. The proposed replacement does not represent a meaningful expansion of use, but rather modernization and safety improvements for a long-standing facility that supports youth summer recreation activities in the township. A motion by Henry to send the letter recommending substantial conformance for Summer Recreation for Children in Lackawaxen Township to the NPS, seconded by Richardson, carried.
- d. **Other:** Ramie said she is seeking the Council’s support for submitting an application to the Delaware Watershed Conservation Fund, a grant program run by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and administered by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation. The UDC would apply under the capacity building category. The intent would be to secure funding to hire a consultant to develop a comprehensive fundraising and development plan—something that had been recommended by the Funding Task Force following the October presentation by David Lillard and Chuck Hoffman. The October discussion had highlighted the need for a full-scale, strategic approach to fundraising and communications—one that goes beyond incremental efforts by the existing three staff members. The goal would be to develop a structured development plan that aligns messaging, branding, donor cultivation, and long-term funding strategies into a cohesive case statement. Outside expertise is necessary if UDC wants to do this properly. The deadline for the current grant round is March 26, and the funding opportunity only opened on January 29, so the window is tight. This particular capacity-building category is the most competitive of the four categories offered through the program. It receives only about 10 percent of total funding. The minimum request is \$75,000 and can go up to \$250,000. Historically, this grant program required a one-to-one funding match, which effectively ruled UDC out in prior years. However, for 2026, the match requirement has been removed. While a match is still strongly encouraged and would improve scoring during evaluation, it is no longer mandatory. The DRBC is willing to assist in developing the application. The process is intensive and requires careful alignment with the program’s business plan and strategic priorities. Applicants are encouraged to meet with a proposal lab in advance to present their concept, receive feedback, and participate in informational webinars before submitting. The UDC could include in-kind contributions from its municipal members as part of the proposal, since the UDC already functions as a regional cooperative entity. Those contributions would strengthen the application by demonstrating collaborative investment. To provide additional context, she read directly from the program’s description of capacity-building grants: “The goal is to strengthen the ability of local communities and organizations to collaboratively enhance fish and wildlife habitat and improve access to nature by increasing practitioner knowledge, organizational capacity, partnership strength, and overall ability to deliver on-the-ground work.” Projects funded under this program must begin after July 1, 2026, commence within six months of award, and be completed within three years—offering a generous timeline for implementation. Richardson said he would certainly endorse going for it. They acknowledged that it sounds ambitious but suggested leaving it up to Ramie’s judgment as she works through the application details to determine whether it is realistically achievable. Ramie noted that the timing coincides with other major deadlines—the March 30 deadline for the spring newsletter and the March 31 deadline for the annual reports to the NPS. A motion by Richardson for the UDC to apply for the Delaware Watershed Conservation Fund grant, seconded by Rajszyk, carried.

Old Business:

- a. **NPS Comments on Revised PEL Study for SR 1002 Skinners Falls-Milanville Bridge:** Ramie said this letter is informational for members. Kurnath said NPS is waiting to hear from PennDOT whether a new bridge will be constructed at that location or not.
- b. **Other:** None.

Public Comment: None.

Adjournment: A motion by Roeder seconded by Robinson to adjourn the meeting at 7:39 p.m. carried. The meeting was followed by a 2026 board photo and reception for new officers.

Minutes prepared by Stephanie Driscoll, 2/12/2026