

Upper Delaware Council
OPERATIONS COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES
May 24, 2011

Committee Present: Rando, Rajs, Roeder, Niflot, Richardson, Peckham
Committee Absent: None
NPS Partner: McGuinness
Staff: Douglass, Soete, Ramie
Guests: N. Yoder, D. Keesler

The UDC's Operations Committee held its monthly meeting on Tuesday, May 24, 2011 at the Council office in Narrowsburg, NY. Vice-Chairperson Scott Rando called the meeting to order at 6:35 p.m.

Election of Committee Chair: It was noted that the UDC chairperson by tradition presides over the Operations Committee. Since a new UDC chairperson was elected on May 5, 2011, this committee election was now being held. A motion by Rajs seconded by Niflot to nominate Larry H. Richardson as chairperson of the Operations Committee was carried unanimously. There were no other nominations upon request. A motion by Rajs seconded by Niflot to close the nominations and have the secretary cast one vote for the nominee was carried unanimously. Richardson took over from Rando at 6:38 p.m.

Review of Staff Health Insurance and Employee Retirement: Richardson said that he had asked Nancy Yoder of Tri-State Benefits to attend this meeting to address questions regarding the health insurance benefits of a particular employee. First though, Richardson announced that the UDC had received Office Manager Carol Coney's resignation late today. Douglass read aloud the letter that was addressed to him as executive director and dated May 24, 2011. It stated, "Dear Mr. Douglass: This letter will serve as formal notice that I will be retiring from this organization after 19 years of service, effective May 24, 2011. Please know that it has been a pleasure to serve the Council and all its dedicated members. I wish you all the best for the future and continued success as an organization in preserving the Upper Delaware Scenic and Recreational River. Most sincerely, Carol Coney, Office Manager." Rajs asked Yoder what the policy is for departing employees in terms of health benefits. Yoder replied that the UDC sets that policy. The health insurance could be ended immediately or go to the end of the month. The premium has been paid through May 31. Yoder continued that New York State has continuation of coverage for this size of an employee group. If the former employee wishes to stay on the health plan, she may do so for up to three years by assuming 100% of the payment responsibility. Richardson said that UDC Resolution 2011-04: Change in Employee Health Insurance to Take Effect June 1, 2011, had been referred back to this committee by the full Council at its May 5 meeting due to some unresolved questions. A motion by Rajs seconded by Roeder to recommend approval by the full Council at its June 2 meeting of the Empire Blue Cross/Blue Shield EPO Stepped plan was carried unanimously. Yoder informed the committee that the health plan requires a minimum enrollment of two employees. A motion by Rajs seconded by Roeder to remove Coney from the UDC's health insurance plan as of June 1, 2011, while providing the option of continuing coverage for up to three years at her own expense, was carried unanimously. Niflot instructed that a letter to that effect be sent to Coney under the executive director's signature. The letter will also request the return of all keys to the UDC office building. Yoder said she will handle filing the termination of coverage notice with the health insurance company as well as updating the change in plans.

Approval of Apr. 26 Meeting Minutes: A motion by Rajs seconded by Peckham to approve the Apr. 26 meeting minutes was carried unanimously. There was no public comment on the agenda. Richardson instructed staff to look into the purchase of a digital tape recorder and transcription equipment for meeting documentation purposes.

PR/Fund Raising Specialist's Report: Ramie reviewed highlights of her written report, which was handed out. She noted that she was out on vacation for six weekdays during this report period. Regarding NYS Grant TM09050, she will send a memo to the Towns of Delaware, Fremont, Hancock, Highland, and Tusten reminding them of the UDC's Mar. 30 receipt of the executed contract which enables the filing of reimbursement requests for their completed projects. The Towns of Lumberland, Deepark, and Cocheton have already received reimbursement. For the Upper Delaware Scenic Byway (UDSB), Ramie submitted a

revised scope of work and contract extension for NYS Grant M060091 on Apr. 28 that would allow six beautification projects sponsored by byway municipalities to proceed. She provided an update of activities being done under the UDSB's FY 07 FHWA grant for the Invasive Plant Species Educational Campaign and Interpretive Signage Project. Ramie donated her time and mileage for the two Japanese Knotweed seminars held on Apr. 30 in Narrowsburg. Despite a low public turnout at these seminars, the UDSB committee is interested in holding another one in the fall at a downriver location. The newly-printed Japanese Knotweed brochures remain a popular request. The UDSB committee approved a design proposal for the 2x4-foot community signs. Local content of municipal narratives and a photo is being gathered. The UDC issued three news releases in the past month. One concerned the annual meeting of the NY-PA Joint Interstate Bridge Commission that Ramie attended with Douglass and Carla Hahn from NPS on May 19 in Dunmore, PA. Ramie also took minutes at the Apr. 20 D&H Transportation Heritage Council in the absence of the secretary and continues to participate on the 2011 Delaware River of the Year Steering Committee. Pennsylvania plans to issue four posters for the River of the Year designation in June to represent the diversity of the Upper, Middle, Lower and Tidal sections of the Delaware. Soete has five photos in contention for the Upper section. Upcoming UDC summer projects to organize will be the Family Raft Trip on Aug. 7 (Barryville to Pond Eddy) and the Fall/Winter 2011 issue of "The Upper Delaware" newsletter due to the printer on Aug. 12 for a Sept. 1 release.

Regarding the June 18-20 Upper Delaware section days of the Delaware River Sojourn that was included on the calendar of Ramie's report, guest Dolores Keesler said she was proud to be asked to serve as Lady High Admiral for the Sojourn's program above Kellams Bridge on Day 1. Ramie noted that she had announced that designation at the May 17 Water Use/Resource Management Committee, as well as the Lord High Admiral designations for Jim Serio and Dr. Peter Kolesar on Day 2.

Richardson offered an update from the Upper Delaware Scenic Byway's May 23 monthly meeting. He said that the UDSB Visitor Center is in jeopardy again. The federal transportation funding that would provide construction monies is still there but UDSB, Inc. has learned that the legislation still has Cohecton as the project location rather than the change to Narrowsburg that UDSB, Inc. and Sullivan County had approved. That had been considered a technical change that would not be a problem but now it is. Any change to the language is considered a new earmark bill and Congress is not approving any new earmarks right now. This is a stumbling block.

On another UDSB note, Richardson said that the opening of the FY 2011 grant round for the Federal Highway Administration's National Scenic Byways Program was announced with a very short timeframe. UDSB, Inc. on May 23 identified three potential projects in Cohecton, Deerpark, and Lumberland but applications would need to be submitted by May 27 to qualify. Richardson described Cohecton's desire to upgrade an existing pull-off area on NYS Route 97 between Exits 114 and 116 near the old pump station. It would be a great place to have a welcome sign and landscaping. Cohecton is pursuing this with the state, which owns the land. It could either be done on a small budget or a nicer scale if grant funding was secured. The FHWA grant requires a 20% local match. McGuinness asked whether Cohecton would be looking to the National Park Service to assist with the FHWA matches. The projects must be proposed on publicly-owned properties. Ramie added that the applications due by May 27 must include the intended source of any matching funds. It would be difficult to receive a commitment at this point. In-kind services are acceptable for the match also. Rajs said that Lumberland's proposed project is to improve the intersection of Rt. 97 and County Rt. 31, while Deerpark's project involves the Sparrowbush river access site. Richardson pointed out that the Village of Hancock just received a \$200,000 grant for UDSB gateway improvements through this same program in the FY 2010 round. He said that it's nice to see that kind of money come to our area. McGuinness said that the Park Service will look to partner with UDSB or its member municipalities next year on larger projects.

Executive Director's Report: Douglass said he had no report beyond what had already been discussed. Richardson asked Douglass to put some details together on how the UDC will cover the office and what functions need to be performed pending the hiring of a new staff member. Rajs added that we need to get an advertisement out quickly.

New Business

Summary of Pending Bills / Financial Statements: The committee was provided with a summary of bills as of May 24 to review. Douglass referenced the expenses marked as “estimated” and said those will be held until the end of the month to be assured of their accuracy. May 31 is the date of the next payroll. Rajs observed that the UDC’s health insurance premiums will be less starting next month. A motion by Rando seconded by Rajs approving the bills for payment was carried unanimously. The financial statements for the period ended April 30 were handed out. Rajs asked why the Friends of the Upper Delaware group was still appearing intermittently on the Profit & Loss statement as an income since this program has been defunct for years. Peckham said that Douglass was supposed to look into this.

Staff Meetings or Travel Requests: McGuinness reported that the National Park Service will hold a two-day training session on the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act on June 23 and 24 at PPL Environmental Learning Center in Hawley, PA. Instructors will provide basics and cover all sections of the Act, specifically applied to the Upper Delaware Scenic and Recreational River. Fifteen members of the UPDE staff, eight from the Delaware Water Gap National Recreation Area, and 10 from the Regional office will attend to date. There is a maximum capacity of 35 participants. McGuinness said this would be a good training for UDC staff to attend, at no expense to the Council. The sessions are not open to the public. A binder of handouts would be provided. Richardson said that this is an important subject and that all three UDC employees should go if there is someone available to cover the office by then. Peckham said he would be interested in attending also. A motion by Rajs seconded by Rando that as many UDC staff attend the June 23-24 Wild and Scenic Rivers Act training sponsored by the National Park Service was carried unanimously.

Other: None

Old Business

Review of UDC Fund Raising Plan from 1993: Rajs suggested tabling this item to the next meeting.

Other: None

Public Comment: None

Executive Session: A motion by Rajs seconded by Rando to go into executive session at 7:29 p.m. regarding personnel matters was carried. A motion by Rajs seconded by Rando to come out of executive session at 8:02 p.m. was carried. Rando and the committee described general options regarding employee pension plans. Ramie suggested asking the UDC’s bookkeeper Mike Poska to assume the duty of filing for the monthly funding advances and reimbursements from the National Park Service, with consideration of additional compensation for this service. McGuinness said he would have his fiscal officer Karen Henry come over to review the financial procedures with the full staff. Richardson said that, until a new staff member is hired, there will be an extra burden on Ramie’s workload. If it gets to be too much, tell us. Ramie said it may not be possible to cover both jobs within the 40-hour work week due to meetings and various deadlines. Richardson proposed offering up to 10 overtime hours per week, which the UDC would pay out of the office manager’s budgeted salary. Peckham said this would be payable at a rate of time and a half, and that the UDC should act as soon as possible to fill the vacant position. Rajs said that the Council will advertise for a full-time secretary as opposed to an office manager or other title. Richardson said that the individual should be competent in office work and that a knowledge of 501(c)(3) organizations would be helpful. He asked the staff to prepare a position description. Ads will be placed in the *Sullivan County Democrat*, *River Reporter*, and *Wayne Independent*. The ad will emphasize that the UDC can provide health insurance and a retirement plan match as benefits, and that salary will be commensurate with experience. Richardson said he would like to have resumes to review in advance of next month’s Operations Committee meeting so that interviews may be scheduled and a recommendation could possibly be made to the full Council in July. Ramie suggested a deadline of June 20 to receive applications.

Adjournment A motion by Rajs seconded by Roeder to adjourn the meeting at 8:18 p.m. was carried.