

Upper Delaware Council
OPERATIONS COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES
July 26, 2011

Committee Present: Larry Richardson, Scott Rando, Harold Roeder, Jack Niflot, Fred Peckham
Committee Absent: Nadia Rajsz
NPS Partner: Sean McGuinness
Staff: Laurie Ramie, Dave Soete
Guests: Tony Ritter (at 6:43 p.m.), Dolores Keesler (at 6:58 p.m.), Debra Conway (at 7:02 p.m.)

The UDC's Operations Committee held its monthly meeting on Tuesday, July 26, 2011 at the Council office in Narrowsburg, NY. Chairperson Larry H. Richardson called the meeting to order at 6:35 p.m.

Approval of June 28 Meeting Minutes: A motion by Rando seconded by Niflot to approve the June 28 meeting minutes was carried unanimously. There was no public comment on the agenda.

Public Relations/Fundraising Specialist's Report: Ramie reviewed highlights of her written report. From May 24 to July 22, she has accumulated 22.5 hours in overtime to fulfill the office manager duties. This involves answering the phone, posting outgoing mail, sorting incoming mail, some filing, ordering office supplies, preparing meeting agendas, copying handouts, collating packets, recording meetings, and drafting minutes. At the Personnel Subcommittee's direction, she set up six interviews with secretary candidates that took place on July 20.

Recent special activities included attending the Grave of the Unknown Soldier ceremony in Lackawaxen on July 22, the Battle of Minisink commemoration in Minisink Ford on July 23, and Riverfest in Narrowsburg on July 24 where the UDC had an information booth.

Reservations are being accepted through Aug. 1 for the UDC's 23rd Annual Family Raft Trip which will take place on Sunday, Aug. 7. Kittatinny Canoes is the host livery and a seven-mile section between Barryville and Pond Eddy will be paddled. Only 18 guests have signed up to date but Ramie said that it's typical for people to reserve later. On-site check-in will be between 9-10 a.m. on Aug. 7 at Kittatinny's Luke's Landing Base in Barryville.

Ramie issued three news releases in the past month concerning the Battle of Minisink, UDC Technical Assistance Grants Applications, and the Family Raft Trip. Her next news release will announce the number of participants in the raft trip.

Administration of Senator Bonacic's New York State Grant TM09050 awaits project completions by the Towns of Delaware, Fremont, Hancock, Highland, and Tusten. Ramie said that while she had targeted Aug. 15 of this year to finalize this program, the actual state deadline is Aug. 15, 2012. She is also administering four active state and federal grants for the Upper Delaware Scenic Byway, Inc.

The next big public relations project is composition of the Fall/Winter 2011 "The Upper Delaware". While Aug. 12 is targeted as her deadline to submit the newsletter to the printer, Ramie said that might not be possible due to her current extra workload. The issue is due to be released on Sept. 1. She noted that it typically requires two weeks of relatively uninterrupted time to do research and interviews, lay out the issue, find photos, and write articles for the 12-page newsletter.

Executive Director's Report: Bill Douglass was absent from the meeting. Richardson said he was disappointed that the executive director did not provide a monthly report whether he is here or not.

New Business

Personnel Subcommittee Report on Status of UDC Secretary Search: A motion by Rando seconded by Peckham to go into executive session at 6:44 p.m. to discuss employment of a particular person was carried unanimously. Staff and alternates were invited to participate. A motion by Roeder seconded by Peckham to

come out of executive session at 6:52 p.m. was carried unanimously. Richardson remarked that all of the applicants interviewed on July 20 were very good. A motion by Rando seconded by Peckham to recommend that the full Council make an offer for employment as Upper Delaware Council secretary to the candidate recommended by the Personnel Subcommittee was carried unanimously. Richardson noted that UDC representatives will set the salary and finalize the offer at their Aug. 4 meeting.

Suggested Improvements to UDC Meetings: A letter from Mike Uretsky of Damascus, PA dated July 10, 2011 offering three suggestions “to significantly improve” UDC meetings was handed out for discussion as requested. Uretsky suggested: eliminating the practice of reading the committee minutes at the full Council meeting since they are distributed in advance; modifying the agenda to provide a list of issues and implications for each item to be discussed, and making the agenda available in advance to the board and public; and inviting written rather than verbal comments during the public comment period that could be reproduced and handed out. The respective rationales were: to avoid “pervasive boredom”; to permit “everyone to focus their attention on the issues before you and come in adequately prepared”; and because “the public comment at the end is a dysfunctional waste of time.” Richardson noted that Council members had already discussed the issue of reading the committee minutes and voted in favor of letting the committee chairs offer their excerpted reports as they see fit. Rando said he would object to altering the public comment period. This organization represents its member towns and all of those municipalities offer public comment periods. Everyone is entitled to have a say. There could be time restrictions placed on it. Richardson said that is already the practice and every board he’s been involved with approaches this the same way. The first public comment opportunity pertains to items that are on the agenda. The second public comment is open to anything on anyone’s mind. He believes that the more you let people speak, the better off you are as an organization. If the board isn’t up-front with the public, it’s time to change the board. There were several examples offered of how various towns and townships handle the agenda and public comment items at their meetings. Richardson said he doesn’t think we’ve really had problems with the way we run meetings and observed that there does not appear to be a real interest in changing our procedures at this time. He expressed appreciation to Mr. Uretsky for providing his comments.

UDC Hosts Family Raft Trip Aug. 7: The UDC’s July 14 news release inviting participation in the 23rd Annual Family Raft Trip on Aug. 7 was handed out. Ramie noted that registration and waiver forms are available for downloading on the UDC’s website at www.upperdelawarecouncil.org. Richardson said that he hopes local residents take advantage of this event. It’s tough to build a protection sentiment for the river if people don’t get out there on it to see what a gem it is.

Summary of Pending Bills / Financial Statements: The committee was provided with an abstract of bills dated July 26 to review. Richardson asked whether Douglass had done the office fuel gallon usage comparison as previously requested. Ramie said she did not believe so. Soete indicated an error on the abstract. Due to a misunderstanding, the bookkeeper had made a check payable for \$28 to him as reimbursement, when that amount is actually owed to Lackawaxen Township. The township secretary charged the UDC \$28 for copying the Holbert Quarry documentation on July 25 after Soete was first required to file a Freedom of Information Law request to obtain the approximately 140 pages. Niflot asked why we paid for these documents. McGuinness replied that the transcript of the June 8 public hearing and the conditional use permit decision from the July 20 township meeting would be needed if the UDC opts to file an appeal. A motion by Roeder seconded by Rando to void the \$28 check to Soete and have the bookkeeper issue a \$28 check to Lackawaxen Township was carried unanimously. A motion by Rando seconded by Peckham approving the bills for payment as amended was carried unanimously. Soete noted that there will be five payments for completed FY 2011 Technical Assistance Grants projects on next month’s abstract. Financial Statements as of June 30, 2011 were handed out for review. Richardson advised committee members to direct any questions to Douglass.

External Meetings and/or Travel Requests: Soete requested permission to attend a July 28 public hearing by the Town of Lumberland on draft revisions to its zoning law, to be held at 7 p.m. at the Lumberland Town Hall in Glen Spey. A motion by Rando seconded by Roeder to authorize Soete’s attendance at the July 28 public hearing was carried unanimously.

Other: None

Old Business

FY 2012 Funding Request Submitted to NPS on 7/8/11: Ramie reported that bookkeeper Mike Poska had completed the Federal Assistance SF-424 Application for the UDC's FY 2012 funding required under its Cooperative Agreement with the National Park Service. Staff members and Poska met with Upper Delaware Scenic and Recreational River Agreements Technical Representative Karen Henry on July 6 to review what forms and supporting documentation would be needed by the July 11 deadline. Ramie compiled the forms that Poska prepared with the UDC's FY 2012 budget and work plan functional allocations. Douglass delivered the package to Henry on July 8.

FY 2011 Budget Reallocation of Salary for Retired Employee: A copy of a July 8 UDC letter to Karen Henry at NPS Upper Delaware was handed out which details modifications to the Council's FY 2011 budget due to the May 24 retirement of a full-time employee. Ramie noted that the UDC was obliged to explain how the funds for salary and benefits that were budgeted for the office manager are being reallocated.

Report on 6/23-24 NPS Wild & Scenic Rivers Act Training Workshop: Soete provided handouts of the agenda for the Wild & Scenic Rivers Training Workshop held on June 23 and 24 at the Lake Wallenpaupack Environmental Learning Center that he had attended, as well as a copy of the slide presentation, Frequently Asked Questions about Public Law 90-542, and an Overview of the Wild & Scenic Rivers Act. He noted that many of these documents are also available on-line at www.rivers.gov. Soete said he had not had time to prepare a written report otherwise. Richardson said he would still like to see a report in Soete's own words about what he got out of the two-day workshop and whether he felt it was beneficial to attend. Roeder agreed that we need to get some feedback. McGuinness commented that his Upper Delaware staff and those who attended from the Delaware Water Gap thought it was great. They discovered there was a lot that they didn't know. The training helped clarify definitions and provided information about the applicability of the Wild & Scenic Rivers Act. Soete agreed that it was a good workshop, particularly for the case studies that they explored.

6/30 Letter to Westfall Township on UDC Vacancies: Ramie reported that the Council has not received any reply to a June 30 letter it sent to Westfall Township inquiring about the status of their search for a representative and alternate to serve on the UDC's board. The two positions have been vacant since June 2, 2011 and Dec. 31, 2009, respectively. Richardson instructed Douglass to call the township as a follow-up. He should stress the benefits of membership and what Westfall has gained through its UDC participation. Rando said it would be good to get Westfall back on board, especially with issues being debated now that affect them, such as the Pond Eddy Bridge replacement. McGuinness said that an inquiry had come to his office recently from a township resident concerned about a zoning change. He will pass that information along to Soete.

Adopted FY 2012 Operations Committee Work Plan Available Upon Request: It was announced that anyone interested in receiving the final FY 2012 Operations Committee Work Plan as adopted at the July 7 UDC meeting may request it.

Other: Rando asked McGuinness about the status of federal budget negotiations. McGuinness replied that it looks like the National Park Service will come out ok, although many fellow agencies are taking a hit. Rando recalled that the UDC called a special meeting last year to discuss contingencies in case of a federal shutdown. McGuinness said that the situation is not as disastrous as originally feared although the debt ceiling outcome could be an issue. In fact, he is still hoping for approval of a small increase to the UDC's federal funding share. The new fiscal year starts Oct. 1.

Public Comment: None

Adjournment: A motion by Peckham seconded by Roeder to adjourn the meeting at 7:29 p.m. was carried unanimously.