

D&H Transportation Heritage Council Feb. 22, 2023

Quarterly Meeting Minutes (rescheduled from Jan. 25, 2023)

Hosted at the 1863 Schoolhouse Town of Deerpark Museum, Huguenot, NY

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
Norma Schadt, Town of Deerpark Historian
Michael Worden, Town of Deerpark Museum
Bill Dudko, Town of Deerpark Museum
Kerron Barnes, Town of Mamakating
Sean Moore, Sullivan County's Delaware & Hudson Canal Interpretive Center, Summitville
S. Robert Powell, Carbondale Historical Society
Joe Tantillo, affiliate member
David Lawrence, Neversink Valley Museum of History and Innovation
Judy Gumaer-Testa, Assistant to the Mamakating Historian and NVMHI
Bill Bollinger, Bollinger & Rutter Video Services
Kenny Christianson, Rowland Cooperative and Lackawaxen River Conservancy (Zoom)
Ingrid Peterec, National Park Service Upper Delaware Scenic and Recreational River (Zoom)
Sally Talaga, Wayne County Historical Society, D&H Canal Park at Lock 31 (Zoom)
Jack Weiser (Zoom)
Professor Paul King (Zoom attendance for presentation only)

Call to Order: Chairperson Merchant called the business meeting to order at 1:00 p.m. following Lunch & Learn presentation by Norma Schadt on "John Roebling's Posters from the Meulhausen Museum in Germany". She noted that they received a grant in 2007 to acquire the posters in the German language and they are available in Illustrator program software if anyone would like to print them.

Election of Chair and Vice-Chair for 2023-2025 Terms of Office: On a **motion** by Durland, seconded by Lawrence, Bill Merchant and Cliff Robinson, Jr. were nominated and re-elected as D&H Transportation Heritage Council chairperson and vice-chairperson, respectively, for new two-year terms, with all in favor.

Additions to the Agenda: Merchant noted that when DHTHC became chartered by New York State, five original trustees were named: Bill Merchant, Cliff Robinson, Laurie Ramie, Kerron Barnes, and Jane Varcoe. We can appoint more. He would like to have the trustees start meeting monthly, either in person or by Zoom, as we continue these quarterly meetings of the whole council. He asked if anyone else would like to step up to trustee status. Agreeing to serve at that time were Donna Durland, Judy Gumaer Testa, Kenny Christianson, and Sally Talaga. Merchant said he would confirm with Varcoe whether she wants to continue in that role and encouraged anyone else present or absent to contact him to join. On a **motion** by Merchant, seconded by Testa, the new trustees were approved as presented. Merchant will send an email around to arrange scheduling a first meeting of the trustees.

Secondly, Robinson requested adding to the agenda a discussion over whether this group should petition the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation to become stewards of state-owned lands from the Mongaup south $\frac{3}{4}$ mile, Rt. 209 to Rt. 17 stretch, and Haven Road to Rt. 17. Stewards agree to clear and maintain properties which remain under NYS ownership.

Barnes noted that the NY-NJ Trails Conference has a stewardship agreement with the DEC. We should check to see if it extends to those areas. A **motion** by Merchant, seconded by Durland, supported the concept of seeking DHTHC stewardship of the parcels as described.

Acceptance of October 26, 2022 Minutes: On a **motion** by Durland, seconded by Robinson, the October 26, 2022 minutes were approved.

Treasurer's Report and Membership Update: Durland presented a written financial report showing transactions starting with a previous balance of \$3,386.24 and ending with a balance of \$2,176.24. She received several membership dues payments today to add to the Village of Wurtsboro, Upper Delaware Council, Waymart Area Historical Society, Basha Kill Area Association, and Mamakating Historical Society that have already paid for 2023. Durland is setting up a system to accept credit card payments. She will file a 990N form with the IRS in the form of an electronic postcard.

Business and Discussion Items:

- a) **DHTHC 501(c)3 Restructuring and Review of Bylaws** – Merchant said this subject will be the topic at the first DHTHC Trustees meeting, and we will report back.

- b) **Release of DVD Chapter 4: Port Jervis to Phillipsport; and April Bus Tour Planning** – Bollinger delivered 100 copies of the completed Chapter 4 DVD today. They are packaged as 5 DVDs and available for \$7 per copy. He will provide them to Talaga to add to the DHTHC inventory. Talaga reported as the number of copies in the supply: Chapter 1 – 22; Chapter 2 – 18; Chapter 3 – 20; and Chapter 4 – 100, minus what may be purchased today by paying Durland. Regarding a bus tour, Robinson said that May 20 (rather than in April) is an available date. It has been a challenge to find an operational bus company but he has options for a 44-passenger school bus or a 56-passenger motorcoach. He has developed an itinerary with seven stops from Port Jervis to Phillipsport, and lunch at a restaurant to be determined in Wurtsboro potentially. The trip would start at 10 a.m., with a possible rendezvous behind the Port Jervis Library, and return at 3 p.m. The cost would be \$55, which includes lunch. Robinson will write up a description that he'd like everyone to distribute through their networks so we can assess the response, which will determine whether the trip is viable and what size bus to get. Talaga advised getting a deadline from the bus company of when they need the reservation by so we can work backwards. The invitations should include a commitment date and require advance payment with the reservation. She had provided lists of people from the past 2 bus trips who expressed interest in future trips, which Ramie acknowledged she has and will use as outreach to prior guests. Talaga encouraged sites with newsletters to run an article in their next issues if the timing is appropriate.

- c) **Production of DVD Chapter 5: Phillipsport to the Hudson; and Video Platform Set-up** – Four days of shooting have occurred so far and there are a half-dozen speakers involved in this section. Merchant said we had started out keeping the videos to approximately 15 minutes but Chapter 4 ran for 26 minutes. We probably have enough material to divide this one into two chapters. Barnes said if we find it's running too long, we could consider splitting off Summitville to Phillipsport and Phillipsport to High Falls. Robinson said there is more extant canal in Ulster County than the rest of the route, plus multiple industries involved. Extending to a Chapter 6 would cost an additional \$2,000. DHTHC has so far made a \$1,000 downpayment on the filming of Chapter 5. On a **motion** by Durland, seconded by Robinson, members agreed to split this segment into two chapters to cover: Chapter 5, Phillipsport to High Falls; and Chapter 6, High Falls to

the Hudson. Regarding a video platform, Merchant said there are multiple methods of offering content online. Now that DHTHC is a 501(c)(3) organization, we could solicit donations, such as setting up a streaming platform and asking people who watch the videos to donate in support of our mission. Lawrence said it's also possible to set up a paid subscription service through YouTube in which the videos could be encoded so they can't be copied. Merchant said he feels our mandate is to get the D&H Canal story out there. We could continue to sell the DVDs for those who prefer that. Robinson said while we could offer this content entirely online and save the cost of printing copies, that would undercut the small profit that individual groups receive who sell them. Currently the videos are not featured on the DHTHC website since that platform doesn't have the bandwidth for it, pending an upgrade. Bollinger said that Wally Life TV had asked about airing the videos also. Merchant said the videos do play better on TVs than monitors. Bollinger said he can provide anyone with a high-definition file of the chapter to get that better quality playback upon request. After further discussion, it was decided that Ramie will ask Dorene Warner how much it would cost to set up a Donate button on the website to be linked to a PayPal account. If it's less than \$300, authorization is given to proceed.

- d) **DHTHC Brochure Design Refresh** – Tantillo, a professional graphic designer, had offered to assist with a redesign of the DHTHC brochure. He said he has some logo designs to share. Merchant suggested having the trustees meeting first since the organization's structure is in transition before working on messaging for the brochure.
- e) **W Design Proposal for www.dhthc.org; Potential Grant Sources** – Merchant said he has two potential grant sources to pursue the \$4,750 design fee + \$500 to build an eCommerce shopping cart quote that W Design of Barryville, NY had provided to develop a new, responsive, mobile-optimized website utilizing the SquareSpace framework. The sitemap of content originally discussed in June 2019 included Home page, Membership, History, News, Videos, Photo Gallery, and Contact Form. Annual fees for SquareSpace business are \$276 (or \$23/month), with optional annual add-ons for eCommerce sites (basic \$325 or advanced \$588), as well as \$96 annually to set up email via Google Workspace. Those prices were current as of October 2022.
- f) **Activities Planning for D&H 200th Multi-Year Anniversary** – Talaga said that she considers the committee's work to be done since they provided a timeline of activities that could be commemorated to everyone. Now organizations need to commit to developing events. Let the committee know what and when they have planned, and we can help promote them. Christianson said that the Lackawaxen River Conservancy and the Rowland Cooperative will hold a 200th anniversary kick-off event on March 12 from 1-4 p.m. at the Rowland Cooperative Market to include a history talk, canal music by Dan Engvaldsen, food, and exhibits. He will send out the flyer. Barnes reported there are many organizations interested in putting on a reenactment in Wurtsboro but they haven't found a leader. He may look for funds that would enable hiring an intern or coordinator to lead that planning committee. Powell noted that the Lackawanna & Wyoming Valley Railway Historical Society is celebrating the 1823-2023 anniversary of the Delaware & Hudson Canal Company and Railroad in their 2023 calendar, as well as the 1973-2023 anniversary of the Lackawanna and Wyoming Valley Chapter of the NRHS. Both milestones are noted on the front cover and throughout the calendar with photos and text. It's for sale and doing well. Request a copy via lwvrhs.org or P.O. Box 3452, Scranton, PA 18505.

- g) **Update on National Historic Landmark Nomination Status** – Merchant reported this project awaits National Park Service review of their nominating report submission of 411 extant features of the D&H Canal to update the listing. He expects this process to finish this year.
- h) **Facebook Postings:** www.facebook.com/D&HTransportationCouncil – Merchant would like to add more administrators to provide updated postings to this Facebook page. Robinson said there are a couple Facebook groups associated with the D&H that are very active: Wet the Canal and Save the Canal. Maybe we can join forces. Social media can be a useful learning tool and create an army of volunteers.
- i) **Other** – Now that DHTHC is an educational institution, Merchant would like to put in a request to Canadian-Pacific Railroad to purchase the D&H maps they’re holding in Canada outright. Barnes said our arrangement was that we can use the map images with a \$50/page license to make copies to display but we can’t distribute them. Merchant said, by law, these maps are in the public domain. He believes it falls under the Fair Use Doctrine.

Announcements of Member Accomplishments, Concerns, and Upcoming Events
(abbreviated due to weather concerns as it started to snow):

Bill Merchant – 1) He will be recognized with an Individual Achievement Award by the Museum Association of New York, with the ceremony taking place at the organization’s annual meeting in Syracuse on April 17. 2) Merchant is working on a project with Professor Paul King to review 22 boxes that the Minisink Valley Historical Society had of correspondence from D&H Canal Co. Chief Engineer Russell Lord. Every Thursday from 1-4 p.m., he goes in to photograph documents which he is saving to a Google Drive. He will make these digitized files available for scholarly research. Talaga said that former MVHS Executive Director Peter Osborne did his Master’s thesis at Rutgers University on Russell Lord and that he self-published a book through Peenpack Press. 3) The D&H Canal and Historical Society Museum and Mid-Hudson Visitors Center is currently open Thursdays through Mondays from 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. They will expand to seven days a week from May through September. 4) Merchant encourages everyone to check out their D&H TV channel for recorded presentations of numerous history talks.

Cliff Robinson, Jr. – 1) The Neversink Feeder and Canal Conservancy is still attempting to get custody of the Port Jervis to Westbrookville section of the canal. There are two places listed on the National Historic Register where the abutments are falling apart. They are currently working with the Open Space Institute on this but may need to take legal action. 2) He will be giving a speech to the Basha Kill Area Association at the end of March. 3) The World Canal Conference will take place in Poland in 2024 which he plans to attend, then the next one will be in Buffalo, two years away. He suggests that we put in a formal proposal to host tours of the D&H at Kingston as a conference field trip. He will work on some ideas for that.

David Lawrence – The Neversink Valley Museum of History and Innovation got “kicked out” of the buildings it occupied at Orange County Canal Park on Dec. 7. The county voided an original 1976 agreement involving the three buildings it owns, saying that they received a \$15 million grant to restore them as the rationale. It’s basically a landlord/tenant issue. They had received a notice on Oct. 28 to get all their records out. Their charter says they have access but Parks Commissioner Brooks says the county owns all the contents. NVMHI had always been a separate entity, never a county park. Now they have no access to their website or email, and he doesn’t have enough bandwidth at home. They plan to take legal action and will get media involved when

they receive an eviction notice. Orange County closed all of their museums. The county historian is sympathetic but has not taken any action, he said. Merchant offered 1,000 square feet of storage space in High Falls that NVMHI could have for free and asked him to advise whether support letters are needed. Lawrence provided a personal email address.

S. Robert Powell – 1) He’s had a wonderful response to the Delaware and Hudson Railroad Bibliography listing his books (29 illustrated volumes at a collective 12,016 pages) and articles that can be read on Internet Archive. Each volume is contained on one DVD. 2) All of the listed articles were published in the Bridge Line Historical Society Bulletin. Among the reviews, publisher Jim Bachorz wrote, “Dr. Powell’s knowledge and writing have helped to take the BLHS to new heights of historical review. We continue to be amazed at the impressive men and incredible accomplishments of the Gravity railroad and canal system.” 3) Powell passed around photos of the Delaware & Hudson Caboose 35964 in Carbondale showing the new roof that was installed during the last month. 4) He downloads new material each year into an Addendum which as of Dec. 31, 2022 was 247 pages long. 5) There has been a new buyer of property at Shepherd’s Crook. The area around Panther Creek was dedicated in 2009 as the first Private Wild Plant Sanctuary in Pennsylvania by the PA Department of Conservation and Natural Resources. It includes Plane #14, associated with a Notice of Nonprofit Incorporation filing on Nov. 1, 2022 by Scott Bennett to call it The Chapel of the Ruins. They have respect for the site’s historic significance. 6) There was a Facebook search underway for Right of Way and Track Maps for the Honesdale Branch from Carbondale of the D&H that yielded positive results.

Norma Schadt – Copies of the “Deerpark Diary” December 2022 newsletter were distributed.

Next Quarterly Meeting: DHTHC will meet on the 4th Wednesday, **April 26, 2023** at the Century House Historical Society in Rosendale. A tour and lunch will be arranged.

Adjourn: The February 22, 2023 DHTHC meeting adjourned at 3:04 p.m. on a motion by Durland, seconded by Merchant.

Minutes submitted by Secretary Laurie Ramie, 3/21/2023