

Upper Delaware Council
OPERATIONS COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES
June 24, 2008

Committee Members Present: Bowers, Roeder, Richardson, Niflot, Shafer, Fluhr
Committee Members Absent: Wieland
Partner: Martinez
Staff: Douglass, Soete, Coney, Ramie
Guests: None

Committee Chairperson Alan Bowers called the meeting to order at 6:35 p.m. A motion by Richardson seconded by Fluhr to approve the May 27 meeting minutes was carried, with one abstention. There was no public comment on the agenda.

PR/Fund Raising Specialist's Report: Ramie reviewed her written report with the committee. The Council's summer newsletter should be in the mail July 11. The Delaware River Sojourn Upper Delaware section saw participation at 43 on Sunday and 52 on Monday. This is down from last year. The honored title of Lord High Admiral for Sunday was bestowed on NYS Senator John J. Bonacic, and the Lady High Admiral on Monday was bestowed on Sandra Gerry of Sullivan Renaissance. The educational programs in the upper section went well. The Delaware River Sojourn will conclude on June 28.

The Council's annual family raft trip will be held on Aug. 3 and planning has started. A reservation form will be included in the summer newsletter and news releases publicizing the event have and will be issued.

The NYS grant through Assemblywoman Gunther is almost completed. The grant deadline is July 31. The last part of this grant involves production of a Council website. The projects for the NYS grant through Senator Bonacic are progressing. Each UDC NY member town will receive \$8,125 for their projects. This is a state reimbursement grant and completed projects with expense documentation need to be provided to the Council. Another State grant for \$75,000 is waiting in the wings. Ramie also noted she is administering the Upper Delaware Scenic Byway grants as well.

The Council will have a booth at the July 27 Narrowsburg RiverFest. The Council has participated in this event for many years. Council staff is continuing its participation in the 40-30-20 anniversaries projects with the National Park Service (NPS).

UDC Executive Director's Report: Douglass reviewed his written report with the committee. He covered staff evaluations, Technical Assistance Grants Program, fiscal year 2009 work plans and budget, fiscal year 2008 audit, Upper Delaware Greenway. Douglass requested that if any member wished to attend any informational sessions with our state and federal district representatives to let him know. Meetings will be set up accordingly. The cooperative agreement packet for fiscal year 2009 needs to be in to NPS on Oct. 1. Martinez reviewed the ramifications of late applications.

Old Business

Berlin and Damascus Townships' attendance at June UDC meeting, follow-up: Douglass reviewed that Berlin Township had notified the Council that their local officials would be "attending one or more of your meetings to become more familiar with your organization". This was the result of Douglass and Fluhr attending a Township meeting and reviewing the benefits of joining the UDC. The officials from Berlin and Damascus Townships did attend the June UDC meeting. According to press reports following the June meeting attendance, Berlin Township "wanted to do more research" before joining. Damascus Township may consider a public hearing on the matter of joining UDC and would also like to hear from their constituents about their feelings on the matter.

Martinez mentioned that one of the reasons NPS and UDC presented a public information natural gas development forum in Wayne County was in response to residents' concerns about the gas leasing and drilling issue that's pervading northeast Pennsylvania.

Upper Delaware Greenway update: The committee was provided with copy of press release indicating that NYS Assemblywoman Gunther had introduced legislation that would add two additional members to

the Upper Delaware Greenway council, the Upper Delaware Council and the Upper Delaware Scenic Byway. This would bring the board total to 14 voting members including the state agencies. Gunther felt that "by including these two important groups in the planning and execution of the goals of the Upper Delaware Greenway, we ensure the inclusion of all stakeholders and the coordination of efforts by each agency".

The committee was provided with copy of the Upper Delaware Scenic Byway letter to NYS Senator Bonacic and NYS Assemblywoman Gunther regarding participation on the greenway board. Some points made in the letter were: Whether or not the state agencies have voting privileges, it would be important to assure that the local members retain majority status on the Council; the Byway welcomed the opportunity to have an official role with the Greenway Council as it would provide a mechanism to communicate about current projects, combine resources when applicable, and share the benefit of the byway board's organizational experience; and the Byway strongly recommended the scheduling of a local meeting to update the eight municipalities on the status of Greenway legislation in the NYS Assembly and Senate.

The committee discussed the greenway and UDC participation. Following discussion, a motion by Fluhr seconded by Shafer to send a letter to Bonacic and Gunther that the UDC will continue to cooperate and participate with the Greenway proposal. The committee was concerned with budgetary constraints and staff time but needed more information before reconciling those issues.

Status of NPS-UDC natural gas development public forum on NY side of River Corridor: Douglass mentioned that many educational forums are being held on NY side of the River corridor regarding the gas leasing/drilling issues, including at Walton and Liberty. The Sullivan County Planning division and the Catskill Mountainkeeper are sponsoring one in Liberty on June 27 at 7 p.m. for the public and a 4 p.m. workshop for local officials. Richardson pointed out that the New York towns need answers on their responsibilities, such as do they have the right to declare a moratorium on gas drilling and what can the towns locally regulate. Since the gas drilling is under federal and state purview, it's difficult to determine if the towns can pass regulations to protect the health and safety of its citizens. Fluhr commented the towns/townships need a model ordinance from areas that have dealt with the gas industry already. No one has provided that so far. Roeder will contact Cornell Cooperative Extension regarding this and report back. He also mentioned that there is a town supervisors group that could look into ordinance language as well.

New Business

Summary of Pending Bills: The pending bills were reviewed. A motion by Fluhr seconded by Shafer to approve the bills for payment was carried. The financial statements for period ended 5-31-2008 were handed out for review.

Request from Sullivan County Planning for support letter, NYS grant: The committee reviewed copy of a draft letter to the Sullivan County Division of Planning and Environmental Management as well as background information regarding the Division's request for a UDC support letter for their grant application to the NYS Dept. of State's Local Waterfront Revitalization Program to develop a Regional Waterfront Revitalization Program for the Upper Delaware River Corridor. This grant involves a 50/50 match of funds and the match could be in in-kind services. The grant request is for \$75,000. The Division has also requested support letters from the corridor towns and other stakeholders. After review, a motion by Shafer seconded by Fluhr and carried to forward the request to the Project Review Committee as they can take written action within the timeframe allowed. The Operations Committee had no negative comments on the request.

NPS Report: Superintendent Martinez briefed the committee on NPS activities. The NPS staff did a great job of cleaning up the NPS headquarters' buildings and grounds. The work needed to be done and everyone chipped in to see it got done.

Martinez participated on the Upper Delaware section of the Delaware River Sojourn for the first time as the new Superintendent and expressed his view that seeing the River corridor from the River proper provided a totally different perspective than looking at the River from the shore. He had a pleasant experience.

Seasonal staffs for the maintenance and interpretation divisions are on-board and trained. During training they were apprised of the history of the Upper Delaware River corridor's designation and the roles played by NPS and UDC. They are doing selective cuttings on the D & H Canal towpath trail at present.

A handout was provided and explained relative to the background and status of the Mongaup Interpretive Center Project for the Upper Delaware River corridor. The NPS-Upper Delaware's goal is to use the remaining TEA-21 Enhancement Program funds to provide much needed visitor services in the Mongaup gateway area. Since the proposed location for the center is within a flood inundation zone, NPS feels that they can meet travelers' needs by placing mobile units, trailers or modular units, on the town's property once this matter is solidified. Facilities at the site could include visitor information area, restrooms, storage area, and office. This proposed project would dovetail with the River Management Plan guidelines and the Upper Delaware Scenic Byway's concept plan to have a visitor center in the gateway area. Martinez noted that UDC Executive Director Douglass would be invited to the next planning meeting.

Public Comment None

Adjourn A motion by Roeder seconded by Shafer to adjourn the meeting at 8:07 p.m. was carried.

Carol Coney, Office Manager