

**D&H Transportation Heritage Council**  
**July 27, 2022 Quarterly Meeting Minutes** *(amended 10/28/22)*  
**Hosted by National Park Service at Zane Grey Museum, Lackawaxen, PA**

Participants:

**Bill Merchant (chair)**, D&H Canal Historical Society and Museum, High Falls  
**Cliff Robinson, Jr. (vice-chair)**, Neversink Feeder & Canal Conservancy  
**Donna Durland (treasurer)**, Mamakating Historical Society  
**Laurie Ramie (secretary)**, Upper Delaware Council  
**Don Drewett (legislative liaison)**, full voting individual member (by Zoom)  
**Jane Varcoe**, Waymart Area Historical Society  
**Kathy Land**, affiliate member  
**S. Robert Powell**, Carbondale Historical Society  
**Sally Talaga**, Wayne County Historical Society's D&H Canal Park at Lock 31  
**Ingrid Peterec**, National Park Service Upper Delaware Scenic and Recreational River  
**Alex Garcia-Maldonado**, National Park Service Upper Delaware Scenic and Recreational River  
**Kenny Christianson**, Lackawaxen River Conservancy and The Rowland Cooperative  
**Judy Gumaer Testa**, Neversink Valley Museum of History and Innovation and Assistant to the Mamakating Historian  
**Kerron Barnes**, Town of Mamakating (by Zoom)  
**Joe Tantillo**, affiliate member  
**Chester Hartwell**, affiliate member (by Zoom)  
**Bill Bollinger**, Bollinger & Rutter Video Services - guest  
**Jon Rubin**, Westbrookville resident – guest

**Call to Order:** Merchant called the business meeting to order at 1:50 p.m. following the optional morning program and tour of Roebling's Delaware Aqueduct by Professor Paul King and lunch at Il Castello in Barryville, NY.

**Additions to the Agenda:** Robinson added proposals to join the Inland International Waterways Group and to get involved with NYS DEC stewardship.

**Acceptance of April 27, 2022 Minutes:** On a **motion** by Durland, seconded by Talaga, the minutes of the last quarterly meeting were approved.

**Treasurer's Report and Membership Update:** Durland reported that DHTHC has transitioned to a new account at Wayne Bank under the new corporate name. She presented a written report of transactions noting the previous balance of \$4,314.73 and ending balance of \$3,297.98. She also listed 20 organizations and individuals, and six affiliate members who have paid 2022 dues as of this date. One new membership was received today from guest Jon Rubin. Durland said that a **\$243.75 check paid on 4/28 for W Design for the website has not cleared so she will re-issue it.** She will also explore **setting up a PayPal or Venmo account to accept electronic payments.** Christianson asked whether the membership dues are tax-deductible, which Varcoe said they are because it's a donation to the organization.

**DHTHC Legislative Liaison Report** – Drewett said he plans to reach out to the canal area's local Members of Congress to offer tours after their August recess while they're in their home districts, then we can follow up with conversations about funding. Merchant said he was surprised to see the two-page write-up that he had authored proposing to designate the entire corridor as a continuous National Park Trail printed in the Basha Kill Area Association's "BKAA Guardian"

Spring 2022 newsletter. A copy was provided in the meeting packets. That had been circulated as a draft to explain the historical significance of the D&H Canal to audiences such as elected officials. Drewett said it's great when articles like this are published and letters to legislators such as NYS Assemblyman Karl Brabanec regarding the Neversink Feeder and Canal are sent, but he requested for the future that the Council **discuss and approve these canal-related outreach messages before they are finalized** to be in unison and stay on message.

**Business and Discussion Items:**

- a) **DHTHC 501(c)3 Corporation Implications and Restructuring** – The DHTHC has evolved from being a loose group of canal and gravity railroad site stewards started by the National Park Service, to being chartered through the New York State Education Department, and now has federal 501(c)3 status. Merchant said we should consider our objectives and how we can be most effective. Does having quarterly meetings still make sense? What are the trustees of the new corporation responsible for compared to the elected officers? Is there a sufficient number of trustees? He suggested that we **individually review the bylaws which Ramie will circulate to determine if there are any revision needs**. He said one way to conceive a restructuring is to regard the trustees as a type of “brain trust” for the organization and perhaps they meet more often than the quarterly meetings with the full membership. There would still be at least an annual meeting to vote on officers. He asked everyone to gather their thoughts after reviewing the bylaws and be prepared to discuss this at the next meeting. Barnes later offered tips for three steps to take following 501(c)3 designation: 1. Register with the New York State Grants Gateway (which is being replaced with the Statewide Financial System); 2. Register with SAM.gov (System for Award Management to accept government grants); and 3. Get a DUNS number (which has been replaced by a Universal Identifier). **Ramie and Durland volunteered to work on those registrations for the DHTHC.**
  
- b) **Update on Historic DVD Series Inventory; Chapters 4 and 5; Video Platform** – Talaga provided an inventory of the DVDs still available: Chapter 1 = 30; Chapter 2 = 14; and Chapter 3 = 24. Bollinger reported that shooting should wrap today for Chapter 4, although he would like to re-create the scene where the first shovel load of dirt was removed to start building the canal in Wurtsboro. **Barnes said he will contact the property owner and knows of a costumed re-enactor who may be interested; Gumaer Testa has a lead as well.** A complete text of the 1825 speech is available. Ramie reported that she had passed along the link for the historic DVD series “teaser” video compiled by Conner Simon that Bollinger had sent her the link of on 5/11 to Dorene Warner at W Design with a request to upload it to the website. Warner replied that because of its 394 MB size, we would need to host the video on another platform such as YouTube or Vimeo. Otherwise, the video will take up too many resources and storage space on the DHTHC website hosting server. Merchant noted there is no cost to do that, although you do have to tolerate their ads and suggested other content to use those platform's resources. Rubin said that Vimeo doesn't come with an advertising bombardment. Merchant agreed that video is a powerful way to get out a message. He and Durland volunteered to **set up a DHTHC video channel and send the link to Council members.**
  
- c) **Planning a Bus Tour from Port Jervis to Spring Glen** – Robinson said that he will coordinate a bus trip with the release of Chapter 4. He feels that November timing would be best.

- d) **Report on 6/18 Trails Summit hosted by Town of Mamakating; The Kate Project Progress** – Barnes reported that the goal for the June 18 Trails Summit was to bring together organizations that are working on trail projects but haven't necessarily networked so they can connect with each other. They arranged six quick presentations in one hour and set up tables as "think tanks". A video was recorded of the whole summit by FIT Photography Professor Brad Paris that is currently being edited. Each trail group will receive their own 15-minute segment. Merchant said he'd be happy to send the whole video out to the group via a Google link when it's ready. Barnes added that it could be posted on social media too. Interest was expressed in holding this summit annually. Merchant reported that OSI received a \$1 million grant to do a feasibility study lasting at least one year to expand the NY O&W Railroad trail. From Ellenville to Algerville, the O&W involved the D&H bed. The project is expected to cost \$5-6 million. He is serving on the committee and can report back to the group. Merchant also noted that loop trails are being established on NYS DEC-owned properties. All these efforts dovetail nicely with our trail expansion interests. Robinson mentioned several trail sections including some NYS DEC properties that are overgrown or in need of work, including Haven Road to Westbrookville, half a mile on the north side of Rt. 209, and Mongaup to the Hawk's Nest. He would like to seek a conservation easement from the private property owner in the latter case. Robinson said as we are seeking grants, we can cite the number of miles of the towpath we have already improved to support the justification. Merchant said there is a precedent for the DEC to buy these properties and then turn them over to a steward to maintain. That could be the DHTHC. Regarding The Kate Project, Ramie said that Debra Conway had a meeting conflict today but did want to report that a site plan and work permit application has been submitted to the NYS Department of Transportation for that extension of the NPS Towpath Trail to the river access site in the Town of Highland. She is hopeful for that phased-in project to continue moving.
- e) **Report by Cliff Robinson, Jr. on 5/30-6/3 World Canals Conference in Leipzig, Germany** – Robinson shared his experience in attending the World Canals Conference. His June 1 program on "D&H Canal: An Unappreciated Resource" was well-attended. He was happy to share information on this canal and learn about others. It was clear that watered canals attract visitation. He saw what could be accomplished and revitalized through public will. In Leipzig, the canal is a vibrant part of their city and has government sponsorship. Robinson passed around a copy of the Inland Waterways International magazine. They have a map depicting every canal in North America. The NY D&H Canal Association has invited him to attend and speak at their October meeting. It's focused on the Erie Canal but he would like to see them expand that to all canals in New York. Robinson proposed **joining the Inland Waterways International at a membership rate of \$60**, which was approved on a motion by Powell, seconded by Christianson. Powell said he is pleased that Robinson took our canal story to a larger stage to connect to the bigger picture and has become re-energized to the possibilities of what we can do here in the process.
- f) **Report of National Historic Landmark Nomination Update** – Merchant submitted the narrative for this update three months ago and hasn't heard anything back from the National Park Service. The report includes 411 extant canal resources. He's working on photographs now and is proud of the thorough nature of this documentation.

- g) **Local Activities Planning for D&H 200<sup>th</sup> Anniversary** – A committee with Merchant, Talaga, Christianson, Barnes, and Tantillo will plan to **get together within the next 1-2 months** to coordinate a list of potential celebrations for the multi-year anniversary.
- h) **Website (www.dhthc.org) & Facebook Postings** – Ramie reported on Dorene Warner’s recommendation for DHTHC to consider redesigning its website on SquareSpace.com “so that it’s easier to maintain and more importantly a responsive site that is accessible on mobile devices”. They offer an email connected to the domain name via Google Workspace for \$72 annually. Warner said she could resend the outline of website content which DHTHC discussed a few years ago to review any changes. Ramie said the website update hasn’t been pursued due to lack of funding, though it’s very outdated and has limited functionality based on what we have inherited. Members agreed to **ask Warner for a cost estimate for the site’s redesign and maintenance**, which then could be the basis for seeking a grant to cover the expense.
- i) **Other** – Merchant said we ran out of time today to discuss a **re-design of the DHTHC brochure** and logo that Tantillo has taken on for a task, but we will include it on the next quarterly meeting agenda.

**Announcements of Member Accomplishments, Concerns, and Upcoming Events:**

**Bill Merchant** – The grand opening of the new D&H Canal Museum and Mid-Hudson Visitor Center in High Falls, NY occurred on June 18 with over 250 guests. They have seen over 800 visitors come through the doors in the last 3 months and raised \$3,000 in donations, with the gift shop earning about the same in revenue. It will be open seven days a week at least through September. One matter to figure out is sustainability since they have only limited funds for salaries. Noting that the new museum had consumed the last decade of his life, Merchant received congratulations from the Council members for all the hard work that went into its development. Merchant continued that the society sold their former office and museum property, which is now on the market again. The 1850 Telegraph Office that they acquired will become part of an expanded 6 Locks Walk eventually. They have applied for additional grants for that.

**Jon Rubin** – He has been a summer resident of Westbrookville for 38 years who has always enjoyed exploring the canal. Through Kerron Barnes, he found out that there is a group of people who have the same interest and now he’s here.

**Laurie Ramie** – Copies of the Upper Delaware Council’s Summer 2022 newsletter were distributed as well as flyers for the UDC’s 34<sup>th</sup> Annual Family Raft Trip coming up on August 7 from Skinners Falls to Narrowsburg.

**Kathy Land and Jane Varcoe** – The Waymart Area Historical Society reopened its museum on Memorial Day weekend. They will host a Beginners Guide to Online Genealogy Resources from 1-3 p.m. on August 6. They won a \$4,000 tourism grant from the Pocono Mountains Visitors Bureau to build a platform for Gravity Railroad Car #43.

**Kenny Christianson** – The effort continues to get their part of the canal in Lackawaxen listed on the National Register and he will consult with Merchant on that. They’d also like to list the Rowland Cooperative. The Pike County Historical Society has been active in putting on events at Lock 16. They plan to renovate the tollhouse through a Delaware Watershed Conservation Fund grant. There has been a lot of opposition from private property owners to the expansion of a Lackawaxen River Trail through the Pike County section. He observed that while people enjoy

trails, they don't want them through their land. Merchant said it has been well-established that property values go up and that there are liability protections in the law regarding trails with insurance. Christianson asked if Historic District designations require approval by property owners. Talaga said individual owners don't need to sign on for a district. It is basically a name. Merchant pointed out that the entire canal was put on the National Register of Historic Places in 1968. That outlives all of us and individual ownerships, but it doesn't restrict private property rights. Historic listings offer "bragging rights" but actually have no enforcement components.

Donna Durland – The Mamakating Historical Society has two upcoming programs at 7 p.m.: Aug. 5, "Killing Time in the Catskills" by Kevin Owen, telling the story about Lizzie Holliday, a notorious woman of the late 1800s; and Sept. 23, Doug Hart will speak about the paranormal activity at the Shanley Hotel in Napanoch.

Sally Talaga – The Wayne County Historical Society's 9<sup>th</sup> Annual Canal Festival will take place on August 20 from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. at the D&H Canal Park at Lock 31. Talaga handed out brochures detailing the schedule of events with a site map and sponsors listed. They made special t-shirts for sponsors and volunteers that will also be sold. In the house, the plaster has been refinished after three months. Volunteers are scraping and painting. The restoration of one fireplace is starting today.

S. Robert Powell – The caboose restoration in Carbondale is moving slowly; they have the funding to do it but not the contractors.

Ingrid Peterec – NPS Upper Delaware Scenic and Recreational River Superintendent Joe Salvatore passed away unexpectedly on July 26. The staff is pulling together to cope with his loss. Professor Paul King will be delivering a program on the Roebling Bridge, as he did earlier today for DHTHC though more technical, to visiting engineers from West Point. NPS is getting a virtual intern who will focus on social media and share information on the D&H. There is a new virtual geocache with a geology focus at the Roebling Bridge, not sponsored by the Park Service, which has been attracting a different audience.

Kerron Barnes – They have a very small section of grant-funded trail development work to close out later this summer in Wurtsboro but the whole trail is open to the public. He has led three trail walks so far this year. The latest BKAA newsletter mentions the 50<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the Basha Kill Area Association, for which a celebration took place last Saturday at the Town Park. They have been responsible for defeating 7-8 proposed development projects due to environmental concerns. Lyman Holmes from Canal Town Emporium in Wurtsboro has handed over operation of the store to his daughter. Holmes is also a village trustee and would like to help with the 200<sup>th</sup> D&H Canal celebrations.

**Next Quarterly Meeting:** DHTHC will meet on the 4<sup>th</sup> Wednesday, **October 26, 2022** at the Mamakating Environmental Education Center (MEEC) at 762 South Road in Wurtsboro (intersection of Haven and South Roads, about five miles south of the actual village of Wurtsboro.) There is a walking trail that begins at the building and goes along the adjacent rail trail for about a mile. It is part of the "TravelStorys" GPS system. Users put the app on their phones and, as they walk, they hear a narration describing important artifacts or natural features. This trail features an eagles' nest and views of the Basha Kill. Those wishing to walk the trail should arrive at 10:30 a.m. with their phones. Lunch arrangements will be announced, and the business meeting will be from 1-3:30 p.m. at MEEC.

**Adjourn:** The July 27, 2022 DHTHC meeting adjourned at 4:08 p.m. on a motion by Christianson, seconded by Robinson.

*Minutes submitted by Secretary Laurie Ramie, 8/12/22*