



Upper Delaware Council

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UPPER DELAWARE COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES July 2nd, 2020

The Upper Delaware Council held its monthly meeting on Thursday, July 2nd, 2020 at the Tusten Town Hall in Narrowsburg, NY. Chairperson Richardson called the meeting to order at 7:02 p.m. and roll call followed.

In attendance: Town of Cohecton- Larry Richardson, Town of Delaware- Thomas Dent, Town of Hancock- Fred Peckham, Town of Lumberland- Nadia Rajs, Town of Highland- James Gutekunst, Town of Tusten- Susan Sullivan, Town of Deerpark- David Dean, Town of Fremont- Jim Greier, Damascus Township- Jeff Dexter, Berlin Township- Alan Henry, Lackawaxen Township- Doug Case, Shohola Township- Aaron Robinson, National Park Service- Darren Boch. Staff in attendance: UDC Executive Director- Laurie Ramie, Secretary- Ashley Hall-Bagdonas. Absent: Westfall Township- Michael Barth, Delaware River Basin Commission- Kristen Kavanagh, State of New York- Bill Rudge, Commonwealth of Pennsylvania- Tim Dugan. Media: Peter Becker- Tri-County Independent, Linda Drollinger- River Reporter. Guests: Jennifer Claster- NPS, Harold Roeder, Jr.- Town of Delaware, Ginny Dudko- Town of Deerpark, Andy Boyar- Town of Highland, Evan Padua- Town of Tusten.

Delaware River Basin Commission- Kristen Kavanagh, State of New York- Bill Rudge, and Boy Scouts of America- Wayne Holmes were unable to participate as planned due to difficulties with teleconferencing from an alternate venue.

Chairperson Richardson requested a moment of silence in memory of David Hulse, who recently passed away.

Richardson asked everyone to introduce themselves.

Approval of June 4th Meeting Minutes: A motion Rajs seconded by Henry, to approve the June 4th, 2020 meeting minutes carried.

Public Comment on the Agenda: None.

Committee Reports: Richardson said as we've done during this challenging period with our teleconference meetings, he's going to ask that we forego the reading of the committee meeting reports to try to get out of the meeting earlier. At some point in time he would like to get back to reports as he's always felt there was an importance to sharing the highlights of those committees. There were no questions regarding the following meetings. They were: June 16th Water Use/Resource Management, June 23rd Project Review and June 23rd Operations.

Status Reports

Delaware River Basin Commission: Ramie said included in the packet is a resolution that was passed at the most recent DRBC meeting, which sets their leadership for the coming year. The Governor of Delaware is chairing the DRBC. The United States member is the vice-chair and the Pennsylvania Governor is second vice-chair. Boyar asked what is the United States member? Ramie said the federal government has a role on the DRBC equal to the four States. The hydrologic report from Monday was also provided in the meeting packet.

NYS Dept. of Environmental Conservation: Provided in the meeting packet was a 7/1 press release titled “DEC Launches New Fishing, Hunting, and Trapping Licensing System”. The improved DEC Automated Licensing System (DECALS) includes user-friendly features to help hunters find license sales outlets, keep track of licenses, and harvest information. Additional functionality launching on DECALS will include an events calendar with upcoming season dates, youth hunts, free fishing days and clinics, etc. Fully integrating with DEC’s Hunter Education Program enables users to more easily register for courses and automatically update certifications; and there are auto-renewal options for all annual licenses. Users can access DECALS by phone and online.

PA Department of Conservation & Natural Resources: Ramie said Dugan provided a handout regarding a stakeholder survey. The Pennsylvania DCNR Bureau of Forestry is in the process of writing a new Strategic Plan that will set the bureau’s mission and overarching goals. It guides how the Bureau provides leadership in forest management and conservation on both public and private lands in urban and rural areas. The survey is intended to obtain input pertaining to the new Bureau of Forestry Strategic Plan. Please feel free to forward the link to this survey to others. Opinions about these critical strategic questions will prove valuable in the planning process. The survey should take approximately 10 minutes to complete. The survey link will remain active until 8/31/2020. The survey can be found here: <https://www.surveymonkey.com/r/BOFplan>

National Park Service-Upper Delaware: Boch said it’s a strange time to take any NPS assignment, especially an acting one during a time when the partners that you work most with are communicating via telephone. He said many of his interactions with his staff are by phone as well. Boch said he is privileged to be here until 10/2. He said the Unit is adapting to COVID-19. They are open for business; people are on the river and enjoying the resource, but it’s certainly changed how they do business with visitors. For example, the Zane Grey Museum is closed. They are waiting for Phase 4 to reopen and at that point, they would consider changes to access and operations in particular for the visitor centers at Zane Grey. Boch stated it would be modified as it is in all national parks. They are generally following the guidance of that state’s locality. With their unit it’s two States and multiple counties.

Boch wanted to mention that Jennifer Claster has accepted a position at the Regional Office in Philadelphia and her last day is 7/19. She will be working here until 7/30. Boch said she will be sorely missed.

Boch said there were tires at the Cochection-Damascus Bridge as well as the Callicoon-Damascus Bridge. He spoke this Wednesday with the Chief of Facilities and Chief Ranger, and they’re all going to go up next week to retrieve the tires and dispose of them.

Lastly, in the management meeting yesterday they discussed giving a credit across the board to the dozens of Commercial Use Authorization holders since a lot of them are not operating this year. Others that are operating are probably operating at a reduced capacity with revenue. Boch said it will probably be a \$150 credit against the renewal fee. Peckham asked if the camps are in operation and Boch said they are closed. Richardson clarified that sleepover camps are closed; day camps can open. Boch said if anyone would like to meet with him they may find him at NPS headquarters. The fastest way to contact him is at (201) 314-3977. Richardson asked when NPS will have a replacement for Claster? Boch said as soon as he heard she was departing he asked administration and HR to move quickly on the recruitment package. The federal government hiring is a long process and it’s likely that Claster’s replacement will not be here until Boch’s tenure is over. Richardson said we like to have an orientation for any new NPS personnel because this isn’t a traditional national park. It takes some education to understand the history. He said if you have new people, we would like to extend that opportunity.

Boch asked for clarification where the tires were in Callicoon. Dent said he would be able to give him detailed information via email.

UDC Executive Director’s Report: Ramie said she wanted to start with the July calendar that was provided in the packets. She wanted to mention it was Hall-Bagdonas’ birthday, saying she’s a trouper for attending the UDC meeting. Also, coming up on Tuesday, 7/7, this Region of the state is eligible to enter Phase 4 reopening. Specifically of concern to UDC, the gathering limit moves from the current 25 to 50. Currently, Pennsylvania

counties of Wayne and Pike are both in the green phase that allows gatherings of 250. Even though we're on this PA/NY border, the counties operate very differently.

Ramie said for the sake of the reservations and publicity, we'd like to get a final determination about our two signature events coming up, the 32nd Annual Family Raft Trip and the 32nd Annual Awards Banquet. We originally started out with an April date for the banquet that moved to May, which got moved again. Now we're currently looking at 8/30 in Wayne County at the Central House Family Resort in Beach Lake. Keynote Speaker Representative Fritz is still available. Ramie's spoken with Central House about what accommodations they're making for this. She was advised that that in their Carriage House facility where our banquets are typically held, tables have been spaced six feet apart and that does allow for a maximum capacity of 100. Typically, we've had anywhere between 75 and 95 people. If we managed to get to 100 guests, we would have to limit it to that. In addition to facial coverings being required when you're in that room, except for when eating, they also have been doing additional sanitizing. Staff is all subject to health checks, and the bathroom capacity will be limited to one person at a time. We started with a buffet but they are not appropriate during COVID-19 so they now would offer the option of a cafeteria-style service or served meals. Ramie requested the board's opinion as she is working on the Summer Newsletter deadline that would have an article about this event and also has to think about the souvenir booklet prep work. The UDC Raft Trip is coming up on 8/2 and the deadline for reservations is 7/27. Hall-Bagdonas has been in touch with Lander's River Trips. Our trip would be from Minisink Ford to Pond Eddy and they have assured us they can handle our group. They have gone through the training and will be sending more shuttles. Ramie said she doesn't see any difficulty in proceeding with that event. They are also doing extra disinfecting of all their equipment. Richardson said he feels the raft trip is doable but we must emphasize you need a minimum of four people to a group. Regarding the banquet, he feels people are anxious about large group dinner events, you will have to take your mask off to eat and there will be talking. It creates an environment he would not be comfortable with. Rajs said there are so many unknowns with this COVID-19; it evolves and is getting worse in certain areas. It also affects people differently. She agrees that it may be too soon to hold the banquet. Richardson said there was discussion today that the Governor of New York is considering banning eating-in at restaurants and it will continue to be take-out. Richardson requested a straw poll of those who feel uncomfortable and feel that the UDC 2020 Award Banquet be postponed. He counted 8 hands. Motion by Henry seconded by Sullivan was cancel the 32nd Annual Banquet, put the Awards Banquet booklet online, and send the awards to the appropriate recipients. Sullivan proposed having it online. Ramie said it's a historic event for UDC and we want those people to get the recognition they deserve. Henry amended his motion to honor the designated recipients at next year's dinner rather than doing it online with Rajs seconding and it carried. Richardson asked all of those in favor of the original motion of canceling the 2020 UDC Awards Banquet if they were in agreement and had consensus.

Ramie said on 6/20 she was driving along Route 652 and noticed that the Darbytown access sign had been changed. The UDC had been requesting for several years that the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission change the sign, which had said "Narrowsburg PA" which does not exist to the historically accurate name of Darbytown. Ramie said one important aspect is that it lists the 911 address to the site. For those not familiar with the area there's a physical address of 2084 Beach Lake Highway that they can alert people to. We are grateful to the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission for responding to our longstanding desire to have that sign changed. Ramie also noticed while she was there the signage that the NPS has put up for COVID-19 safety. Ramie took pictures of both signs and printed out a copy for anyone to look at later.

The summer newsletter is due to Courier Printing by 7/22. We also have a big project with the launch of our new Project Review Workbook. The printer has completed our 100 hard copies and Hall-Bagdonas will be picking them up early next week from Spring Hill Laser Printing Services in Lake Ariel. The next step is to put the electronic version on our website. It will have the fillable forms to make it as simple as possible on the user's end to take advantage of the Project Review Workbook for their submissions. Simultaneously with getting that ready we're also working on the virtual presentation. It started as a series of in-person workshops, but due to the current times, Ramie said we've decided to create a video to which we will provide a link for code enforcement, officers, planning, zoning boards, etc. to watch at their leisure. We're particularly motivated to get this done while we still have Cluster with us because she is our subject matter expert on the Project Review Workbook and she's doing a presentation that will be filmed as part of this video. It will also include an introduction by our chairperson and also the history of the Land

and Water Use Guidelines that Tom Shepstone has agreed to provide. We'll use scenery from the Upper Delaware.

Another project is our Five-Year Strategic Plan that is expiring on 9/30. We do have dispensation from the NPS that we can extend beyond 10/1 for that because all of our primary documents are already submitted in terms of the Cooperative Agreement Renewal, which covers that same five-year period, and all of our first quarter information, budget, work plans, etc., for FY 2021, but we still need to complete the Five Year Plan. Originally, we had 5/30 on our schedule for that and now we are in the process of rescheduling the retreat that we wanted to have. We have our facilitator, Buck Moorhead. What we need to do is figure out a new venue. Ramie would appreciate help coming up with a venue, favoring an outdoor pavilion setting. She asked for contact information for the people who book these venues. We are anticipating a timeframe of late September, early October for this retreat. We had previously discussed a full-day Saturday program for the board to get together to hash this out with partner organizations. Richardson asked Case if the Lackawaxen Fire Company still uses their pavilion? He said yes, they are having a big yard sale there this week. Richardson asked him to look into seeing if Lackawaxen Fire Company could hold an event there in early fall. Henry recommends contacting Central House as they have a covered area by the Carriage House. Richardson said he's been in communication with Moorhead and he would like to put together a small Steering Committee to help him get some direction on how we want to proceed. If anybody would like to be on that committee let him or Ramie know. Ramie said the function of the Steering Committee is to develop the agenda for that day and to decide what kind of topics to cover, what sort of exercises to hold, who should be invited, etc.

Ramie said 8/3 is the date that we had included in the memo that we sent to all the Town/ships and our two state representatives to give us their comments on the proposed amendment to the Land and Water Use Guidelines. This is for the purpose of adding Utility-Scale Solar definitions and where it belongs on the Schedule of Uses in the guidelines. So far, she has heard back from the Towns of Fremont and Delaware. It's a non-binding straw poll to answer three questions that we posed about the procedure for the Utility-Scale Solar.

Lastly, now that we are back to meeting in person, we are lining up some educational presentations, which we always used to do in about 20 or 30 minutes at the start of these meetings. We have currently scheduled on 8/6 to meet with the folks who are behind the Japanese Knotweed study in the Upper Delaware. That's Friends of the Upper Delaware River and the NPS, specifically Steve Schwartz and Jessica Newbern, who will be presenting. At the 9/3 meeting, we had rescheduled Kevin Clarke, who is with the New York State DEC, to present on the Mongaup Habitat Management Plan.

Old Business

NPS 7/1 Response Letter re: Ten Mile River Access Launch Designation: Ramie said last month we approved sending a letter to the Regional Director re: Ten Mile River (TMR) Access Launch Designation and we just received the response on Wednesday. The letter was sent out in advance and also provided in the meeting packet. Boyar said he waited for that letter from the NPS with bated breath. It was supposed to come a couple of weeks ago and finally came on the 7/1. When he received it he was disappointed. The determination was pretty much the opposite of what he had hoped for. On its face, the letter seems to cover all the bases, but Boyar feels it's replete with fictions. He's unaware of any recommendations made by the UDC consistent with the closure of the TMR. NPS said that that's part of the basis for the decision. No recommendations that came out of the UDC are consistent with that closure. The matter was on the Water Use/Resource Management Committee's agenda on several occasions, and it was uniformly agreed that the situation at the site varied from year to year. That's what the experts know from the site had said some years like last year it was muddy and it was a problem and that's the basis for the closure. However, the year 2020, there's been no problem. It's absolutely suitable for launching all of April through July. Boyar said he had been there several times. He was there before this meeting and you can walk to the shoreline and do not sink in. He said there's not a guide operating on this river that wouldn't be able to safely launch and take their boat out at TMR. Boyar said it's a fiction that there's some kind of a problem. He said it was a muddy situation last August. To adopt it unilaterally without going through any committees or being vetted by WU/RM, was not appropriate. Now the problem is fixed; it doesn't exist. He said it creates a problem by impinging on the businesses and the individuals who use that as an important way point. Boyar said they talk about guides getting stuck at TMR and said there is no record of that. He believes this letter is more fiction than fact as it states that the ideas and

recommendations put forward by the UDC were considered. This full body never received a recommendation; the Water Use/Resource Management committee was never sent the recommendation. The truth is that no recommendations were made by NPS or UDC. The first we had heard about the TMR access being closed for trailered launching was when it was a done deal in the newspaper. It didn't come through this committee or through this council in any form. He sees the determination by the NPS being cloaked in language, implying that it was a cooperative approach, but the determination was in fact unilateral. That determination reflected last year's landing conditions and they have improved. Boyar said this is what has been discussed at the Water Use/Resource Management (WU/RM) Committee; that it changes and it's a fluid situation. The NPS is solving a problem no longer existing, negatively impacting recreational opportunities on the river and hurting those who make a living on the small mouth fisheries in the section below Narrowsburg. This is a world-class, smallmouth fishery in this middle section above and below the TMR. The actions of the NPS ended up doing more harm than good and do not represent the use of the landing for optimal benefit for the recreational public, for the river guides and professionals or for the support of businesses that benefit from the use of that landing. Shutting down the operation in this difficult economic time is the opposite of what should be happening. This matter should be reviewed in light of current conditions and of the conditions that exist now with fair opportunity for the river guides and other interested people to have a say. This matter should be revisited and it should be corrected.

Richardson wondered if a flag arrangement would work whereby if conditions are fine you put up a yellow flag by the entrance; if the condition is poor, you put up a different color flag.

Padua said he is on the WU/RM Committee, and his response is similar to some of the points that Boyar just made. He'd like to state that very simple improvements to that access can save us all a lot of trouble. If we could just stop saying that there's not a viable solution, which is said in the letter, and they also quoted that they recognize the beauty and popularity of the access. He doesn't know why there hasn't been a slight movement towards a small concrete ramp, just like at the Pennsylvania Fish and Boat Commission launch to make it a little better than it is. The fact that they just slapped a new restriction on it that directly affects him and a lot of other people is what we disagree with. Padua said he just hopes that they move forward and try to improve it. He doesn't think a flag system will do anything. He believes a small boat ramp would work. Richardson said many years ago there was a walking tour at TMR with NPS about these same issues and that flag system was suggested. It was pretty much agreed to at that time that anything permanent was not going to stay there and that high water was going to take it; including concrete.

Henry said he used the TMR access long before the NPS was up here. He talked with Dick Crandall, who was the TMR Ranger in the 1960s and later became a NYS Trooper; and he never remembered there being any incident at either job for people launching there. Henry said if there's a concern as mentioned in his letter about degrading the resources, they should have brought this up 30 years ago because he's probably launched boats there 500 times in his career. Padua and others have been using that access historically successfully without getting stuck with no public safety concern and should be allowed to use it. That's what we had asked the NPS to do and it's on the minutes from last fall; we had said, whatever you do, don't put a closure on launching boats. Henry said as Boyar mentioned in his statement, nothing was ever done; we were never notified. They never did anything according to the appropriate procedure, until we get a letter that says it's closed. Henry recommends that we take the letter and refer it for further discussion to the WU/RM Committee.

Personnel Subcommittee Report: Henry said we interviewed a candidate yesterday for the Resources and Land Use Specialist position. He thanked all that showed up for that. We will be going into an Executive Session tonight to discuss that particular personnel action.

Other: None.

New Business

Draft Letter of Commendation for Jennifer Z. Claster, Community and Land Use Planner: Richardson said we have a draft letter of Commendation for Claster and wish her good health and thank her for the work and

everything she's done for the River Corridor. A Motion by Peckham seconded by Rajsz to approve the draft letter carried.

Proposed Amendment of the UDC Bylaws: Richardson said this is a proposed amendment to the UDC Bylaws. We had a temporary resolution so we could participate in teleconferencing. Ramie is proposing that we make permanent changes to the Bylaws. Ramie said this is the 30-day notification and the committee would vote on it at the 8/6 meeting. A Motion by Rajsz seconded by Henry to approve the 30-day notification for the proposed amendment regarding teleconferencing votes for the UDC Bylaws carried and will be voted on 8/6.

UDC 2021 Technical Assistance Grant Applications Due by 8/28: Ramie said the Technical Assistance Grant (TAG) applications are due by 8/28. This is the same date that the current TAGs are to be completed as well. Please take note that the special annual meeting of the Project Review Committee will be on 9/8 to review the applications that we receive.

Economics Impact of Tourism Statistics: Ramie said this is a list that she updates every year after the NPS Visitor Spending Effects Report is released. She noted a bump during the Centennial year and predicted next year we are sure to see the effects of COVID-19.

Other: None.

Public Comment: None.

Executive Session: A Motion by Greier seconded by Rajsz to go into Executive Session carried at 8:09 p.m. A Motion by Robinson seconded by Rajsz to come out of Executive Session at 8:20 p.m. carried. Henry requests that an offer be made to Shannon Cilento for Resources and Land Use Specialist.

Adjournment: A motion by Peckham, seconded by Gutekunst, to adjourn the meeting at 8:21 p.m. was carried.

Minutes prepared by Ashley Hall-Bagdonas 7-13-2020