

## **UPPER DELAWARE COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES December 4, 2014**

The Upper Delaware Council held its monthly meeting on Thursday, December 4, 2014 at the Council office in Narrowsburg, NY. Chairperson Andy Boyar called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. The Pledge of Allegiance and roll call followed.

In attendance: Town of Hancock-Fred Peckham, Town of Fremont-Jim Greier, Town of Delaware-Harold Roeder, Town of Cohecton-Larry Richardson, Town of Tusten- Susan Sullivan, Town of Highland-Andrew Boyar, Town of Lumberland-Nadia Rajs, Town of Deepark-David Dean, Damascus Township-Jeffrey Dexter, Berlin Township-Alan Henry, Lackawaxen Township-Camille James, Shohola Township-Patricia Jeffer, Commonwealth of Pennsylvania-Tim Dugan, Delaware River Basin Commission-Steve Tambini, National Park Service-Kris Heister. Staff in attendance: Executive Director-Laurie Ramie, Resource Specialist-Travis O'Dell, Secretary-Cindy Odell. Also in attendance: Tony Ritter, Tusten Alternate, Virginia Dudko, Deepark Alternate, and Debra Conway, Highland Alternate. Absent: Westfall Township, State of New York.

**Presentation on the September 15-18 National Park Service Natural Gas Summit:** Heister said that the Power Point presentation she was sharing was to show members what was seen during the training that took place in September. Notes taken by Ramie were provided in members' packets, Heister added. The training was attended by Park Service staff, Upper Delaware Council staff and members, Delaware River Basin Commission staff, and the Army Corps of Engineers. Heister noted that the purpose of the training was to improve understanding of natural gas operations and facilities at both a local and landscape scale; better understand the potential impacts to NPS units and affiliated areas; and increase understanding of the resources and values of Upper Delaware. Day One started out at My Shady Lady in Hancock with a presentation by Dave Messersmith of Penn State Cooperative Extension and Carla Hahn of the Park Service followed by a canoe trip down the Delaware River from Lordville, N.Y. to the Soaring Eagle Campground. Presentations by Park staff were conducted along the way.

Day Two began at the Millenium Pipeline, followed by a tour of the Hancock Compressor Station, and ended with a "windshield tour" of Bradford County and the Towanda area. Heister shared details of each stop.

On day Three, participants were with representatives from Cabot Oil and Gas in Susquehanna County. An active drilling site was visited. Heister shared the details of the day.

Day Four was spent providing the team with an understanding of the Upper Delaware corridor community. Presentations were given at the Equinunk and Basket Historical societies. The summit concluded at Lander's Café with a diverse group of local business people who shared their perspectives on the gas industry. She said the conversation really "gave a flavor for the pros and cons" and was a great experience for everyone involved.

Heister concluded her presentation by pointing out some differences in the landscape between Bradford and Susquehanna Counties and the Upper Delaware region. She said it was stated that wells can produce from 30 to 50 years and the industry anticipates up to 100 years of energy coming out of Bradford and Susquehanna Counties. She said her main concern for water quality for this area should the gas industry come to the region is the deforestation of the landscape. The one thing that maintains and protects water quality is the heavily forested landscape. Heister shared a list of potential impacts of greatest concern that was developed as a result of the summit.

A brief question and answer session took place after the presentation.

**Approval of November 6 Meeting Minutes:** A motion by Rajs, seconded by Jeffer to approve the November 6 meeting minutes was carried.

**Public Comment on the Agenda:** None

**Committee Reports:** Committee reports were provided based on the meeting minutes. They were November 18 Water Use/Resource Management by Tony Ritter, November 25 Project Review by Larry Richardson and November 25 Operations by Harold Roeder.

Greier said he would like the Town of Fremont Board to be kept in the loop regarding the proposed Ferry Street project. He noted the Board members are not in favor of the project. Ritter said meetings of interested parties are being planned in the new year to make sure that the plans for the access are of most use to all users and residents of Long Eddy.

**Status Reports**

**Delaware River Basin Commission:** Tambini introduced himself noting he is the Executive Director of DRBC since August 1 of this year. He said the scope of the DRBC is quite extensive which he continues to learn every day. He has been spending much time out of the office listening and learning with many different constituents as he feels this is very valuable.

Tambini reported a Commission meeting is scheduled for December 9<sup>th</sup> and 10<sup>th</sup>. A Resolution passing the Annual Water Resources Program FY 2015-2017 was to be on the agenda. Within this program is an estimate of the regulatory plans for the next several years. He noted that there is nothing new regarding natural gas currently. The Commissioners continue to confer on the issue, he added.

Tambini noted that the Delaware River Basin Commission agreed last month that the PennEast natural gas pipeline project was subject to its review because of potential impact on waterways. The 36-inch pipeline would carry natural gas about 100 miles from northeastern Pennsylvania across the Delaware River, through Hunterdon County to Hopewell. Tambini believes this topic may draw a large crowd to the scheduled meeting.

Tambini said the Commission recently published its 2013 Annual Report. He shared a copy noting retired UDC Senior Resource Specialist Dave Soete's photo on the cover.

Regarding the hydrologic conditions, Tambini said it has been relatively dry. He said that NOAA according to U.S. drought monitor considers this area to be "abnormally dry" which is a step above "moderate drought". The combined New York City Delaware River Basin Storage as of December 1<sup>st</sup> was at 57% which is below the long-term median, but the reservoirs are slowly starting to refill, Tambini stated. The DRBC continues to keep an eye on this situation.

Sullivan said she had heard that due to the dry conditions, there has been some salt water intrusion on the lower part of the river resulting in large releases from the reservoirs. Tambini noted that New York City releases are about meeting the flow target in Montague which does have an impact downstream. The DRBC manages other reservoirs in Pennsylvania on the Lehigh and Schuylkill Rivers which are specifically managed in terms of releases to make sure the salt line stays where it is supposed to stay. These releases have been occurring. The salt line is up a little bit higher because of the low flows than it normally would be. The salt line is up to river mile 80 when it is usually at river mile 70, he added.

Greier questioned why the Neversink and Cannonsville reservoirs are so low. Tambini explained that New York City decides where it releases water from and most of the water is released from the Cannonsville. He spoke of the drought conditions in 2001 when Cannonsville got down to 6.5% before it recovered.

**NYS Dept. of Environmental Conservation:** No report in the absence of Representative Rudge. A news release dated November 13 titled "DEC Announces New Toll-Free Hotline to Report Poachers and Polluters" was provided in members' packets at Rudge's request.

**PA Dept. of Conservation and Natural Resources:** Dugan said the Commonwealth does have a new Governor and the Department waits to see what their position will be with him. They are in the process of preparing many transition documents and reports so that the new administration will know what the Department is active with, what roles they play in the community and throughout the Commonwealth in terms of the Bureau of Forestry and the Department.

Dugan reported that in October the Department announced approximately \$33 million for 219 grants to communities and non-profit organizations for a wide variety of recreation and conservation projects across the Commonwealth.

Dugan said it is hunting season and encouraged people to wear orange when they head out into the woods.

**National Park Service-Upper Delaware:** Heister reported that a "Trail of Geology" has been selected as a collaborative project with Delaware Water Gap as part of the Centennial.

Heister said she expects the report from the NPS Interpretation Management Assistance Program Evaluation on December 12<sup>th</sup>. She will share the results as appropriate.

Heister said that she, Don Hamilton, and Travis O'Dell are scheduled to meet with the Lackawaxen Township Sewer Enforcement Officer on December 5<sup>th</sup> regarding the Masthope Community sewage issue. She hopes to come out of the meeting with a strategy for how to proceed.

Ginny Dudko said that back in September she notified Heister that the radio station that signs refer people to for information at either end of the Upper Delaware River Scenic and Recreational River corridor is not working. She said she recently traveled through Hancock and checked the station again and it was still not working. Heister apologized and said she will check into it. Dudko feels that if the radio station is not broadcasting, the signs should be covered or removed.

**UDC Executive Director's Report:** Ramie thanked Heister for the Gas Summit presentation, noting it was a great summary of what was observed. She also thanked her for including the UDC in that opportunity to take the tour.

Ramie reported that she finished the UDC FY 2014 Annual Report earlier in the day. Staff review is underway and she expects that the report will be posted to the UDC website in the next few days. Once posted, she will issue a news release announcing its availability.

Ramie noted that the Sullivan Renaissance grant of \$300 makes up for the budget shortfall to print hard copies of the newly designed Design Handbook. The third proof from Spencer Printing was signed off on by Dorene Warner from W Design and Ramie earlier in the day. There were enough funds to print 103 copies which will be distributed to member towns and townships as well as representatives and alternates. The print job is expected to take 3-5 business days. A press release will be issued thanking Sullivan Renaissance for the financial assistance on this project.

Ramie said that a letter was sent out on November 10<sup>th</sup> to Central New York Railroad to express concern over the condition of the railroad access road that runs along the railroad track on the Pennsylvania side starting at Railroad Bridge #2 in Mill Rift, PA and extending to the Pond Eddy Bridge in Pond Eddy, PA. No reply has been received yet, she said, but noted it will be shared should one be received.

Ramie referred members to the December calendar of UDC Meetings, Activities, and Deadlines. She noted the election of officers for 2015 will take place at the January 8 full Council meeting with the Officer Oaths ceremony and reception scheduled for February 5. She noted that group photo will take place at the February meeting.

A copy of the UDSB Inc.'s comment letter on the 2014 Draft Open Space Conservation Plan was provided in members' packets. Also included in the packets were an NPS News Release titled "Mandatory Life Jacket Wear in Effect for the Upper Delaware", and the 2015 UDC meeting dates for the full Council and three standing committees.

### **Old Business:**

**Other:** Henry questioned if the handouts from the November 15 National Parks Conservation Association (NPCA) Meeting were available yet. Ramie said that she requested them, but has not received them yet.

Henry said the *National Parks and Hydraulic Fracturing: Balancing Energy Needs, Nature, and America's National Heritage* booklet was interesting reading. Ramie said she will make another request.

**New Business**

**Nominating Committee Report:** Speaking on behalf of the Nominating Committee, Dexter announced the following 2015 slate of officers for consideration at the Council's annual meeting and election in January: Chairperson – Alan Henry (Berlin Township); Vice-Chairperson – Susan Sullivan (Town of Tusten); and Secretary/Treasurer – Jeffrey Dexter (Damascus Township). Other candidates can be nominated from the floor and elections will be by ballot at the January meeting.

**3<sup>rd</sup> Draft Letter to NYS DEC Commissioner Martens: 2014 Open Space Conservation Plan**

**Comments:** A motion to send the letter to Commissioner Martens was made by Henry, seconded by Rajsz and carried.

**Draft Resolution 2014-14: Awarding the Printing of "The Upper Delaware" Newsletter to Courier Printing Corp. for FY 2015:** A motion to approve the resolution was made by Henry, seconded by Dean and carried.

**Draft Resolution 2014-15: Amend Contract with Eckersley and Ostrowski, LLP for a FY 2014**

**Financial Review:** A motion to approve the resolution was made by Roeder, seconded by Henry and carried. Richardson expressed his appreciation to Richard Eckersley for initiating the savings that will be realized by having reviews conducted for two years followed by a full audit every third year.

**Other:** Boyar commented the Council has survived another year thanks to the good work everyone has done and acknowledged the staff for their outstanding work.

**Public Comment:** None

**Adjournment:** A motion by Roeder, seconded by Dean, to adjourn the meeting at 8:40 p.m. was carried unanimously.

*Minutes prepared by Cindy Odell 12/15/14*