

Upper Delaware Scenic Byway, Inc.

October 26, 2020 Meeting Minutes

Attendance:

Voting members:

John Pizzolato, Town of Highland representative, Chairperson
Rosie DeCristofaro, Town of Delaware rep., Vice-Chair
Larry Richardson, Town of Cohecton rep., Secretary/Treasurer
Bianca Velez, Town of Lumberland rep. (by phone)
Josh Felderstein, Town of Tusten rep.
Ginny Dudko, Town of Deerpark rep.
Teresa Spradling, City of Port Jervis rep.
Freda Eisenberg, Sullivan County alternate
Bill Dudko, Town of Deerpark alt.

Non-voting members:

Ingrid Peterec, National Park Service Upper Delaware Scenic and Recreational River (via phone)
Amanda Subjun, Delaware Highlands Conservancy (via phone)
Carmela Hugel, Sullivan Renaissance (via phone)
Laurie Ramie, Upper Delaware Council

Guests:

Christine Colley, NYS DOT Scenic Byways Program Coordinator (via phone)

Call to Order: Chairperson Pizzolato called the meeting held at the Upper Delaware Council office in Narrowsburg to order at 7:01 p.m.

Business Items:

a.) **Approval of September 28, 2020 Meeting Minutes:**

On a **motion** by G. Dudko, seconded by Richardson, last month's minutes were approved.

b.) **Secretary's Correspondence Report:**

Ramie handed out a written report of outgoing and incoming correspondence, a list of informational requests through the website and hotline, memberships and book sales, and voting membership status since the last meeting. She noted that anyone who plans to participate by phone in these meetings can contact her in advance to request a digital copy of the packet with all the handouts. There was an uptick in UDSB toll-free hotline calls from people requesting the status of the foliage along Rt. 97. Ramie would generally refer people to the iloveny.com Fall Foliage report which is updated every Wednesday with the percentage of leaf color changes throughout New York State. It was noted that link would be a good one for the new UDSB website to feature seasonally.

c.) **Treasurer's Financial Report:**

Richardson reviewed his written report. The current balance is \$51,909.12. This includes checks for clerk services, the \$1,200 donation to the Upper Delaware Council, and the \$990 Butterfly Grant to the Trust for Public Land. Richardson said that a thank you letter was received from the UDC. One new UDSB membership came through the website by Gray Ghost Guides and Flies in a \$50 PayPal payment, minus a \$1.75 handling fee. Richardson referenced a Budget-to-Actual handout which shows expenditures of \$21,706 and income of \$31,800 in comparison to the 2020 budget, with a breakdown of categories and year-to-date transactions. Member support for 2020 totals \$31,250. Without Sullivan County's \$25,000 contribution, the UDSB would have only \$6,250 as operational money for the year. In terms of new bills, Richardson received a \$720 invoice from Moriah Wolfe for website photography and a \$300 invoice from Catskill-Delaware Publications for annual renewal of the UDSB brochure distribution contract. On a

motion by G. Dudko, seconded by DeCristofaro, the Treasurer's Report and payment of the two invoices was approved. Pizzolato remarked that the website photographer "knocked it out of the park" with her excellent work. She visited every business between Port Jervis and Hancock to capture wonderful images, and organized them by community folders in a photo gallery. Website designer Steve Franzken is basing the virtual mapping based on the way she formatted the photos. Paired with Noah Kalina's images, the website will be visually amazing. Pizzolato said he would share the gallery with everyone. Regarding the new business membership, Ramie explained that Gray Ghost Guides and Flies owner Jim Serio was a former UDSB representative for the Village of Hancock who also operates a real estate firm in Hancock. She said that we should discuss what acknowledgements to provide for business members, noting that Richardson has presented the last sign-up, the Cochection Firehouse restaurant, with a framed certificate for display. She said they may also wish to promote the membership opportunity to all businesses. Pizzolato proposed featuring business members on the website with a special listing for a certain length of time, perhaps a Business of the Month recognition. He noted that the new website will feature a Hunting & Fishing section. He felt that after the website launches would be an appropriate time to conduct a membership drive and issue a news release. Richardson agreed that we need to incentivize businesses to consider joining at the gold, silver or bronze levels. The spotlight frequency could be tied to their membership level.

d.) Grant Applications:

No new applications were received for Vista Enhancement, Butterfly Promotion, or Non-profit Signage. Pizzolato encouraged every UDSB representative to prepare reports for their municipal boards to advise them of these grant programs and other byway developments at least once a year. He will send an example of the written monthly report he provides to the Highland Town Board, which anyone is welcome to replicate under their names. Richardson said that he was disappointed that the Trust for Public Land took out a half-page ad in the *Sullivan County Democrat* to thank all the contributors for the success of their River Harvest day at Callicoon Riverside Park and did not mention the UDSB \$990 Promoting Butterfly Habitat on the Byway grant. Pizzolato said he shared that frustration which led to an apology when that omission was pointed out but not a retraction. Project Leader Francis O'Shea had said in an email response that the grant to purchase and give away native pollinator plants was credited to UDSB, Inc. at the event itself. It was suggested that the Trust for Public Lands could consider writing a Letter to the Editor of the newspaper to acknowledge the UDSB grant publicly. Eisenberg said that timing to acknowledge a benefit that this organization offers to its communities would be appropriate since annual budgets are being prepared. Hugel said if information about accomplishments like that were posted on the UDSB Facebook page, she would be happy to share that through her networks.

e.) Other:

Pizzolato said he received a call from Sullivan County Legislature Chairperson Rob Doherty who had been on vacation and saw some innovative, solar-powered trash and recycling compactor bins that he felt could work well in this area. There may have also been a built-in incinerator. The receptacles were manufactured by Waste Management, Inc. Doherty suggested that UDSB, Inc. look into their costs and feasibility and maybe a pilot project could be initiated to introduce them at locations such as public river accesses where garbage has been problematic. DeCristofaro said that local people have been known to stuff those public garbage cans also; it's not just visitors. Pizzolato said these receptacles appeared to have openings just wide enough to deposit individual items. He will do some research and bring the information back to the committee to discuss next month whether it appears to be a viable beautification-oriented project. B. Dudko advised that Waste Management Inc. has a location in Beach Lake, PA.

Public Comment: None

Discussion Items:

- a) **UDSB Website Update Status** – Pizzolato reported that the business listing photos and the Rt. 97 map were the last major items that Franzken needed to receive for his development of the updated website. He thanked Marketing Committee members for gathering content for the various pages such as Health & Wellness, Homegrown, Parks & Accesses, and Real Estate. He has a 7 a.m. call on Wednesday with Franzken. Before the site is migrated over, he will share a link to the update and ask everyone to review and proofread its content. Once it is launched, Pizzolato said that Franzken will charge \$30 per hour to make revisions.
- b) **Byway Leader Training Report & Recommendations** – G. Dudko said that she went through her notes from the Scenic Byway Leader Training held online by the National Scenic Byway Foundation over six sessions on Sept. 15, 16, 17, 22, 23, and 24 to pull out highlights for her written report that had been circulated in advance. In discussing the six Intrinsic Values of a Byway – Scenic, Historic, Archaeological, Recreational, Cultural, and Natural – they recommended agreeing on which two are the most important and then working on how best to promote and protect them. UDSB is fortunate to have all of these in play. One session dealt with creating a useful corridor management plan. It should be community-based and have buy-in by all of the communities along the byway. It should also be a living document that is reviewed every year; summarize the intrinsic values with a description of the byway’s vision/mission; establish goals, objectives and strategies; state who is responsible for carrying them out; and establish a timeline. There hasn’t been an update or review of the UDSB Enhancement Concept Plan since it was finalized in 2002. Dudko said the plan should reflect the ways that people use and receive information these days. Pizzolato added that a byway group in Ohio uses a Google Doc for its plan that all members contribute to updating constantly. It’s an approximately 30-page user guide. He said that anyone should be able to read the plan and get a beat on who we are and what we’re doing, almost like a how-to handbook. It could include the minutes for the year in it. The format we have now is not a good basis for getting grants. Eisenberg said our plan was originally done to meet the requirements for the nomination process to the New York State Scenic Byways System. DeCristofaro agreed that it had to be sent to Albany as the foundation for the group’s application and because of that, planners were hired to develop it. Pizzolato said he learned from the other byway examples that it doesn’t have to cost thousands of dollars and require professional assistance. Regarding buy-in, Dudko asked if we even know who our stakeholders are and how they stand on being for the byway (such as favoring economic gain and growth), against the byway (they find tourists cause congestion and inconvenience), or neutral (don’t care until personally-impacted). It may be time to identify our partners. Eisenberg said we could do a strategic planning workshop to invite these partners to share their thoughts. Dudko said it could be a town hall-style meeting. Other training sessions involved telling your byway story, wayshowing & wayfinding (assistance provided to travelers), authenticity and the visitor experience, building a byway marketing program, conservation and viewshed protection, sharing success stories, leveraging resources and funding byway projects, and conducting a byway assessment of strengths, weaknesses, opportunities, and threats. Dudko said one recommendation was to rate the “10 Best Things to See & Do On Our Byway” and to advertise those experiences. She said we have so many great assets, but how are we actively promoting them? Ramie noted that early on, the byway hosted an expo for business leaders and others at the Delaware Youth Center in Callicoon to which the head of the Seaway Trail was invited to share how that national byway operates and benefits its participants. One exercise was to write down 97 Reasons to Love UDSB on a flip chart, numbered from 1 to 97 in no particular order. Pizzolato said that National Geographic’s WildScenicDelawareRiver.com MapGuide offers a lot of this information to market authentic attractions and businesses in the Upper and Middle Delaware River regions but its interface was hard to use. Dudko said our byway’s location in a unit of the National Park System with a predominance of private property is somewhat unique. They suggested getting help from federal planners and landscape architects. She noted one group

in Oregon used historic postcards to show how their area has grown up over time with vegetation. Help could be requested to conduct a scenic management assessment. Pizzolato said the course identified a lot of helpful, thoughtful issues and Dudko's notes could be used as a blueprint for a workshop to delve into these. We could invite our partners from the Callicoon Depot project to participate in particular. This could shape how we pursue the visitor center's development. Eisenberg said that she and Heather Jacksy could work on a format for this workshop. Richardson suggested starting the meeting early at 6:30 p.m. to focus on the topic of initiating development of an updated plan. Pizzolato said he believes it can work within the regular meeting timeframe since some of the issues we have on the agenda now should be completed by next month, such as website update and anti-littering signs. Pizzolato said we will dedicate a half-hour of the Nov. 23 meeting to strategic planning, and will ask Eisenberg and Jacksy to lead us in that process.

- c) **Hawk's Nest Complaint and Recent Activity** – B. Dudko reported that NYS DOT has newly installed 35 m.p.h. speed limit signs westbound and eastbound on Rt. 97 along the Hawk's Nest area in the Town of Deerpark. A Lincoln car commercial shoot there last month had expedited graffiti removal along the scenic overlook walls and a bad accident apparently expedited the speed limit change. The signs appear to be permanent. They were installed about a week after the accident that involved serious injuries. An Oct. 14 article in the *Times Herald-Record* that was copied in the packets stated that New York State Police investigated the Oct. 10 crash involving a motorcyclist who lost control and two pedestrians at an overlook who were struck, for which unsafe speed was alleged as the cause. Spradling suggested sending a letter to say that we are happy with the improvements at the Hawk's Nest. She has been seeing many people stopped there lately, taking photos of the foliage and sunrises. Ramie referenced the handout of an Oct. 13 email message that the Upper Delaware Council received from Matt Steele. He wrote, "To whom it may concern, I am writing to voice my concern as a lifetime resident in the area of Rt. 97 Hawks Nest in the Town of Deerpark. I along with other concerned neighbors, friends and family have seen speeding, racing, reckless driving and vandalism which has gotten out of control in the past couple years. I along with other have concerns of the speed limit currently on that stretch of road of 55 mph and request the speed be lowered to 30 mph since this will enforce people to slow down. Also is there any way that the state can put in rumble strips or something similar you see on some of our highways' shoulders to alert drowsy drivers whom drift off? Also we would love to see our beautiful Hawks Nest stay beautiful and would like to request cameras to monitor the vandalism and dumping. My suggestion would be maybe a live view camera for the public to view live and be able to view it at any time. People are so concerned about the situation they have created a Facebook page named "Hawks Nest Outrage". I along with many others would like to preserve the beauty and safety of our beautiful Hawks Nest and would appreciate your assistance to this matter. Thank you for your time and hope to hear back." Pizzolato said he has seen more of a police presence. He asked Ramie to reply to let Mr. Steele know what UDSB, Inc. has done regarding the Hawk's Nest and assure that we continue to work with the Deerpark Police Chief, town, and DOT on these issues. He noted that there are some Facebook groups which have formed to encourage people to meet up there to race; they appear to be "motorhead" teens from the Port Jervis area. Eisenberg asked if we have accident data and traffic statistics for the Hawk's Nest. That might be helpful to gather. B. Dudko said we had requested and received law enforcement statistics about arrests. He suggests holding off on further action as we approach winter when crowds should abate and see whether the 15-minute parking signs and lower speed limits help take care of some of these problems.

- d) **Other** – None

Follow-up Actions and Committee Reports:

- a) **Highland River Access Construction Drawings Financing Update** – Eisenberg reported that financing was secured to complete the 95% construction documents for the Highland River Access. Jacksy found out the O’Connor Foundation grant she had been seeking wasn’t available because this was considered to be an outstanding bill rather than a stand-alone feature of the project, therefore ineligible. The good news was that Jacksy was able to receive a waiver from the federal grant to a clause that had prevented her from accessing those funds now. She also received pledges from the Friends of the Upper Delaware River of \$750, the Town of Highland of \$250, and the Greater Barryville Chamber of Commerce of \$500. Pizzolato said that UDSB, Inc. had approved a contribution toward this also but now it wasn’t needed. He acknowledged that some members were against that in fearing we were opening up the organization to similar funding requests, but said that Legislator Doherty had thanked UDSB, Inc. for being willing to step up. Eisenberg said the next step will be for the Sullivan County Procurement Department to proceed with contracting. She hopes a contract will be in place by the end of this year. In response to Felderstein questioning what the construction will do, Eisenberg said she will circulate the concept plans which include regrading the boat launch, landscaping, adding amenities, and removing invasive species.
- b) **NYS Department of Transportation Region 9 Report** – A written report compiled by Kris Gilbert appeared in the packets. Work on 18 runs of guiderail in the Towns of Delaware and Cohecton is anticipated to start the first week of November 2020 and be completed by 11/30. Rt. 97 slope and guiderail work in the Towns of Fremont and Delaware is anticipated to begin in late 2021 or early 2022. That is the same schedule for removal of invasive species in the Town of Tusten from north of Grassy Swamp Road to Lackawaxen Road. Harsh winter paving was completed in Delaware County from John Deck Road to Lordville Road on Oct. 22. Shoulder backup work there will continue as weather and resources permit.
- c) **Callicoon Train Depot and Visitor Center Project Update** – Pizzolato reported that the officers for the new Callicoon Depot, Inc. non-profit organization have been identified, with Nicole Vallance as president, John Erik Karkula as vice-president, Laurie Ramie as secretary, and John Pizzolato as treasurer. [Vallance reported in a post-meeting note that three at-large trustees will be Kate Hawk, Freda Eisenberg, and Bianca Velez to comprise the seven-member board which will be presented in the incorporation application.] Pizzolato said he wants to assure that UDSB, Inc. has ongoing future representation on that board since the visitor center is being developed jointly by our two organizations. He will be meeting with the Sullivan County Clerk’s Office tomorrow to discuss what satellite services that agency could provide in Callicoon to add value and convenience for western Sullivan County. Eisenberg said that the Train Depot Committee is waiting to hear back whether the railroad company will require a Phase 2 environmental study, which should be the final step toward getting the lease signed. She noted that the Sullivan County Legislature on Thursday approved a \$20,000 allocation from the room occupancy tax to this project to help cover soft costs like taxes and insurance. Pizzolato said he appreciates the county’s decision to invest in this tourism initiative, while adding there was no attempt to divert this money from any other entity. It is about sharing revenue collected from visitors. As announced in newspaper coverage, the county is currently renegotiating its contract with the Sullivan Catskills Visitors Association. As a non-voting member of that board representing UDSB, Inc., he had participated in an emergency SCVA meeting on that subject, which initially had called for terminating the contract.
- d) **The Kate Project Vista Enhancement Progress by The Delaware Company** – Debra Conway emailed to say, “We did not receive the DOT permit until last week. The contractor has two excavation jobs he is crunching to finish before the ground starts to freeze but anticipates

beginning in a couple of weeks. (Of course, I'm holding my breath, anticipating deer season when all hunters disappear from work.) Stay tuned.”

- e) **Anti-Littering Community Signage Update** – Pizzolato reported that they are in the final stages of submitting the work permits needed to install the circular anti-littering panels on the existing UDSB route markers. Ramie located Peter Osborne’s 2003 paper files which included an inventory of the 50 trailblazer sign locations by geographic description rather than mile marker. Ten panels will be fabricated. He has found it difficult to get permission from NYS DOT Region 8 for the Orange County signs. Felderstein asked whether we can print the UDSB website address on the signs. Pizzolato said no; that would be considered advertising which is not allowed on a state sign.

- f) **Other** – Ramie said that copies are available online at www.upperdelawarecouncil.org of the 2020 River Valley Awards program which includes full-page write-ups with color photographs of the awards presented to Nancy Furdock, former Village of Hancock representative and UDSB, Inc. vice-chairperson, for Community Service based on this group’s nomination and to Sullivan West teacher John Ogozalek for Special Recognition based on his initiative to mark the Highest Elevation Point along the Upper Delaware Scenic Byway with signage that he has creatively decorated for holidays and occasions such as honoring essential workers and first responders during the COVID crisis. While the Upper Delaware Council’s 32nd Annual Awards banquet had to be cancelled, the roster of 2020 recipients will hopefully be honored in person next spring.
Contact Ramie to request a hard copy of the booklet.

Next Meeting Date: 4th Monday, November 23, 2020 at 211 Bridge St., Narrowsburg.

Adjourn: On a **motion** by DeCristofaro, seconded by G. Dudko, the October 26, 2020 UDSB meeting adjourned at 8:35 p.m.

Minutes prepared by Laurie Ramie, 11/1/20