

Upper Delaware Council
WATER USE/RESOURCE MANAGEMENT COMM. MEETING MINUTES
August 15, 2017

Committee Members Present: Fred Peckham, Andy Boyar, Doug Case, Pat Jeffer
Committee Members Absent: Tony Ritter, Jim Greier, Al Henry
NPS Partner: Jessica Newbern
Staff: Laurie Ramie, Pete Golod
Guests: Ed Wesely

The UDC's Water Use/Resource Management Committee held its monthly meeting on Tuesday, August 15, 2017 at the Council office in Narrowsburg, NY. Chairperson Peckham called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

A motion by Boyar, seconded by Jeffer to approve the July 18 meeting minutes was carried.

Ramie introduced Ed Wesely of Milanville, PA, noting that he would like to address the committee. Wesely stated that he has a copy of an Upper Delaware Scenic Byway letter to PennDOT in support of the preservation and restoration of the Skinners Falls-Milanville Bridge (Milanville Bridge) and he would very much like to see the same support from the Upper Delaware Council. Wesely spoke of the booklets he recently put together on the history of the bridge and its value to the community and of the Milanville Historic District which is intimately connected to the bridge. He shared some history of the bridge referring to it as "a vital transportation link for the community of Milanville." Wesely stated that PennDOT never really considered historic preservation as a value during the Pond Eddy Bridge replacement debate. He would like the UDC and other community leaders and organizations to let PennDOT know that they should consider the historic and cultural values of the Skinners Falls-Milanville Bridge at the beginning of any process. Wesely told the committee that he would appreciate it if they could recommend to the full Council that a letter be written to George Roberts, District 4 Executive for PennDOT, expressing support for the preservation and restoration of the bridge. Boyar asked Wesely if there is additional community support for the bridge. Wesely said there is and provided several examples including a petition drive begun and managed by Vanessa DeGori of the Milanville General Store to reopen the bridge after its December 2015 closure. A brief discussion about the bridge weight limit took place. Wesely commented that PennDOT has a terrible record on historic bridge preservation. He shared the three options that have been discussed for the Milanville Bridge. Those are: no bridge; restoring the present one for limited use; and a new bridge of today's standards. Wesely said he feels that a fourth alternative if they decide they cannot repair the bridge for traffic at limits that are reasonable, would be to leave the bridge as a pedestrian bridge. Wesely hopes that PennDOT will give more consideration to the wishes of the community when making their decisions. After more discussion, a motion to draft a support letter for preservation of the Skinners Falls-Milanville Bridge for consideration of action at the September 7th full Council meeting was made by Boyar, seconded by Case and carried.

Wesely thanked the UDC for the Distinguished Service Award given to him at this year's awards ceremony.

Old Business:

Upper Delaware Scenic Byway July 24 Meeting Minutes: A copy of the July 24th meeting minutes was provided in members' packets and Ramie provided some highlights.

Ramie noted that the new website is still not live as work continues on photos for the site and confirming the accuracy of the business listings. A motion approving taking the website live as soon as it is judged substantially ready was made and carried.

Ramie said one application was received this month for the Butterfly Habitat Promotion grants. The Tusten Heritage Community Garden, Inc. requested funding for a morning workshop and afternoon program with materials, to take place during the Narrowsburg Honey Bee Festival on September 23rd. Ultimately after discussion, their request was approved for partial funding in the amount of \$542. Ramie reported that four grants have been approved and out of the \$5,000 funding pool, a balance of \$3,321 is left.

A motion to order 6,500 more UDSB butterfly brochures was made and approved, Ramie noted.

Ramie stated that the U.S. Postal Service has issued pollinator stamps that feature bees and butterflies primarily. Discussion took place about doing a butterfly habitat promotion in conjunction with the release of the new stamps. One thought is to do a special cancellation. Deb Conway will flesh out the idea of promoting the pollinator stamps further with the organization's support and assistance as needed.

Ramie said the Byway committee is considering re-ordering promotional placemats. The maps would still feature the Byway map, but could include various historic sites and pollinator gardens. Further discussion of this issue will take place at next month's meeting.

Ramie said a committee member suggested that holding a photo contest would be a good way to build an inventory of photos along the byway and to also emphasize how important views are when towns think of development. It was noted that it would be valuable to get baseline photos of the 38 views identified in the UDSB Enhancement Concept Plan for protection. Further discussion of a photo contest will take place at next month's meeting.

Ramie said a copy of a letter dated June 27, 2017 from Ronald L. Epstein, assistant commissioner for Policy & Planning/CFO for NYS DOT in Albany, NY in response to the Byway's inquiry about a dedicated funding stream for scenic byways was handed out. Mr. Epstein stated, in part, "The New York State Department of Transportation strives to ensure that the public roadways parallel to the UDSB are safe for motorists, pedestrians, and bicyclists. NYS DOT is committed to implementing projects that improve shoulder access; mitigate and manage hazardous vegetation; and restore the general roadway surface for all users. I understand and appreciate that you have specific concerns regarding the condition of this corridor and the Department welcomes the opportunity to discuss these issues in greater detail. Jack Williams, the Regional Director for the Southern Tier, will be taking the lead in working directly with the UDSB to explore potential project opportunities." It was suggested to share this reply with Senator Bonacic and Assemblywoman Gunther as they had been copied on the original correspondence.

An announcement was recently made by NYS DOT that they will spend \$3.3 million to repair and pave 11.2 miles of NYS Route 97 from the intersection of County Rt. 55 to County Rt. 23 (Beaver Brook Road) in the Town of Highland.

Two draft letters were approved at this meeting. One was to NYS DOT Region 8 Director Todd Westhuis addressing overgrown vegetation at the Hawk's Nest and the second was to Kenneth Smith at the NYS Department of State in Albany to express support for the Sullivan County NYS CFA application for the Highland River Access Improvements Construction Phase.

Ramie said an "Explore the Scenic Byway" booklet published by The River Reporter was provided to members. It offers "Hidden gems of the Upper Delaware Scenic Byway" as its theme and turned finding the pictured images into a contest with prizes. Ramie said the committee had provided that idea of that theme and that she had offered compliments to Section Editor Anne Willard for how well it had turned out. The second brochure passed around at the meeting was the "Historic Markers of the Town of Deerpark" created by UDSB Town of Deerpark Alternate Norma Schadt. The brochure was produced under an Upper Delaware Council Technical Assistance Grant.

Ramie reported that the committee approved writing a letter to PennDOT to express support for the preservation and restoration of the Skinners Falls-Milanville Bridge, and opposition to replacing it with a modern bridge.

The next meeting of the Byway is scheduled for Monday, August 28th.

D&H Transportation Heritage Council July 26th Quarterly Meeting Update: Ramie said that 16 people were present for this meeting that took place at the Wayne County Historical Society. A copy of the July 26 meeting minutes was provided in members' packets and Ramie covered some of the highlights of the meeting.

The first order of business was to talk about a bus trip. Members like the idea, but feel the expanse of the canal and gravity railroad is too large to make a bus trip practical. It was decided to table the idea for further discussion.

Discussion regarding a reprint of the DHTHC brochure with style changes took place. A motion to print 1,000 of the revised brochures was made and carried.

Ramie said that only seven copies of the Chapter 1 DVD: Gravity Railroad to Honesdale are left and that Chapter 2 which covers Honesdale to the Delaware River is already in production.

Announcements of member accomplishments, concerns, and upcoming events took place. This typically accounts for a large portion of the meeting, Ramie noted.

The next quarterly meeting of the Council is scheduled for Wednesday, October 25. It will be hosted by the National Park Service at the Zane Grey Museum in Lackawaxen, PA.

Other: None

New Business

Letter to Madeline Urbish, Director, Coalition for the Delaware River Watershed: Ramie referred to the copy of the letter provided in members' packets. This letter was directed from the August 3rd UDC meeting in response to a July 18 Coalition press release titled "Delaware River Basin Restoration Program Clears First Funding Hurdle". The purpose of the letter was to advise of the fuller extent of the Delaware River Basin given the inclusion of one quote which stated that the program would benefit the river from the Delaware Water Gap to the Eustuary. A copy of a response from Madeline Urbish from earlier in the day was provided in members' packets. The response states in part, "We certainly understand the Council's concerns and apologize for any consternation that this may have caused – we will work to ensure future quotes from our partners avoid this type of issue." It went on to mention examples of how the Coalition has actively supported the UDC and Upper Delaware issues, which fellow Coalition partner Jeff Skelding from Friends of the Upper Delaware River also responded that day as being the case.

Narrowsburg Bridge Overnight Closure Update: Ramie referred to a copy of an email from NYS DOT providing notification that the Narrowsburg Bridge will be closed August 28 through August 31 from 9:00 p.m. until 7:00 a.m. The crews may be able to complete their work in three nights but have reserved the fourth evening if needed.

Delaware River Flow and Storage Report: A copy of the August 15th NYC Current Reservoir Levels was provided in members' packets. Total combined storage was at 90.8%, normal for the same date is 83.7%.

Other: Peckham questioned if anyone had any information on New York City's Filtration Avoidance Document (FAD) renewal believed to come due in 2017. Newbern said she was familiar with this subject and will research the status.

Peckham referred to a July 17 Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission release titled, "PFBC to Host Wild Trout Summit in Bellefonte." The summit, open to the public, will be held at the PFBC Centre County regional office on Saturday, August 26 beginning at 9:30 a.m. More information can be found on the PFBC website.

Public Comment: None

Adjournment: A motion by Jeffer, seconded by Case to adjourn the meeting at 7:55 p.m. was carried.

Minutes prepared by Cindy Odell, 8/23/17