



Upper Delaware Council

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UPPER DELAWARE COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

February 6, 2025

The Upper Delaware Council held its monthly meeting on Thursday, February 6, 2025. Chairperson Rodgers called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. Roll call followed reciting the Pledge of Allegiance.

Attendees:

Town of Hancock- Fred Peckham (Zoom), Town of Fremont- Jim Rodgers, Town of Cohecton- Larry Richardson (Zoom), Town of Delaware- Harold Roeder, Town of Tusten- Evan Padua, Town of Deerpark- Ginny Dudko, Town of Highland- Christine Martin, Town of Lumberland- Nadia Rajsz (Zoom), Damascus Township- Jeff Dexter (Zoom, joined 7:47pm), Lackawaxen Township- Doug Case, Shohola Township- Aaron Robinson, National Park Service- Lindsey Kurnath, Commonwealth of Pennsylvania- Tim Dugan, New York State- Ryan Coulter (Zoom, left the meeting at 8:15pm), Delaware River Basin Commission- Kristen Bowman Kavanagh (Zoom)

Absent:

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), River Reporter- Liam Mayo, WJFF Radio- Rosie Starr, Delaware Currents- Meg McGuire (Zoom)

Guests:

Town of Deerpark- Bill Dudko, Town of Tusten- Cathleen Breen, NPS- Carly Marshall, Norm Starr, Jan London, Mike Schanil, Jody Schanil, Tom Shepstone, Vivian Corso, Tony Kwiatkowski, Silver Canoe- Allen Crouthamel, Indian Head Canoes- Amy Salvia, Randal Bushart, Mike Edison, Peter Greene, Hester Greene, Chris Sawicki (Zoom), Tom Rue (Zoom), Raymond Gray (Zoom), Joe (Zoom), Jill Behling Padua (Zoom), Colleen Clark Rizzo (Zoom), Vincent (Zoom), Amy Becker (Zoom), Jane Cypher (Zoom), Silver Canoe- Danielle Crouthamel (Zoom), Jeff Sidle (Zoom), Erin Feely-Nahem (Zoom), Rose Biondi (Zoom), Adam Curtis (Zoom), Cynthia Nash (Zoom), Craig (Zoom), Bonnie Bortree (Zoom), Paul Sheehan (Zoom), Art Suckewer (Zoom), Cass Collins (Zoom), Barbara Arrindell (Zoom), Linda Slocum (Zoom), Brandi Merolla (Zoom), Kittatinny Canoes- Rocco Baldassari (Zoom), Randy Harris (Zoom), Joe Levine (Zoom), Tamara D'Antoni (Zoom)

Swearing-in of 2025 Officers by Town of Fremont Town Clerk Jody Schanil: Town of Fremont Town Clerk Jody Schanil administered the oaths of office to: Chairperson Jim Rodgers; Vice-chairperson Evan Padua; and Secretary/Treasurer Al Henry. Rodgers in turn presented Schanil with a UDC lapel pin with the council's appreciation.

Rodgers thanked the council for the opportunity to lead them in 2025.

Presentation: "History of the Erie Railroad in the Callicoon Area and the Upper Delaware River Valley" by Randal Bushart, Callicoon Depot Historian: Randy Bushart introduced himself. He grew up in the Albany, NY area but has come to the Upper Delaware region for summer camp in Callicoon since he was around 13 years old. He is also the Callicoon Depot Historian. A lot of people are aware they are trying to turn the Callicoon Depot into a Visitor Center.

In 1832 the New York and Erie Railroad was chartered by New York State to run from (or near) New York City to Lake Erie (Dunkirk, NY). Hence the name Erie Railroad. A Chief Engineer of the Delaware & Hudson Canal, Benjamin Wright, was tasked at the time. After getting to the Allegheny Mountain Range he determined that a canal couldn't be built, but a railroad may be possible. They broke ground around 1835 in Deposit and started construction. One of the reasons they had to start from Piermont, not NYC, is that they were chartered to run in NYS.

Once they started surveying, they discovered a better route along the Delaware River. From Port Jervis to Lackawaxen the D&H Canal had the better side through NY, with cliffs along the opposite side.

An 1847 survey was shown. They looked at two interior routes to avoid entering the state of Pennsylvania. They considered building the railroad up through Wurtsboro to Monticello coming down Callicoon Creek and up the Delaware River. That would be better for business with farms to ship from there. When they crunched the numbers, it was a better decision to build through the Delaware River. The railroad may have never come through this area if they took that "interior route". The New York and Erie Railroad put out an ad for contractors to build the railroad. They had stipulations that "they would not use ardent spirits", meaning no alcohol for the workers. In 1926 there was an article in the *Democrat* that interviewed Mrs. Charles Curtis who was on scene when the first train came all the way through in May of 1851. She was quoted, "I was one of a crowd of children, being twelve years of age at the time, who made wreaths of spring flowers to be thrown on the engine, and I remember well that it was a very serious question with us, even after we were ready, whether our wreaths might not stop or derail the engine." It was such a new technology; people didn't know much about it.

The local residents were not always welcoming of the railroad. The railroad scared teams of horses and there were occasional crossing accidents. There were a lot of lawsuits against the railroad. The *Callicoon Local Record* in 1868 published, "It is proposed to take down the sign boards 'Look out for the engine' on the Erie Railroad, and substitute them, 'Prepare to meet your God!'" If you boarded a train in 1951 you may purchase for 50 cents a Harper's Guide. They did nice graphics and gave descriptions of the towns along the way as you rode the train.

Shown was an employee timetable from 1855. This is how train crews operated at that time. On the Westward trains there were 1st Class passenger trains, a mail train, a night-express, but there was also a Westbound only emigrant train. They sold lower priced tickets on an emigrant train. This is how a lot of European people came into NY to help develop towns. On the table there were special instructions for approaching all stations and Wooding Places; the first source of fuel for the locomotives. They had wood agents assigned to the railroad to contract with local farmers for loads of wood to supply the steam locomotives.

On 1860 Abraham Lincoln traveled on the NY and Erie Railroad through Callicoon. He was a young lawyer at the time, only a year before he was elected president. He was going to a conference in Norwich, CT to speak.

A poster from 1853 was shown on fresh oyster delivery through the Erie Railroad. You could ship cigars, fish, china, beer, and many other things on the railroad.

A photo of an 1860's locomotive near Port Jervis was shown. There was a gentleman who made color drawings in 1875 of what they looked like, showing how majestic and beautiful they were. The locomotive at the time was assigned to the engineer. They put a lot of personal touches on them.

In 1861 the NY and Erie Railroad changed its name to the Erie Railway. They used to do that if they were in trouble financially and needed to get reorganized. The Erie Railroad was struggling during construction, going bankrupt a few times, even during construction. A few stereoview cards were shown of the Erie Railway in Callicoon, looking from where Agway is currently down toward the Delaware Youth Center and Callicoon Creek.

In 1878 the Erie Railway became the Lake Erie and Western Railroad. They expanded, buying some railroads in PA, Ohio, and into Illinois reaching Chicago. A rare train photo at the Callicoon Depot was shown that burned on November 5, 1895. At around 11pm that night the stove caught the building on fire. The building fire would have spread to the rest of the town. It happened to be the first Tuesday of November, so the townspeople were up waiting for election results. They worked out of a boxcar for a while, and then the Erie Railroad came with contractors in December 1896 to open the new Callicoon Depot that still stands today. That station almost burned in 1913. The agent left the station at suppertime. A mantle gas lamp caught some papers on the desk inside. A passing train saw the fire, rang the fire department that was across the street at the time and they were able to save the depot.

The Erie Railroad had their own police force. A badge and handcuffs were shown. There was a chicken thief that was caught and a safe was blown up, only for the robbers to find \$8. The Erie Railroad still has their own police force.

A tourist souvenir cup made in Austria for Charles F. Starck who had a store in Callicoon featured the Callicoon Depot. In 1920's the railroad started using scenes in their timetables. A May 27, 1928 timetable featuring the Callicoon Depot was shown with an intertrack fence to prevent people racing across the tracks for the train.

The Erie Railroad promoted the Delaware River Valley as "Summerland". Pamphlets were shown from the 1930s and 1940s. There was a brochure on rafting and canoeing, and where to camp. Inside the pamphlet you would find a color map with the Upper Delaware River. Each town would be featured with places to stay. There were 68 places to write and stay, a lot being old farmhouses; much like the modern day "AirBnB". A series of postcards were shown showed what the depot looked like at the time, people coming off the train, and another of the Callicoon Creek Bridge. There was an old stone water tower that was torn down. They built another one with a wood base that still stands today behind the Olympia Hotel.

Each town along the railroad had a telegraph call, a 2-alpha code. When they telegraphed that station, the operator would know who they were speaking to. Callicoon's was "KC".

A map for leasing properties from the 1940s showing Callicoon and the station was pictured. When the railroads came to town they were giving wide property lines. You can see upper Main St. and lower Main St. and that the railroad owned all the property between them.

A ticket of the Delaware & Susquehanna Divisions & Branches was shown from 1898-1901 with stations like Parkers Glen, Masthope, Stockport, and a lot of places that disappeared from the station stops.

A before and after of Callicoon was shown. You can see in the turn-of-the-century photo the early automobiles, but that the Callicoon Depot has changed very little.

Freight train photos were shown of a train heading westbound departing Callicoon. A floor plan of the Callicoon Depot from August 1909 was also shown. One postcard showed a receipt from ordering a table from a catalog to be shipped via the Erie Railroad with a freight to be paid when picking up. Bluestone, fruits and vegetables, chickens, dairy and butter were shipped via rail. A photo of glass plate negatives were shown of the creamery in Callicoon along the railroad along with a milk can from Fairview Farm in Callicoon.

The Erie Railroad used the Delaware River for publicity shots. A photo was shown of a westbound train around Hankins with a diesel and steam train. They also used the river in a lot of artwork and ads. A front and back cover of the 1948 Annual Report to stockholders had a painting featuring the Basket Creek and Delaware River Valley and a diesel train. That same view graced the cover of the Erie Railroad Employee Magazine for many years which was a great reference for information. In 1952 they are still referencing "Summerland" with special rates up and down the river. In 1950 the magazine featured Callicoon local resident Allen Heyn, a WWII Veteran involved in the Pacific ship sinking. He survived while a lot of his shipmates were attacked by sharks. He went on to work for the Erie Railroad. A photo of him at the Callicoon Depot was shown along with his side-jobs like his gas station and nursery. B. Dudko said Heyn was one of the eight survivors.

The Callicoon Depot escaped another disaster. In 1978 twenty-one train cars piled up just beyond the depot. Roeder said it was shocking that wreck didn't take any buildings with it.

In 1960 the railroads were in bad shape financially. They looked to merge and merged with Erie Lackawanna Railroad.

Photos were shown taken by a passenger from the back of Train #21 in 1965 at Cochection, Lake Huntington Station. He also took a picture leaving Callicoon showing the original Callicoon Theatre. Another photo of the Hankins station was shown that does not exist anymore.

The railroad lost the mail contracts from the government that made passenger trains very unprofitable. They couldn't get rid of passenger train service without interference from the government so they made their trips very uncomfortable and squeezed passenger onto cars. A picture was shown of the last passenger train from Callicoon in 1966.

The Callicoon Depot survived as a maintenance building for the railroad, signalmen, and craftsmen. In 1976 Erie Lackawanna Railway became part of Conrail. Conrail started saving money by tearing down buildings in NYS. An article was shown of "Narrowsburg Depot Gone in One Day." People in Callicoon started getting nervous, asking Conrail if they planned to tear down the Callicoon Depot. In an article it stated that the townspeople painted the depot and put up flower boxes. The first picture Bushart took in 1981 of the Callicoon Depot was shown, where you can still see the flower boxes intact on the building.

In 1999 Conrail went to CSX and Norfolk Southern. Pictures were shown of the Norfolk Southern train. Bushart said his son is now a locomotive engineer for Norfolk Southern. In 2025 Norfolk Southern leased to Central New York Railroad (New York Susquehanna and Western Railway). They have lines in NJ and NY. They keep the local line up to move between routes.

The caboose in Callicoon was shown, but Bushart said we have a new beginning in Callicoon for the depot. We have a chance for a gem in our valley, transforming the Callicoon Depot to a Visitor Center. Rodgers and the council thanked Bushart for his interesting presentation and display of his collection of railroad memorabilia.

Approval of January 2, 2025 Minutes: A motion by Henry seconded by Padua to approve the January 2, 2025 meeting minutes, carried.

Public Comment on the Agenda: Barbara Arrindell asked the council to please ask for a pause in the demolition of the Skinners Falls-Milanville Bridge. It can be restored in an ethical, environmentally friendly, and cost-effective way using historic bridge technology. Art Suckewer has joined tonight's meeting via Zoom; copies of his comments replying to PennDOT's responses explain the process and technique of restoring historic bridges. PennDOT is wrong. There has been no movement with the bridge, so therefore there is no emergency. On PennDOT's comments from February 3rd Damascus Citizens for Sustainability (DCS) sent information that included Governor Shapiro's letter allowing the bridge to be destroyed. He stated in the letter himself that he is not using his emergency power to destroy the bridge. Then what is he doing? There can't be an emergency then. PennDOT just wanted the bridge gone. Is it a money situation? DCS is urging the council to vote no on allowing the demolition of the bridge. Please give it some time. The emergency can be eliminated without blocking river traffic in the summer and without causing any other problems that PennDOT has pointed at. Hopefully everyone has had a chance to read the responses from Suckewer. Please take note and pause the demolition of the Skinners Falls Bridge.

Suckewer said he has been involved in restoring historic bridges, including ones dealing with PennDOT. He has helped with the process of disassembling historic bridges with abutments collapsing and then using the technique of how it was put up originally to reassemble the bridge. This process is much more cost effective for the states or entity. You can have the bridge stable and secure without bothering the river flow or recreation. There are ways of doing it without causeways being installed, etc. These are the means that were originally used and are safer, having a lower impact on the habitat. He is an engineer by trade, but mostly deals with aerospace. There are people available that specialize with restoring old bridges, as opposed to NPS, DOT's, etc. that deal with constructing new bridges. If you believe they are going to demo the bridge and get it cleaned up by Memorial Day, you are being unrealistic. Peckham asked what the lifespan is of a re-constructed historic bridge? Suckewer said you would be bringing the bridge to new condition with original techniques, using modern materials. The lifespan of the restored bridge would depend on maintenance done; deck replacement would be around 30 years and painting done every 50 years. The reason this bridge is failing is because it hasn't been maintained. You can see the cracks in the abutments and how they've progressed over the last 30 years. Peckham asked what the weight limit would be on a restored bridge? Suckewer said it would be the original weight limit. He would not rate it higher than 10 tons.

Hester Greene of Damascus Township said other people in this room got the irony in the December article of the River Reporter that spoke about Governor Shapiro's approval to demo the bridge with explosives that followed up with a smaller article with a link to a website that talks about historic preservation in Pennsylvania, being a Keystone Community. There are grants and partnerships for restoring something in our community that is important to our history. During the presentation on the Erie Railroad, Bushart said they used to pick milk up at a farm by Skinners Falls. You used to have to take a ferry across there to the train depot before they decided to put the Skinners Falls Bridge in. That was transformative for the community. To have it destroyed is to give up something voluntarily in our community that we cannot regain. There are people in this world who have just lost everything and we are giving this up voluntarily. Please vote no.

Rosie Starr of Wayne County said she echoes the statements of Hester Greene, Barbara Arrindell, and Art Suckewer. She has been a part of this community for many years now, listening to the sentiments of the people who have lived here for generations. She has met people that have family that go back to the 1750's. They love the Skinners Falls Bridge, the arches, the beauty of it; it's like a Currier and Ives painting. In the Town of Milanville there are fourteen structures that are historic, and that includes the bridge. This is a piece of history that represents greatness. This is greatness right here in our community and we need to preserve it, not destroy it. Vote yes to preserve. The sentiments the people have are of value to all of the community. The people in the community make the community great. This is an expression of greatness.

Committee Reports: There were no questions regarding previously distributed minutes for Water Use/Resource Management 1/21 (Evan Padua), Operations 1/28 (Jim Rodgers), or Project Review 1/28 (Larry Richardson).

Status Reports:

Delaware River Basin Commission: Bowman Kavanagh reported that there will be a DRBC business meeting on 3/12. The Water Management Advisory Committee will meet on 2/19, on which the UDC has a seat. There will be a Regulated Flow Advisory Committee meeting on 3/20.

NYS Dept. of Environmental Conservation: Coulter congratulated the new Chair, Vice-chair, and Secretary Treasurer. He reported the Biology Department is writing reports and planning work for next year. After years off, this year they were finally able to answer ice fishing inquiries. We finally have safe ice on most lakes and ponds in New York for people to get out and enjoy.

Padua asked about the Callicoon Access (Riverside Park in Callicoon). Coulter said the DEC purchased that parcel in August and plan to have a ramp there as part of their original design. They still need to get the official plans up to Design and Construction to get an idea of a timeline and the work they will be looking at. Surveyors have been out on the parcel making progress. Hopefully it will be a wonderful addition to the river. Padua asked if they need any help or suggestions to please let him know and to keep us up to date with any information. Coulter said the Design and Construction group is DEC staff, so once the plans are out, he will send them to the council. They still need to get the ball rolling with funding. Rodgers asked if there is a target date? Coulter said based on how long the Long Eddy Access took, logistically around two years.

Ramie asked about the DEC Skinners Falls Access; do they plan to do any work there with construction happening with PennDOT? Coulter said DEC met with Jessica Weinman from UPDE and they have a work request in to improve the path down to the water. All the bridge work that's happening could change that. If PennDOT is going to use that site to access the river, they may have more options to improve the site with a possible boat access.

Ramie asked about the Ten Mile River Access. Henry was wondering if there is a status update with the DEC Management Plan? Coulter said he doesn't have much to add until they own all of that land from the Boy Scouts. They are working on it, but it is a massive parcel and will take a little while.

Pennsylvania Dept. of Conservation and National Resources: Dugan congratulated the 2025 UDC officers. He said it has been a good, cold winter with a lot of "hard water" for ice fishing and good frozen ground for snowmobiling. Governor Shapiro released his budget proposal earlier this week. He doesn't have many details on that, but it is the first public step of the budget process. It needs to be signed by the end of June so there will be a lot of hearings coming up. There is strong DCNR and outdoor recreation support from the Governor's office. Governor Shapiro has been a big advocate for people to enjoy the outdoors in Pennsylvania. The PA Game Commission announced the Game Wardens graduation. No one from this region graduated. Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission (PFBC) is working to get a new class out after having another just graduate. Avian Bird Flu is spreading through bird populations. If someone finds a bird that may be infected, you can call the PA Game Commission. The best source is to give them a call and one of the local Game Wardens or a staff member from the Biology Department will come out to take it. Lehigh Valley has some of the larger hits, but it is moving up and down the coast. Chronic Wasting Disease was found at a new location in Luzerne County. That location was 40 miles from the next closest case. It was a captive deer. They will keep an eye on that to hopefully keep it contained. PA Game Commission is looking for public support. Part of their biology team is looking to see how the turkey flock is doing. The DCNR Statewide Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (SCORP) is posted online and is looking for [public comment](#). There may be a little more snow coming this weekend. It's nice to have some nice, solid, frozen ground.

G. Dudko asked if they are seeing the bird flu in any specific type of bird? Dugan said it hits Snow Geese pretty heavily. There was one in Pike County State Forest Land. G. Dudko said, so then it's mostly larger birds? Dugan said he can't comment fully on that. There have been some cases in chickens and poultry farms. G. Dudko asked Coulter if he's heard anything in NYS? Coulter asked for that to be added to the action items for him to follow up on at DEC.

National Park Service: The NPS monthly activity report is included in the packet. Kurnath said UPDE has been consumed in work for the Skinners Falls-Milanville Bridge in the month of January. All paperwork has been completed, including the Section 7 Review they give to the Army Corps of Engineers. They are finalizing the Special Use Permit with PennDOT which has not been issued yet. All of UPDE's staff has been working on Skinners Falls Bridge in some capacity.

It is currently Eagle watch season, and things are in full swing.

As far as staffing goes, UPDE staff that were on details these past few months are scheduled to return. NPS is currently under a 90-day hiring freeze, with permanent staff whose offers had been accepted being rescinded. She is unsure what will happen with that yet. Rodgers asked if that means positions that had already been filled and people hired? Kurnath said it applies to any position that was scheduled to start after 2/9. People had sold their houses and were preparing to move. This will impact their seasonal staff hiring too.

The Commercial Use Authorization (CUA) applications are live on the portal. There have been some glitches with people trying to apply but they have received quite a few applications already and are currently working to process them. Working with the portal has been a change for this year and she appreciates everyone managing that shift.

Law Enforcement has been focused on enforcing overweight vehicles on the Roebling Bridge. Ramie asked what the weight limit is on that bridge? Kurnath said 10 tons.

UDC Executive Director: Ramie said she had sent a message out prior to this meeting on our federal funding situation. We normally pay out our monthly bills on the fourth Tuesday at that month's Operations Committee meeting. Due to the federal financial assistance freeze order from the Office of Management and Budget that was issued on Monday, judicially blocked on Tuesday just before it was to go into effect, and rescinded on Wednesday, the UDC's Bureau of Treasury account was suspended for four days. There was no warning, no timetable given, and very little communication, not even an explanation on the site itself. Since we don't receive any contribution from either state as envisioned in the River Management Plan (RMP), we are reliant on the federal funding we receive. The \$300,000 allocation is in the ASAP account for 2025, but we were blocked from accessing it. The Operations Committee had asked her to look into if we could draw down more than a month at a time from the ASAP account in case this occurs in the future. The answer is no. The policy dictates that we are only allowed to withdraw the amount for reimbursement of our immediate, direct expenses rather than withdraw any extra dollars as a contingency against any future interruptions. If something like that happens again, we could use our own unrestricted funds and pay ourselves back with our federal funding.

Last Wednesday Ramie received an email from the Public Affairs Director at the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) in Region 2 asking if the UDC would be interested in providing a quote for a news release they would be issuing to announce that Mike Martucci is the new EPA Regional Administrator. During his one term in the NYS Senate (42nd District) we found him to be receptive to our issues, meeting with him through the Government Officials Liaison Committee. He had also attended our awards banquet in 2021 as the Keynote Speaker with ideas on how we could approach our funding situation. He attended the Delaware River Watershed Congressional Caucus that former Congressman Antonio Delgado put together, the 2021 Day on the Delaware, and toured the Callicoon Depot. Martucci was the one to suggest to the Press Office that we might be an interested stakeholder to hear from in the release that is in the packets. Ramie was happy to give a quote; it's nice to know we have a friend at the EPA.

Ramie reported that we have received three individual donations for 2025. Two donations were in response to our 1/14 press release about 2023-24 donations and our funding situation from Sarah Vanouwerkerk of NYC and Rosie and Norman Starr of Beach Lake. A third was from Ginny and Bill Dudko, in memory of David Dean to a charity of choice, for which she sent an acknowledgment to the Dean family.

Dates have been set for the UDC's signature events this year. The Upper Delaware Litter Sweep will take place the entire month of April to cover Earth Day and give flexibility to the towns and townships. The 37th Annual Family Raft Trip will be on the first Sunday of August 8/3, with the river segment to be determined. The 37th Annual River Valley Awards banquet will be held on Sunday 9/14 at the Central House Family Resort in Beach Lake.

February and March calendars are included in the packet. At the full council meeting on 3/6 we will start early at 6:30pm to watch the Sexual Harassment Prevention Training Course video and complete the interactive component. If you have received that training from another source, feel free to send the certification to Driscoll for proof. We will also send out the link in advance for anyone who would like to complete the course on their own time. She also reminded everyone to complete and submit the Conflict-of-Interest disclosures, if you have not already.

New Business:

- a. **UPDE's Commercial Use Authorization (CUA) Fee Structure Changes:** Amy Salvia of Indian Head Canoes said the CUA holders in attendance tonight are raising concerns regarding the CUA fee structure changes and their impact on the river valley. The Upper Delaware Scenic and Recreational River is a unit of the National Park System, not a National Park, with most of the land being privately owned. We are managed in a different manner than other National Parks. Federal regulations by the NPS have limited applicability due to private ownership. The NPS role is "much more limited" than in most parks. There is very little NPS-owned land, making 36 CFR regulations limited in application.

Salvia said the River Management Plan (RMP) advocates for permitting authorities for commercial livery operations. They argue that the CUA may not be the most appropriate solution for regulating Upper Delaware River commercial activities. There are two types of CUAs: In-Park CUAs, which allow services solely within park boundaries with gross receipts limited to \$25,000, and Out-of-Park CUAs, that cover the incidental use of park resources by commercial operators whose services start/terminate outside the park boundaries. Liveries fall under Out-of-Park CUAs, according to NPS. The largest CUA holders use private properties to access the river. Use of NPS-managed access points is incidental.

In 2017 there was a 600% increase in CUA fees, with a commitment from NPS not to raise them further except for inflation. With the new fee structure, NPS plans to collect 1.5% of gross park-dependent receipts in the first two-year CUA cycle, increasing to 2% in the next cycle. There is potential for NPS to charge up to 5% of gross park-dependent receipts. These increased fees cannot be absorbed. They will have to be passed onto rental customers as a "National Park Service Fee". Liveries financially support private infrastructure to access the river. A percentage of park-dependent gross receipts is unfair due to liveries' high cost of doing business. NPS fees will impact affordability for families to come recreate on the Delaware River and will disproportionately affect livery customers, but not those who own their own boats or use public access points. Livery customers pay for public use of restrooms, garbage, and maintenance of public access that they do not utilize. They all pay a federal tax, which means they essentially face a "double tax". These fees have the potential of outpricing families, resulting in less economic activity in local business.

UPDE had a biannual budget of \$83,783 in 2017 which has increased to \$237,000 by 2024. This increase is significantly higher than inflation, which would have been predicted at \$99,800. The significant driver for the budget increase, according to NPS, is the increased number of CUAs from 62 to 105. UPDE administrative costs are \$35,600 to process all CUAs, which will disproportionately affect larger CUA holders to pay for most of this based on a % of gross receipts. Personnel costs have increased, leading to fewer employees taking on more responsibility with higher pay. Liveries pay for maintenance costs of \$34,000 including trash removal, lawn care, and repairs, which are used by the general public and generally not the liveries. Law Subsection 52.16 states "The law states fees may include for facility maintenance, but it should be 'reasonable'. Facility maintenance is not required to be recouped."

There is \$168,800 allocated within UPDE's budget to enforcement and monitoring patrols, but the need for this is unclear. There is a lack of visible enforcement or monitoring activities affecting livery operations directly. NPS does not speak to rental customers or inspect livery life jackets. Local fire and emergency squads are the first responders. State highways are patrolled by police. National Canoe Safety Patrol (NCSP) is volunteer. Liveries are concerned about paying for services they do not utilize, like law enforcement in areas outside of their operations (Hancock) and full year salaries when the majority of

business is in two or three months. Additionally, NPS guidelines during high water events are often provided late, if delivered at all. The local liveries work together through different means to figure out the safest solution for guests.

There is a lack of partnership with the NPS when there has been historical mutual benefits between the NPS and liveries (emergency river access support, river cleanup, Skinners Falls garbage). Recent CUA overhaul undermines this partnership with changes presented during the peak season (July 4th week). NPS circumvented the Upper Delaware Council (UDC) as the liaison between NPS, private sector, and local communities. NPS's CUA approach is incompatible with the RMP's values and goals. The application of a generic, one-size-fits-all CUA to the Upper Delaware does not fit the unique circumstances of private land access and commercial use in the region.

The current CUA structure should be revisited and revised to fit the unique needs of the Upper Delaware River. A new, tailored permit system should reflect the private land-based nature of the Upper Delaware River accesses and align with the RMPs values. A reasonable fee for this permit should be negotiated. Local liveries are calling for a collaboration with a need for a more cooperative partnership between the NPS and commercial operators. The CUA system, as currently structured, creates significant financial strain and lacks sufficient oversight.

Tom Shepstone said he was asked by some of the liveries to take a look at the situation from his standpoint and experience with the RMP. He looked through the legal documents. There are three levels of regulation: the first is the law, second is the regulations, and third is the policies. Ultimately, it goes back to the law to determine what is permitted. When he received a letter from UPDE Superintendent Kurnath it quoted NPS policy, etc. The legislation itself was preceded by the designation of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act. This all preceded the decision here. The RMP refers to fees, that there will be a fee, license, and the NPS will develop that with advice from the UDC. There is no reference in the letter she sent to having consulted with the UDC in redoing the whole CUA system. That is a problem. The law that covers this precedes the policies. This is not a normal park, and that is stated in the RMP. The RMP is a social contract between the Federal Government, the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, the State of New York, the Delaware River Basin Commission, every participating town or township along the river, and the UDC. If you are going to ignore what the RMP states, you're ignoring that social contract and that's what is happening here. However, there is an opportunity to get together and have a discussion. The UDC should invite the NPS to talk about this in a rational way. The CUA being used on the Upper Delaware River is like fitting a square peg in a round hole. He sent a memo prior to this meeting showing many issues. It's either \$25,000 worth of revenue on park land or that there is no limit if you start or end out of the park. There is no anticipation of a profit connected with a CUA. It illustrates the complete lack of applicability to this situation. It's a case of fitting a one-size-fits-all rule from a manual to make it fit, but it does not work here. There is no reason to use a CUA here. It should be a license with a negotiated fee. Section 10.1 in the NPS Management Policies talks about "community members services": to be authorized through contracts or CUAs unless otherwise provided by law. The UDC precedes any of that. He asked that the UDC collaborate with the NPS and CUA holders. The structure shouldn't be imposed by the NPS; it breaks the social contract. For example, the Saint Croix River has a CUA, but is set up with a variety of ways to charge. The program is not a one-size-fits-all, but a different system for different types of users. A fishing guide's capital investment vs. a livery is not comparable; if you take 3% of either it's totally different. He urges collaboration.

G. Dudko said the presentation by Salvia was laid out clearly in a way the council hasn't seen before. Padua said out of the RMP, as they've already spoken about on page 107, the NPS should be working together with the UDC and taking guidance from us. The UDC was not asked for input this time around. He was happy to hear from Shepstone and Salvia's statement. As a CUA holder himself, he feels the "cart was put before the horse" on this one. After reading the Community Guidelines, he agrees that the CUA is probably not the right fit for our area. His father has been paying the fees for 20-30 years now, wondering where that money goes to. The UDC, NPS, and CUA holders should collaborate to find a better system that works for everyone. CUA holders were notified of the change in early July, after the fishing guides were told NPS would be "revisiting the CUA fees". Since the CUA applications go out in January and they were only told

in July, that's only six months notification. He encourages changes in the future be done in a timelier matter.

Henry recommends that the UDC tries to meet with the NPS and others at the next WU/RM meeting (2/18). Kurnath said she is open to meeting but the objective should be in writing. The 2025/2026 cycle is already implemented. The law states that with any park issuing a CUA, you need to recover all costs from the program. A National Park Unit will be managed to the same set of policies, management, and laws. Our designation is irrelevant on how a unit is managed. She said she is unclear of the benefits of additional dialogue. Rodgers asked how it was raised the first time? Kurnath said there has been a bit of misinformation shared about that and would like to switch to written documents at this point. Everything that has been shared is not being reflected in the room. They have and will continue to re-evaluate the CUA fee structure every few years. That is what previous UPDE Superintendent Kris Heister wrote. Rodgers said he is struck by the recent fee increase in 2017 of 600%, but imagines that NPS crunched their numbers. Was there a commitment from NPS not to raise them further unless due to inflation? Was that a formal written statement? Salvia said it is in writing and she can get that to the council. Kurnath is aware it's in writing.

Richardson said in the past the NPS has come in suggesting what needs to be done, and unless it wasn't something "out of whack" the UDC wasn't involved. This is a bit different. It's hard to make an objective decision on whether or not the NPS is wrong about this. He would like to see the NPS present this to the council. Include an itemized list of the expenses you are looking to cover in the agreement. How can this fare be recovered from those users? It couldn't be voted on tonight. Kurnath said she had sent that itemized list out this summer via email, but she can recirculate it.

Allen Crouthamel of Silver Canoe said one of his concerns is the budgetary numbers; trying to find out where the money will be expended. Why the request for such a dramatic raise? When he bought Silver Canoe in 2017 he started with a nominal licensing fee. In the next two years there was a 2,600% increase from 2017 gradient system with Silver Canoe being very small at the time. The next cycle will make it a 3,100% increase from 2017. That just isn't absorbable. NPS is requesting the funds, says it's part of their law, but there is no statement there that says fees can be determined by the park Superintendent. There is language and some room to discuss if the NPS is willing. Seems like within the next two-year cycle, we have the chance to get it right. Is the NPS willing to sit down and talk about a solution? CUA holders were given broad numbers from law enforcement use that he requested again today and Kurnath promptly sent him. Those budget numbers don't break down individual numbers. Is there an UPDE full budget available? How are the number generated? How are those being put onto the liveries based on the number of people they serve? Kurnath said they have a budget for how much the staff costs, etc. but she can't give that out publicly. If you want to you can request a FOI. Crouthamel said that the budget would be publicly available. Kurnath said anyone can submit a FOI request so that UPDE can go through and figure out what is protective rights for each employee. She requested we get away from "questions and answers" and receive a written request via email.

A motion by Henry to discuss this further at the 2/18 WU/RM Committee meeting, seconded by Dugan, carried. Henry said it's a fact that the livery owners were not informed about these changes in a professional manner. G. Dudko said we shouldn't wait two years to start the conversation; we should start now. Henry said the UDC was bypassed. Even though Kurnath is citing the 1988 law, there wasn't even legislation in the RMP that was put into effect prior to that and they need to adhere to it. We could also run it by our solicitor. If Kurnath is reluctant to offer the budget, it is available in the Green Book. Kurnath said she has offered that. Henry said in the past, working for the NPS, there was part of his budget that was supplemented by CUA fees. It was a much lower percentage than what is being talked about now. Kurnath disagreed and reminded everyone that we talked about this and shared frustrations in July at NPS's request. She understands frustrations and will repeat the same things she said then: she is going to follow the law. The law states that you need to recover all costs of the program. Roeder said that is policy. Who signed that law? Kurnath said President Clinton. Robinson said the RMP supersedes the law. Kurnath said she is happy to lay out how the law is meshed together. Henry said how many Superintendents before her violated the law then? You are responsible for what happened prior to your term here. Kurnath said she agrees. She believes the liveries got a good deal for 25 years. Henry asked why Kurnath isn't willing to negotiate like

other Superintendents in the past? There were laws and the UDC. They did a good job negotiating. The liveries have a legitimate concern here. Kurnath said would like the request in written form. Henry said to make sure everything is in writing for the 2/18 WU/RM meeting. Rodgers asked what the CUA deadline is for this year? Salvia said it hasn't happened yet. Kurnath said the new cycle started on January 1, 2025. Rodgers asked what the completion date is? Crouthamel said typically 2/1, but they pushed it back.

- b. **Substantial Conformance 2025-01: Willow Wisp Farm Barn, Damascus Township:** A motion by Henry to send a letter recommending substantial conformance for the Willow Wisp Farm Barn to NPS, seconded by G. Dudko, carried.
- c. **Substantial Conformance 2025-02: The Yard Sale Store, Town of Tusten:** A motion by Henry to send a letter recommending substantial conformance for The Yard Sale Store, seconded by G. Dudko, carried.
- d. **Substantial Conformance 2025-03: Skinners Falls-Milanville Bridge, Town of Cochection and Damascus Township (1/31/25 e-vote results):** Engelhardt said the Substantial Conformance Review the UDC did was for the demolition and removal of the Skinners Falls-Milanville Bridge. We received materials regarding this project on 1/14/25 and worked with the NPS on the Substantial Conformance Review for the project. Everyone should know the background of the situation. The bridge was closed to vehicular and pedestrian traffic in 2019 due to safety. There was a PEL study since 2021 to determine the fate of the bridge. PennDOT was supposedly doing regular inspections of the bridge, however there was no maintenance done on the bridge. Someone had reported metal falling off the bridge into the river. There were a series of inspections done that determined the bridge had failed and was beyond repair. NPS and UDC looked at the project trusting the PennDOT engineers' reports and inspection reports from outside engineer firms, viewing the failure of the bridge as already happened. Because the bridge is an Outstandingly Remarkable Value (ORV) and registered historic, it cannot be removed and still meet the requirements of the River Management Plan (RMP) through neglect. Despite other opinions, we are going by the reports from PennDOT that this bridge has failed. At this point, it's just a matter of how the bridge is to be dropped and removed from the river; that is what the Substantial Conformance Review is on.

Engelhardt presented the review at the 1/28 Project Review Committee meeting. The version in tonight's packet is slightly revised, stating that the UDC has been in favor of rehabilitation because of its historic value. The Project Review Committee found the project plan of demolition and removal in substantial conformance, with one abstention (Town of Highland), and one opposed (Damascus Township). We proceeded with an e-vote due to Governor Shapiro's emergency declaration. The e-vote was conducted via email and passed 10, 1, 1 to approve substantial conformance. Engelhardt informed Kurnath as soon as the vote was in so NPS could proceed with the Special Use Permit and other permit reviews.

Padua said he was surprised the UDC conducted an e-vote just days before the full council meeting. He asked if there was something in our Bylaws about rescinding a vote or not holding an e-vote if not everyone is in favor. We waited over six years on this bridge; why not wait the extra four days? Maybe that wasn't the best decision. Ramie said you cannot rescind a vote, but we do have a policy for conducting e-votes, and that plan had been discussed at the time with no objections raised. Richardson said, in light of what we've heard at the meeting tonight, he did vote in favor for substantial conformance. The vote has been taken, but the vote as he saw it was the procedure of taking down the bridge as if it was already failed. However, he would like to put a cover letter with our review that we have heard tonight from an engineer that has experience in these types of reconstructions and ask again that an alternate choice be considered to rehabilitate the bridge. He would like to find out from someone else besides PennDOT if that can be done. He would hate to think that after the fact, there was a missed opportunity.

Rodgers asked if everyone has had a chance to read the responses to PennDOT from Wrought Iron Bridge Works? Richardson said he's not sure if PennDOT has heard fully from Ironworks. Rodgers said this evening we received (and is included in the packet) a document via email on PennDOT's response to Ironworks responses. Martin said she understands public safety is the number one concern, but just listening to the presentation earlier tonight about train depots being demolished and removed in just one day; we are contributing to that idea with this bridge. We are supposed to learn from the past. The blasting hasn't been explained or the impacts of what it will do. People will have to keep their domestic pets inside to keep them safe from running away during the blasting. There has been so much evidence that neglect, delay, and lack of maintenance have contributed mostly to this failure. There is some kind of financial calculation; it's faster and will take less people to demolish. We don't need to do everything so fast; we

should do it properly. Roeder said if this Substantial Conformance Review is on the procedure of removal, then we made the right decision. We aren't voting on taking the bridge down.

Henry said PennDOT is the entity that is going to make the decision ultimately. Roeder said it isn't our decision; we are just making sure that the demolition plan conforms to the RMP. Rodgers said Arrindell said there is no emergency declaration? Wasn't there one signed by Governor Shapiro? You were urging the UDC not to move forward, but in reading the RMP, as a council we don't have any authority over state law or regulation. So if a Governor issues a declaration of emergency, he isn't sure where the UDC falls in our ability to challenge that. Robinson said the UDC has the ability to opine. Arrindell said if you read the Governor's actual statement, it is not a declaration. Shapiro says this is not using my powers to declare an emergency. Ramie said in that case, an emergency refers to a natural disaster. It's not a disaster in that sense but it's a resolution. Arrindell said by the UDC saying we are okay with PennDOT blowing up the bridge, you are responsible for saying pause or go ahead. Many members protested that is not what we are saying. Ramie said we were presented with a plan on how this would be done, if it is done. That's what we were/are evaluating. We put in a statement in the review that said the UDC has consistently supported rehabilitation. Engelhardt said she can emphasize that again in the cover letter. Peckham said remember how long the Pond Eddy Bridge took? Rodgers said the vote we took was legitimate and binding. Ramie said this is not the outcome that any of us wanted.

- e. **Resolution 2025-07: Amending the Upper Delaware Council's Employee Retirement Plan Policy:** A motion by Henry, seconded by Padua, to amend the Upper Delaware Council's Employee Retirement Plan policy, carried with two opposed (Town of Cochection and Town of Hancock). Richardson said he has no problem with what we are trying to do, but he thought the council was creating an incentive for employees to save. He feels all we are doing is giving staff money.
- f. **Establishment of a UDC Funding Executive Committee:** Rodgers said Robinson had brought this up during last month's Operations Committee. Is this something that can be kept in Operations? Robinson said he feels a smaller group of people can focus in a lot quicker than a broader group. We need to find a solution to our funding problem. His concern if it stays as a topic at Operations Committee meeting is that the discussion gets too broad and we don't get anywhere. If the council feels we can do it Operations, that's fine but we need to treat it seriously. We need to dedicate a portion of the agenda to funding. Rodgers said he is going to a meeting by the New York State Budget Director on 2/12. Henry recommends not saying that New York committed to \$100,000; that number is from 1988. We need to find out what a more accurate number would be. Rodgers asked how can that be justified. Many members replied inflation. A motion by Henry to discuss establishing a framework for a Funding Executive Committee at the 2/25 Operations Committee meeting, seconded by Roeder, carried. Dugan asked if the group should be labeled as a workgroup with a limited time period? Robinson said an Executive Committee is more focused and has a force for figuring things out. It has to have some weight behind it. Ramie said what to call the group could be first on the agenda.
- g. **Other:** None.

Old Business:

- a. **Amendment of the September 1, 2022 UDC Meeting Minutes for the Administrative Record:** Ramie explained that the DRBC was doing research for their docket on Camp FIMFO and requested the UDC's substantial conformance review documents. UDC staff found a discrepancy between our notes and the minutes for the roll call vote that approved the UDC's recommendation to the NPS. Specifically, votes were not reported for our two state representatives, although Coulter was in the room and Dugan was there via Zoom. Engelhardt re-watched the Zoom recording and discovered that Coulter got a call and left the meeting before the vote was taken and Dugan had voted yes but there had been a lag in the audio. That was consistent with her handwritten notes. While it didn't change the outcome, we want to revise the minutes that had been prepared by former Administrative Support for the administrative record to accurately reflect that the roll call was 7 yes (Hancock, Delaware, Cochection, Deerpark, Berlin, Shohola, and Pennsylvania), 4 no (Tusten, Highland, Lumberland, and Damascus) and 1 abstain (Fremont), with three absences. A motion by Roeder, seconded by Richardson, to amend the September 1, 2022 meeting minutes to correct the Camp FIMFO Substantial Conformance roll call voting results, carried.
- b. **Substantial Conformance 2024-08: Robinson Garage, Town of Highland:** Engelhardt said this is an unusual case, as the UDC is recommending against substantial conformance. Originally heard at the November Project Review Committee meeting, the applicant was applying to construct an accessory

structure on a vacant lot with no principal use which is allowed in Town of Highland Zoning, but not in the River Management Plan (RMP). The Project Review Committee initially proposed that the applicant combine lots. She shared that information with the Planning Board and reached out to the applicant over the phone. We have not received a revised application at this time. A motion by Henry to recommend that the project does not substantially conform to the NPS, seconded by Roeder, carried.

- c. **NPS Substantial Conformance Determination 2024-10: The Hamlet Dream, Town of Highland:** Engelhardt said this is a letter from NPS concurring with the UDC's recommendation of substantial conformance of The Hamlet Dream in the Town of Highland. No action is required.
- d. **2/14 Deadline for Upper Delaware Litter Sweep Artwork Contest:** Driscoll said we've been getting art submissions. We plan to gather them together after the 2/14 deadline and present them to the WU/RM Committee at the 2/18 meeting for a decision. After that, we will announce the winning design. Henry congratulated Driscoll for her well-done interview on Radio Catskill that aired on 2/3.
- e. **Other:** None.

Public Comment: Arrindell asked for what purpose is the UDC having the bridge "blown up"? G. Dudko said we aren't blowing the bridge up or in favor of it being blown up. Arrindell said she doesn't understand how we could support this knowing the bridge's history and its heritage to this area. Rodgers said it isn't the UDC's decision. Suckewer suggested that in our cover letter we state that the UDC highly disapproves of the demolition and removal of the bridge and that the review is strictly based on the removal. Henry said it's a public safety hazard. NPS has a closure on it. If the bridge isn't taken down our public will be in danger. Sheehan said he concurs with Suckewer's and Arrindell's opinions; this is not an immediate public safety issue. Part of the UDC's mission is to protect the Upper Delaware's resources. We need to weigh the cultural, aesthetic, and economic issues. Once the public safety issue is answered, then we must do what we can to protect the bridge. To let the bridge be "blown away" is irresponsible.

Public Comment From the Zoom Chat:

Erin Feely-Nahem: I am here tonight to request a pause in the destruction of the Skinners Falls bridge. It's historic and deserves to be recognized. Please consider recent restoration proposals provided for consideration. I'll have to go to another meeting at 8:00 but wanted to send my support of Art's proposal. No regular maintenance was done in years. Roads can't handle more weight. We want it restored to what it was, that's what is needed for our community.

Randy Harris: We as well want our bridge restored and preserve the history of our area. Thank you. We too want the Skinners Falls Bridge restored and to protect River Road from being destroyed by overweight vehicles. River Road has a weight limit.

Cass Collins: Respectfully request you pause the approval in order to consider restoration as outlined in Art Suckewer's recommendation.

Tom Rue: Regarding the recent e-vote that was taken in the matter of the substantial compliance review of PennDOT's application to destroy the Milanville Bridge at Skinners Falls, I learned today that the vote that was taken, rather than merely a committee vote, was actually a vote of the full Council. If this is accurate, it appears that there was such a rush to yield to PennDOT's pressure, that a vote was taken ahead of the actual meeting, before members of the Council had an opportunity to fully and publicly deliberate. I would respectfully suggest that any member of the Council who wishes to allow more time to responsibly weigh alternatives to consider a motion to reconsider and rescind the compliance review that was hastily adopted and pause the decision for further consideration of whether the blowing up a bridge substantially conforms with the River Management Plan.

Joe: The Skinners Falls bridge can be restored and is required to be restored. Neglect is not a valid reason for destruction of this bridge. It is a historic landmark on the national historic register, a local treasure and is protected.

Rose Biondi: Agree with all my neighbors who asked that you vote to pause on the destruction of the bridge and seriously consider Art Suckewer's recommendation and respect the significance of this bridge. Thank you, Rose Biondi and Adam Curtis. Milanville, PA.

Cynthia Nash: Damascus Citizens for Sustainability have now provided UDC with expert opinions from engineers with experience on the preservation of historic bridges. Do not ignore this. Support a pause on demolition. It is indisputable that the Skinner Falls Bridge has effectively spanned the river since 1902, and would never have closed it PennDOT had responsibly maintained this iconic structure which is on the National Register of Historic Places in two categories. It was built by the people of Milanville, PA as a proactive solution to replacing a ferry at the site. One hundred and twenty-two years later, the Bridge still has purpose. If it had not been neglected it would not be on the agenda tonight except perhaps to be celebrated. The Bridge has been effective as a one lane crossing lining our two states and Sullivan and Wayne Counties. It needs to be preserved and protected. There is quantifiable and

qualitative data about the powerful and dynamic benefits of historic preservation to the economic and cultural vitality of any community or region. Its destruction will be an incalculable loss.

Jill Behling Padua: Yes, please pause the destruction of this historic bridge. As was stated, there is a way to restore this bridge at less cost. This makes complete sense.

Tamara D'Antoni: Respectfully adding my voice in favor for restoring Skinners Bridge. Using the historical techniques sounds like this should be the seriously considered method. Thank you.

Amy Becker: We wholeheartedly support restoring Skinners Bridge and hope that all paths to do so are deeply considered. Thank you.

Rose Biondi: Asking that the UDC carefully decipher the responses PennDOT has supplied for rejecting the restoration of this historic bridge. As mentioned by both the DCS and Art Suckewer, PennDOT is not familiar with historic restoration. As proven, they have not been proactive in maintenance.

Jane Cyphers: This elegant historical bridge can and must be preserved as Barbara Arrindell and her expert witness has stated. Let's make this happen. Community support is strong.

Joe Levine: Preservation of historic structures such as this bridge is performed regularly on thousands of structures across the country. There are established restoration techniques (such as presented by Art Suckewer) that are approved by state and national historic commissions and which can be employed on this bridge. We must preserve our local heritage. PennDOT must not be allowed to demolish this bridge.

Paul Sheehan: Re: the Milanville Bridge (the original historic name of the Skinners Falls Bridge)

Please do not thoughtlessly throw away this valuable, historic, beautiful piece of engineering which has demonstrated economic benefit to our local community. Please note that the only UDC "NO" vote on demolition was from Damascus! Of course it was! Because this is OUR bridge (I am in Milanville) and we know and love it well! We recognize and appreciate the very real economic benefit it gives us daily- from allowing summer campers on the NY side to walk the half mile to the Milanville General Store, to allowing local residents a quick and easy connection to (55 mph) NYS route 97, which saves both time and gasoline by sparing us from the 3 mile up/5 mile downriver drives to the alternate crossings at Cochection and Narrowsburg. The above said, I sincerely ask that if you cannot sympathize with our situation and vote "NO" on demolition, that you abstain from a vote on this issue. How can you fairly judge this situation if you are in another community 20 miles away? Please have a heart! Please also listen to the professional engineering opinions that have been offered that there is no emergency. Structurally, the bridge currently poses NO immediate danger to public health, safety, and welfare. Most importantly, it can be saved! This bridge is a thing of beauty and it is an historic, established part of our great national scenic and recreational Delaware River! Thank you for your thoughtful consideration on this issue.

Cynthia Nash: Ignoring the reports from experts other than PennDOT leads me to question what the real agenda is here...

Paul Sheehan: The PennDOT report is wrong. I am a licensed, registered NYS architect and concur with the engineers who have offered their opinion that the bridge is both safe and can be saved.

Rose Biondi: We do not want the bridge to be dropped. How many times do we need to communicate this? PennDOT has been ignoring the residents' concerns. Exactly 6 years of ignoring us.

Tamara D'Antoni: Respectfully, a rushed vote taken without full knowledge of options is...

Cass Collins: Rescind the vote!

Paul Sheehan: And please know that licensed architects are trained to understand and practice structural design! We know our stuff!

Tom Rue: Motion to reconsider!

Cynthia Nash: But there has always been a question about the hidden agenda that led to the neglect of the Bridge. To ignore professional input from experts is outrageous. Bravo to Mr. Richardson for his comment to pause!! Motion to Reconsider!!

Joe Levine: Thank you, Larry (Richardson).

Rose Biondi: Thank you, Larry (Richardson)!

Paul Sheehan: It is a fabricated emergency!

Joe Levine: PennDOT wants only to get this bridge problem off their desk.

Art Suckewer: I would recommend reaching out to Jim Barker, who is the technical editor of the NPS historic bridge restoration manual for an additional opinion.

Cass Collins: PennDOT wants a bridge that will completely change the character of Milanville River Rd. They want huge trucks on River Rd.

Paul Sheehan: The neglect is SHAMEFUL!

Cynthia Nash: I agree with Joe Levine. PennDOT did not expect the community to advocate for the bridge and its call for public comments has been nothing but posturing as it has moved along to its hidden agenda, which was to demolish the bridge.

Tom Rue: Blowing up historic bridges does not substantially conform with the RMP. Slow down the process to consider alternatives.

Art Suckewer: Things can be made safe for recreation without demolition.

Rose Biondi: PennDOT does not have the expertise to restore the bridge. They could not even responsibly install buoys around bridge to deter boat traffic. Ask their contractor where the 9 missing buoys (concrete anchors and metal cable) are now, please. They are not qualified.

Joe Levine: The most recent reason that PennDOT gave for the immediate need to demolish the bridge was the condition of the NY buttress. The crack in the buttress stonework happens to be the simplest component of the bridge to repair.

Paul Sheehan: To concur with Joe, the steel span itself is NOT in a "FAILED" state, (per PennDOT's own report!) The bridge can be saved.

Cynthia Nash: P A U S E. UDC should not make this decision based solely on the report from PENNDOT.

Cass Collins: Why was the vote taken before the meeting? Anyone can offer a motion to reconsider.

Tom Rue: Doesn't the UDC use Roberts Rules of Order? A motion to reconsider does not have to be contained in the by-laws.

Cynthia Nash: Let's look at examples of successful adaptive preservation that also might well integrate with the river management plan. Look at The High Line. Look at Walkway Over the Hudson State Park. You have the power to reverse your vote.

Art Suckewer: If it comes down, it may not be replaced due to lack of need.

Joe Levine: PennDOT wants a simple solution that they can handle. This appears to mean get rid of the bridge. They are not able to execute a restoration.

Cynthia Nash: Bravo Larry (Richardson) and Fred (Peckham). It's ironic that UDC devoted the beginning of this meeting to a presentation about our local history and now you are signing the bridge into oblivion. Reprehensible short sighted misguided weakness. And who connected to PennDOT will profit by the demolition of the Bridge? Four million to AECOM and not a cent to the maintenance of our bridge. Joe is absolutely correct.

Rosie Starr: From what I understand the Skinners Falls Bridge was placed with recognition on the National Register of Historic Places and National Bridges both by Pa. Historic Preservation and the National Park Service as "Outstanding Remarkable". I need clarification. Has that changed? Why has the NPS changed their mind? What is worth preserving to the National Park Service? Please clarify.

Adjournment/Reception: A motion by Henry seconded by G. Dudko to adjourn the meeting at 9:50 p.m. carried. A reception for the new officers with cake and coffee took place.

Minutes prepared by Stephanie Driscoll, 2/12/2025