

Upper Delaware Council  
**OPERATIONS COMMITTEE MEETING MINUTES**  
**May 28, 2013**

Committee Present: Jeffrey Dexter (6:55 p.m.), Harold Roeder, Jr., Jack Niflot, Larry Richardson, Nadia Rajsz, Debra Conway, George Fluhr  
Committee Absent: Fred Peckham  
NPS Partner: Sean McGuinness  
Staff: Laurie Ramie, Travis O'Dell, Cindy Odell  
Guests: None

The UDC's Operations Committee held its monthly meeting on Tuesday, May 28, 2013 at the Council office in Narrowsburg, NY. Vice-chairperson Roeder called the meeting to order at 6:38 p.m.

**Approval of April 23 Meeting Minutes:** A motion by Richardson seconded by Niflot to approve the April 23 meeting minutes was carried. There was no public comment on the agenda.

**Executive Director's Report:** Ramie referenced her written report provided in members' packets. She reported that payment to cover the April expenses was credited to our account on April 24<sup>th</sup>. She said the budget is in good shape for the rest of the fiscal year 2013 and noted there may be a surplus with which to address some more office building projects. Two draft budgets for FY 2014 will be addressed under New Business. Fluhr suggested that someone besides Ramie have the password for accessing the UDC's federal drawdown account. Ramie agreed.

Ramie reported that the UDC has been notified by two certified letters received on May 3<sup>rd</sup> and May 24<sup>th</sup> that a retail establishment is proposed for 225 Bridge St., Narrowsburg which is the building that houses the China King Restaurant. Applicants John and Christopher Pisanelli plan to open an educational toys, models, and crafts shop. She noted our concern is the impact on our private parking lot. The application was presented to the Town of Tusten Planning Board on May 20<sup>th</sup> and a public hearing has been scheduled for June 17<sup>th</sup> at 7:15 p.m. at the town hall. No site plan has yet been made available. Staff does plan to attend the meeting, Ramie said. Ed Jackson, the chairman of the Planning Board, is aware of our concerns. O'Dell said he would represent the Council at the public hearing but said he would like direction from the committee. Richardson said, "It is our parking lot and is already being infringed on by the restaurant and we can't deal with another company using it." Fluhr recommended that O'Dell check the town zoning ordinance to see about parking requirements. Conway said even if they have a plan, it will not stop people from parking in our lot. Rajsz noted we do not want to hinder business, but there needs to be some common ground. Ramie agreed and added, "We would love to be good neighbors, we welcome retail, but as long as it does not infringe on our rights here." Niflot noted that he is concerned for the young girl from the Chinese restaurant's safety. She rides her bike around the parking lot with no regard to the vehicles that are coming in or out. He suggested sending a letter expressing our concerns. Richardson agreed a letter should be sent. Ramie noted that while there is a liability issue as well, we are primarily concerned for the child's safety and would hate to see something happen to her. After more discussion, it was decided a letter would be sent.

Ramie provided staff anniversary dates for personnel evaluation purposes: Executive Director, June 9<sup>th</sup> (one year; last evaluation done on 6/7/12 for the hiring resolution vote that followed Ramie's service in an acting capacity from 12/5/11-6/9/12); Secretary, 8/29/13 (two years; last evaluation done on 2/23/12 for six-month probationary end); and Resource Specialist, 10/9/13 (one year; last evaluation done on 3/26/13 for six-month probationary end). Ramie noted that a cushion was built into the FY 2014 salary budget line for the committee's consideration. She told the committee she was providing them with the dates so that the Personnel Subcommittee could set up employee evaluations if they would like.

Ramie noted that Westfall Township has not had an appointed sitting UDC representative since the November 1, 2012 resignation of Alex Cena and the alternate representative position has been vacant since 12/31/09. Participating towns and townships do receive monthly compensation from the Council for the expenses incurred in their participation. Ramie said there is no policy in place pertaining to an extended lack of representation by a member of the organization. Rajsz feels a participating town or township needs to have someone at the table in order to receive their monthly compensation. Ramie said it is up to each

individual town and township as to whether they keep the monthly compensation or pass it on to their representative. Richardson suggested reaching out to the township to see if there is anyone interested in the position and if not, suspending payment until they do. Ramie said that she has been in regular contact with the township secretary who reported to have an individual interested, but there hasn't been an appointment made. Discussion took place as to what constitutes membership on the Council. Ramie referred to page 21 of the River Management Plan where it states under Reimbursement of Council Members "Where permitted by law, local governments shall be reimbursed by the Council for the expenses incurred in the participation on the Council." McGuinness suggested making an offer to go to Westfall Township to meet with Township officials to see what assistance the Council can provide for filling the representative position. Richardson agreed with the idea and suggested putting a formal policy in place on how to deal with extended periods of no representation by a town or township. He added that the Council has had really good participation from Westfall Township in the past.

Ramie suggested that Draft Resolution 2013-08 to revise the UDC bylaws which was to be presented at the June 6<sup>th</sup> full Council meeting be amended to include language in regards to membership and then be presented at the July 11<sup>th</sup> full Council for adoption to allow for the 30-day notification to members. After much discussion, it was decided to proceed with the amended resolution.

Ramie noted that upcoming 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary activities include preparing a UDC educational program for presentation at the Delaware River Sojourn kick-off luncheon on 6/22 in Lackawaxen; staff booths at the 7/20 Zane Grey Festival in Lackawaxen and the 7/28 Narrowsburg RiverFest; promote an alumni/reunion theme for the 25<sup>th</sup> Annual Raft Trip on 8/4; and start the sponsorship drive and open registration for "Strides Across the Delaware" in the Lordville-Equinunk area on 9/28. Ramie said the t-shirts have been posted for sale on the UDC website. C. Odell reported that 42 t-shirts have been sold to date. T-shirts will be available for sale at the Zane Grey Festival, but not at the Narrowsburg RiverFest as per festival rules. Ramie asked the committee to let staff know if they can think of any opportunities for distributing the rest of the commemorative flashlights.

Ramie said she received a call from former Congressman Ben Gilman on May 23<sup>rd</sup> stating that he was "truly sorry I couldn't be with you" at the 4/28 UDC Awards banquet but he had been in Florida when the invitation was received. He gave regards to his Upper Delaware friends. Fluhr suggested putting Gilman on the invitation list for next year's banquet.

Ramie said the three news releases she issued in the past month were "UDC Opposes PA DEP Policy Proposal", 5/3; "UDC Has Upper Delaware T-shirts for \$15 Donation, 5/6; and "Joint Interstate Bridge Commission Approves Construction on Four Upper Delaware Bridges", 5/17; as well as two photos with captions: "UDC Presents Awards", 5/2; and "UDSB Elects Officers", 5/6. Ramie said she contributed information for the Times Herald-Record cover article and three-page spread in the May 19<sup>th</sup> issue, "Advocates Push for Delaware River's Own Identity" and submitted several corrections to writer Steve Israel on May 20. She e-mailed the link for this article out to members and noted it was quite an extensive spread and it has prompted a lot of follow up discussions. Ramie said she was contacted by YNN, Time Warner Cable's news division channel 6, and asked if she would do an interview for YNN's story of marketing the Upper Delaware. Superintendent McGuinness joined Ramie and the two were interviewed for the segment. Rajsz said that an issue she had with the Record article was that it did not mention the role of the Upper Delaware Scenic Byway sufficiently. The Byway, Rajsz said, is an integral part of the area. Ramie noted that on the agenda of the June 6<sup>th</sup> Upper DelAWARE Roundtable meeting will be a discussion/exploration of the Natural Economies, or making the most of the assets of the Upper Delaware River. The meeting will take place from 1 – 4:30 at the Tusten Town Hall and is open to the public. Conway said she felt the May 19<sup>th</sup> Record article should have included the figures from Dr. Kaufmann's Socio-economic values of the Delaware River Basin study in order draw attention to the importance of the river and the Byway. Ramie said that study is available electronically and offered to send it out if anyone was interested. Rajsz questioned who is "taking the bull by the horns" as far as marketing the Upper Delaware. She was told no one at the moment. Ramie said she has described to people that the Byway is there to promote the highway, and the UDC and Park Service promote the river. Richardson said he feels the Sullivan County Visitors Association could be doing more to promote this part of the county. Rajsz agreed.

Roeder asked Ramie if there had been any discussion at the Joint Bridge Commission meeting about the Callicoon Bridge being moved as that rumor had been brought to his attention. Ramie said there was discussion about future rehabilitation, not moving it.

Ramie noted we are waiting to hear of the decision by Norcross Wildlife Foundation in regards to our application for a grant to purchase computer and audiovisual equipment. A decision is expected to be made in late May. Ramie suggested that if the grant is not awarded, perhaps the equipment could still be purchased with the surplus that is anticipated at the end of this fiscal year.

Ramie said the rest of her written report contains Upper Delaware Scenic Byway information, special meetings or events of the period, and a list of documents produced by her.

Rajsiz referred to Ramie's June calendar and asked about the June 20<sup>th</sup> Sullivan Co. Legislature Executive Committee meeting. Ramie said that Legislator Cora Edwards expressed that she wanted to have a presentation, stemming from the Natural Economies conference, about the river valley and its importance at this regularly scheduled meeting to inform her fellow legislators. Ramie said she wants to receive confirmation from Edwards that this presentation will be taking place.

### **New Business**

**Review of Draft FY 2014 Budgets:** Ramie noted the two draft budgets were sent out in advance along with an explanation of the differences between the two spending plans; one scenario being full funding with the \$300,000 allocation, and one which reflects a federal sequestration cut of 10% based on previous advice given by NPS. Richardson suggested moving on the full funding scenario, and if the funding is not there, we can fall back on the other budget. Ramie covered highlights of the budgets. Roeder asked when the budget has to be approved. Ramie said at the June 6<sup>th</sup> full Council meeting in order to meet the July 10<sup>th</sup> deadline. Ramie said it was helpful to have auditor Dick Eckersley here participating in the budget preparation to review our spending trends and allocations of staff time. McGuinness noted that a cut to the budget would most likely be in the 5% range and suggested the Council may not want to have to modify the Cooperative Agreement right at the beginning of the new fiscal year.

A motion to go into Executive Session at 8:02 p.m. to discuss salaries and benefits was made by Richardson and seconded by Fluhr.

A motion to come out of Executive Session at 8:24 p.m. was made by Richardson and seconded by Fluhr with a request by Dexter to put an Executive Session on the June 6<sup>th</sup> full Council meeting agenda for discussion of the same.

A motion to present the full funding budget to the full Council for approval and to have a 5% reduced budget prepared to fall back on was made by Richardson, seconded by Niflot and carried.

**Review Draft FY 2014 Work Plan:** A motion to move the FY 2014 Work Plan to the full Council for approval was made by Richardson and seconded by Rajsiz. Ramie noted that the plan was distributed in advance for review and that the work plans must accompany the UDC budget for the FY 2014 submission to the Park Service by July 10. McGuinness referred to #6 on page two of the plan which states "Plan a conference or educational program on corridor-related topics of benefit to the Upper Delaware River Valley in partnership with the National Park Service, the Upper Delaware Roundtable..." and asked if a specific program should be noted there. Ramie said it was deliberately left open-ended as we do not know at the moment what topic might be appropriate in the next fiscal year. Discussion of item #1 under Fund Raising took place. It was decided to leave that item unchanged. The motion was carried unanimously.

**Small Conference Room Window Treatment Options:** Richardson said it was his suggestion to try to dress up the appearance of the office by installing vertical blinds in that window. C. Odell said she contacted Dan Wagner, the individual who holds the office cleaning contract currently, and requested a price for cleaning all the windows inside and out. That price was provided in the written report. A motion for staff to purchase and install vertical blinds and to have the windows cleaned was made by Richardson, seconded by Rajsiz and carried.

**Summary of Pending Bills 5-28-13/Financial Statements:** The committee was provided with an abstract of bills dated May 28 to review. A motion by Rajsiz, seconded by Fluhr to pay the bills listed on the abstract was carried unanimously. Financial Statements as of April 30, 2013 were provided for individual review.

**Other:** None

**Old Business**

**Proposed Sick Leave Policy Change:** A motion to recommend to the full Council a change to the current sick leave policy to read: "All full-time permanent employees shall earn sick leave with full pay at the rate of one work day for each calendar month of service. Upon the first day of the Calendar Year following 1-year of permanent full-time employment, said employee shall be credited with 12 sick leave days in the advance to be used throughout the following year as needed. The maximum number of unused sick days that may be accumulated is 12 days. Upon termination of employment, no compensation shall be paid for unused sick leave" was made by Richardson and seconded by Rajszyk. T. O'Dell questioned how this policy would affect current staff's contracts. He asked if the proposed policy would be for future staff. O'Dell stated that he is not comfortable with his contract being amended. The fact that the current policy does not have a cap on the number of sick days that can be accumulated was discussed. O'Dell said he understands the concern of the uncapped sick days, but noted that "this is a revision to a signed contract" and questioned "where does it stop?" After more discussion, McGuinness questioned if the conversation should continue in this format. Ramie said that if a change of policy should occur, she recommends doing it by Resolution so that it won't be lost for future administrations. Rajszyk questioned if the matter should go to the full Council for discussion or should it go to the Personnel Subcommittee. Roeder said the matter requires further discussion before it goes to the full Council. Richardson amended his motion to send the proposed policy change matter to the Personnel Subcommittee for discussion. The motion was seconded by Rajszyk and carried. Ramie questioned if the Subcommittee would want to meet in advance of the June 6<sup>th</sup> full Council meeting. It was decided they would meet on June 6<sup>th</sup> at 6:00 p.m.

**Strides Across the Delaware 5K Run/Walk Update:** T. O'Dell said that letters have been sent to Equinunk Fire Department, Damascus Ambulance, NYS Troopers, and National Park Service asking for help with traffic control the day of the event. We received confirmation from the NYS Troopers that they will be there on that day. The race application and on-line registration have been finalized. The sponsorship pledge forms for the event are being worked on. O'Dell hopes that members will promote the event to friends and family. The next step is to secure road permits. He asked members to think about race day and to volunteer to help out if they are able. O'Dell hopes to have Council members to help at registration, handing out packets, and at the finish line for public relations purposes.

**Other:** None

**Public Comment:** None

**Adjournment:** A motion by Rajszyk, seconded by Roeder to adjourn the meeting at 8:55 p.m. was carried unanimously.

*Minutes submitted by Cindy Odell, 6/5/13*