

## **UPPER DELAWARE COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES**

### **March 5, 2015**

The Upper Delaware Council held its monthly meeting on Thursday, March 5, 2015 at the Council office in Narrowsburg, NY. Chairperson Alan Henry 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 Deerpark-David Dean, Damascus Township-Jeffrey Dexter, Berlin Township-Alan Henry, Lackawaxen Township-Camille James (7:09p.m.), Shohola Township-Patricia Jeffer (7:13p.m.), Commonwealth of Pennsylvania-Tim Dugan, National Park Service-Kris Heister. Staff in attendance: Executive Director-Laurie Ramie, Resource Specialist-Travis O'Dell, Secretary-Cindy Odell. Also in attendance: Debra Conway, Town of Highland alternate; Ginny Dudko, Town of Deerpark alternate. Absent: Westfall Township, State of New York, Delaware River Basin Commission. Media: Dave Hulse, Peter Becker. Guests: Carla Hahn, NPS, Joe Hinkes, NPS, Cheryl Korotky, Jane Luchsinger, Iris Helfeld, Carol Wingert.

**Approval of February 5 Meeting Minutes:** A motion by Boyar seconded by Rajs to approve the February 5 meeting minutes was carried unanimously.

**Public Comment on the Agenda:** None

**Committee Reports:** Committee reports were provided based on the meeting minutes. They were: February 5 and 24 Project Review by Richardson and February 5 and 24 Operations by Henry. No report was given for the Water Use/Resource Management February 5 and 17 meetings. Those minutes were distributed to members and are available on the Council website.

### **Status Reports**

**Delaware River Basin Commission:** The DRBC was absent, however, the hydrologic report was provided. The NYC Delaware River Basin Storage as of February 27 was at a combined capacity of 64.9% with Cannonsville at 58.9%. Ramie referred to a press release included in members' packets titled "DRBC Announces One Process/One Permit Program." This program is to promote collaboration and enhance administrative efficiencies between DRBC and the four basin states (Delaware, New Jersey, New York, and Pennsylvania) while ensuring that equal or better environmental outcomes are obtained. A third handout provided was the notice of the upcoming commission meeting. This meeting is scheduled for March 10<sup>th</sup> and 11<sup>th</sup> at the Washington Crossing Historic Park Visitor Center. The docket does contain a few recognizable projects, Ramie noted. Any of these projects that may affect the river corridor will be followed up on. Ramie said that she was contacted by DRBC Executive Director Steve Tambini who notified her that none of the river basin commissions had been included in the President's budget that was released on February 2<sup>nd</sup>. The DRBC intends to try and obtain Congressional support to include FY 2016 funding in an appropriations bill. Tambini has asked the UDC for a letter of support for this effort. Ramie said she recommends deferring discussion about this letter to the March 24<sup>th</sup> Operations Committee

meeting at which time she hopes to have more information from Tambini. Members agreed with this approach. Ramie reported that the four basin states have included funding for the DRBC in their budgets and provided those amounts. Pennsylvania had restored much of the funding that was cut last year, but Delaware continues to be the only state that fully funds their "fair share" apportionment.

**NYS Dept. of Environmental Conservation:** No report in the absence of Representative Bill Rudge. Ramie referred to the five press releases included in members' packets at Rudge's request. Those press releases were: "Draft Fisher Management Plan Now Available for Public Review and Comment" dated February 19; "DEC Accepting Applications for Pheasant Release Program" dated February 23; "DEC Accepting Applications for Annual Environmental Excellence Awards" dated February 23; "Draft Conservation Plan for Bald Eagles in New York State Now Available for Public Review and Comment" dated February 23; and "DEC Accepting Applications for American Eel Weir Permits for the Delaware River Watershed Until April 1" dated February 24.

**PA Dept. of Conservation & Natural Resources:** Dugan reported that he has passed along the Awards Banquet information to the DCNR Acting Secretary Cindy Adams Dunn.

Dugan said that Governor Wolf presented his budget address on March 3. He does not know at this point if his budget as district forester will increase or decrease as establishing the budget is a process. He will provide updates on this in the next couple of months. Dugan noted that overall, the Department of Conservation & Natural Resources and the Department of Environmental Protection look like they will be well-funded.

Dugan noted that the Governor has signed executive orders banning gifts for members of the executive branch of the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania.

Dugan stated that 2015 is the 100-year anniversary of the Pennsylvania Forest Fire Warden and there will be events celebrating this milestone throughout the Commonwealth this year. Dugan said that although there is a lot of snow on the ground currently, the spring fire season is right around the corner. He noted that the fire season is a calendar item for which he and others are preparing.

**National Park Service-Upper Delaware:** In regards to the Park Service Centennial, Heister said the UDSRR has received \$10,000 to develop a virtual visitor experience. She shared some of the ideas for that project. She spoke of the virtual canoe race that is to be undertaken with the Delaware Riverkeeper in 2016. The UDSRR will initiate a program called "Working Together for a Cleaner Delaware River" starting in the summer of 2015 and continuing into the 100<sup>th</sup> anniversary year of 2016. This program will occur on the water and on the land. On the land, it will include trails and accesses. She noted the Park Service has an "Adopt an Access" program and hopes this year they can find some businesses to adopt these places. Heister reported that a photo contest will be launched over Memorial Day weekend. The categories will focus on the Outstandingly Remarkable Values of the UDSRR. The contest will be run through the Park Service Facebook page. Heister said she participated in a teleconference call with the area's five county visitors associations. The Park Service will be partnering with them to market the contest and promote it. There will be a separate category for youth and it is the hope that area students will get involved.

Heister said that the Harpers Ferry Center is the group that provides parks with the tools and services needed to interpret their most special places and designs visitor centers. Members of this group will be in the area on March 12 to provide input on turning part of the Zane Grey Museum into the Upper Delaware Visitor's Center at the Zane Grey House. The key messaging related to Zane Grey will remain. Plans include relocating the Delaware Highland Conservancy's Eagle Institute winter field office to the Zane Grey Museum. The Eagle Institute is currently located in the Margold House next to the Roebling Bridge. Boyar said that using the Zane Grey house was a "really good idea" and one that had been "hidden in plain sight." He was surprised it hadn't been suggested before. Dean questioned how much will be spent on the project. Heister said she did not know; that was one of the objectives of this "scoping trip" by the Harpers Ferry Center. Heister said it might be nice to be able to tell the story of Zane Grey at multiple locations. How to accomplish this will be discussed and input from others will be solicited. Dean asked what the attendance is at the Zane Grey Museum. Heister said she would find that out, adding that she believes attendance could be raised with better signage. Hahn noted that the legacy of Grey's writing career will remain at the Zane Grey location, and it will continue to be a museum. Heister added that other aspects

of Grey's full life including his dental career and his baseball playing will be showcased elsewhere. Sullivan suggested that the oral history project could have a place at the Zane Grey House. Hulse questioned if the Park Service has consulted with the Zane Grey's Society. Heister said they have offered to assist in repurposing the displays.

Heister reported that the Upper Delaware Scenic and Recreational River is one of 17 parks in the Northeast region that has been selected to host a Centennial Volunteer Ambassador intern. It is a year-long professional internship position hired through the Student Conservation Association (SCA). It is a paid position with salary and health benefits provided through the SCA. Information on the SCA and this position is available at <https://www.thesca.org/>. Heister said it is her hope that a local person will fill this position. The job of this person will basically be to connect more people to the National Park Service, she added. Heister noted that the Park Service is currently looking for housing for their seasonal employees. She asked if anyone knows of a place that may work, to please contact Headquarters.

**UDC Executive Director's Report:** Ramie reported that the office furnace malfunctioned on Wednesday. Don Bellotti of Riverside Mechanical was in to fix it and while he was here, he added a trap to the A/C unit to eliminate the odor permeating in the Council office. The trap was not installed initially as the attic was not insulated at the time.

Ramie said that no letter regarding the Pond Eddy Bridge Replacement Project was being presented at this meeting as it was decided that the construction plans package warrants a more in-depth analysis at the committee level. O'Dell is preparing a letter for review by the WU/RM Committee at its March 17 meeting. She noted the UDC does not have the deadline constraints of a permitting agency since the comments that we submit to PennDOT are strictly advisory as a consulting party. Ramie added that the National Park Service is among the federal and state agencies that do have regulatory authority over this project, specifically permits under Section 7 of the Wild and Scenic Rivers Act and the Boating Safety Plan. The anticipated schedule is to bid the job in April 2016 and have the new bridge open to traffic in late 2018, at an estimated cost of \$17.5 million.

Ramie said that nominations for our 27<sup>th</sup> Annual Awards Ceremony are due by Monday, March 9. A keynote speaker invitation was sent to PA Governor Tom Wolf on February 10. That invitation remains under consideration. Ramie said she called his office March 4 and was advised that his April schedule was not worked out yet, but should be by next week. Ramie hopes for an answer by March 11 to meet the newsletter publicity deadline. The banquet will be held on April 26 at the Central House Family Resort in Beach Lake. Tickets for the dinner and program are \$26. Reservations will be due by April 17.

Ramie referred to the Local Officials Directory in some members' packets. She said that Christina Hollenbeck of the NPS compiles this directory each year with some assistance from Odell. Those that did not receive a copy were advised that their town or township should have their copy. Ramie said the directory is a great resource to have.

Ramie said she noticed in the February issue of *PA Township News* magazine that Lackawaxen Township won a 1<sup>st</sup> prize award within its population classification in the 47<sup>th</sup> Annual PSATS Citizen Communication Contest for the quality of its township newsletter. She congratulated Lackawaxen on that award.

Ramie referred members to the March calendar of UDC Meetings, Activities and Deadlines in their packets.

Ramie said that a presentation on the River Corridor GIS Mapping Project will be given at the April 2<sup>nd</sup> UDC meeting by Penn State GIS Master's Program student Shannon Thol. She will explain the methodology, display the map functions, and help us understand what applications the work has for land use planning and project review purposes. All of the counties, towns, and townships which have contributed data will receive an invitation to attend, Ramie noted.

**Old Business:** Peckham reported that the Town of Hancock adopted the property tax exemption program for the rehabilitation of historic, pre-1936 barns. He reported that Little Italy Restaurant in Hancock burned down. He noted that was the third restaurant in four years to burn in Hancock.

**New Business:**

**Upper Delaware River Jitney Service:** Jane Luchsinger said she wanted to provide an update on an upcoming trial of a commercial bus service from Manhattan to the Upper Delaware River Valley. A committee consisting of members from the towns of Lumberland, Highland, Tusten, Cochection, Delaware, Sullivan County Planning, Sullivan County Visitors Association, and Rolling V Bus Corporation met and developed a needs assessment survey. Out of over 190 respondents, 180+ said they would use such a bus service. Rolling V Bus Corporation will pick riders up at 33<sup>rd</sup> Street between 7<sup>th</sup> and 8<sup>th</sup> Avenue on Friday afternoons at 4:00 p.m. and make stops in Lumberland, Barrville, Narrowsburg, and Callicoon. The bus will return to Manhattan on Sunday leaving Callicoon at 5:00 p.m. with stops at Narrowsburg, Barryville, and Lumberland. The trial period dates for this service will be June 26-28, July 3-5, July 10-12, and July 17-19. To begin, the fare will be \$40 one way. Discounted fares may be considered after the trial period, Luchsinger added. Reservations for this service can be made through the Sullivan County Visitors Association website at [www.scva.net/eagleexpress](http://www.scva.net/eagleexpress). Richardson requested that a link to this site be put on the Council's website. Ramie said she can also include this information in the UDC newsletter due out on April 1<sup>st</sup>. O'Dell questioned if this service was available for people to ride into Manhattan on a Friday and come back on Sunday. Luchsinger said not at the present time. Henry asked Luchsinger if she could provide the Council with ridership numbers once this service begins.

**Draft Letter to PennDOT: Narrowsburg, NY-Damascus, PA Bridge Rehabilitation Project:** Ramie said this draft letter was circulated in advance for review. She said the letter offers to host a meeting with PennDOT to inform the public of the plans for the rehabilitation project. A motion to send the letter was made by Boyar, seconded by Sullivan and carried. Dexter stated that he believes that the Skinners Falls bridge is scheduled for some rehabilitation work as well. Hahn said it has been promised that both bridges will not be closed at the same time. She noted that the Skinners Falls bridge is not rated the same as the Narrowsburg bridge. Ramie said we've been assured that NYS DOT and PennDOT do coordinate their schedules. Tusten Supervisor Wingert shared details of the letter sent to PennDOT by the Town of Tusten and described the Town's concerns. Iris Helfeld noted that petitions with over 400 signatures and 350 letters have been sent to George Roberts of PennDOT by area citizens to express their concerns regarding the bridge project.

**2015 UDC River Clean-up Grants Program Application Memo:** Ramie noted that the offer of this grant funding to support river and shoreline clean-up projects to our member municipalities is being made earlier this year to provide additional response time and referred to the memo provided in members' packets. If the memo is approved, applications for the 2015 grants will be due by April 24<sup>th</sup> for review by the Operations Committee on April 28 with funding recommendations for a vote by the full Council on May 7<sup>th</sup>. The towns and townships will have until Monday, August 21, to complete their projects and submit a request for the one-time reimbursement payment. The minimum in this budget line is \$3,000, Ramie stated. The UDC, based on the need that is expressed, could opt to add to that sum. A motion to approve the memo was made by Boyar, seconded by Sullivan and carried unanimously.

**National Park Service Law Enforcement Collaboration:** Heister referred members to the revised handout of Frequently Asked Questions provided in their packets. She thanked those that provided comments. She referred to the press release titled "National Park Service Announces Plans to Increase Collaboration" also provided in members' packets, noting that it would be released tomorrow. She said there was extensive discussion regarding this collaboration at the February 24 Operations Committee meeting, but provided some of the highlights of this initiative. Heister noted that UDSRR and DEWA already work closely on a number of things and it has always proven to be highly beneficial to both park units. Under the new model, the rangers at each park will continue to primarily patrol their respective park areas, however, after a period of training and orientation, law enforcement rangers from both parks may be assigned targeted patrol duties at either park after careful planning and clear objectives are established for those patrol operations. Heister stated this is not an effort to merge the two park units. She said it is believed that this collaboration is a timely and necessary step to address issues associated with stagnant or declining budget scenarios, reductions in the number of law enforcement personnel at UPDE over the last 35 years, an expanding and more diverse American public, and the need to find new and innovative ways to address the challenges of the 21<sup>st</sup> century. Chief Ranger Hinkes stressed that the current number of law

enforcement staff at UPDE will remain the same with the supervisory law enforcement ranger of UPDE reporting directly to the UPDE Superintendent. Hinkes said he will be providing technical assistance and guidance to the supervisory law enforcement officer and he will continue to work with the other law enforcement and emergency services agencies throughout the corridor and five-county area. Heister feels the benefits of the collaboration outweigh any potential negatives and said she would like a letter of support from the UDC. Greier referred to the third question on the Frequently Asked Questions and said he did not like the use of the word “current” in the answer. Heister said she would be happy to take that word out so that it reads, “No. There are no plans to merge the two parks but we will continue to look for meaningful ways to collaborate and cooperate that provide benefits to both units and improve our ability to protect resources and provide visitor services.” Sullivan said the UDC would like to hear in the future how the collaboration is working out. Henry agreed and noted that could be included in the letter of support. Ramie suggested that the Council should want to document their recommendations that the two park units remain distinct, that there be no diminishing of park resources on the Upper Delaware, and that the Upper Delaware retains its autonomy. She said it should state we support the collaboration for all the positive reasons, but make sure to document those points raised at the Operations Committee meeting and tonight. Dean said he would like to see in the letter a strong reminder that the Upper Delaware differs from DEWA in that the land is privately owned. He said that is a distinction worth pointing out and being part of the record. Henry asked Heister if there was any deadline to consider for this letter. She said no. After a brief discussion, it was decided that a draft letter would be ready for the March 24 Operations Committee meeting. A copy of that draft will be circulated in advance. A motion to have a draft letter for the March 24 Operations Committee meeting for vetting prior to passing on to the full Council was made by Boyar, seconded by Rajszyk and carried.

**Other:** None

**Public Comment:** None

**Adjournment:** A motion by Peckham, seconded by Roeder, to adjourn the meeting at 8:22 p.m. was carried unanimously.

*Minutes prepared by Cindy Odell 3/16/15*