

D&H Transportation Heritage Council
April 28, 2021 Quarterly Meeting Minutes
D&H Canal Historical Society, DePuy Tavern, High Falls, NY

Attendance at business meeting:

Bill Merchant (chair), D&H Canal Historical Society and Museum, High Falls
Cliff Robinson, Jr. (vice-chair), Neversink Feeder & Canal Conservancy
Jane Varcoe (treasurer), Waymart Area Historical Society
Laurie Ramie (secretary), Upper Delaware Council
Norma Schadt, Town of Deerpark 1863 School House Museum and Historian's Office
Sally Talaga, Wayne County Historical Society's D&H Canal Park at Lock 31
S. Robert Powell, Carbondale Historical Society
Kathy Land, Waymart Area Historical Society
Shannon Cilento, Upper Delaware Council
Kerron Barnes, Town of Mamakating
Peggy Johansen, Mamakating Library Director
Don Drewett, full voting member, Eldred, NY
Janet Lybolt, Town of Mamakating Supervisor
Dave Lybolt, Mamakating Local Development Corporation
Ingrid Peterec, National Park Service Upper Delaware Scenic and Recreational River (virtually)
Lauren Hauptman, National Park Service Upper Delaware Scenic and Recreational River (virtually)
Dave Kime, D&H Canal Historical Society and Museum Board of Directors

Call to Order: Merchant called the business meeting held at the DePuy Tavern building, which is under renovation to become the museum and visitor center for the D&H Canal Historical Society, to order at 1:03 p.m. following an optional morning hike to tour Locks 13 & 14 and the north Roebling Aqueduct abutment, and a lunch gathering.

Additions to the Agenda: none

Acceptance of October 28, 2020 Minutes: On a **motion** by J. Lybolt, seconded by Robinson, the minutes of the last quarterly meeting were approved as presented.

Treasurer's Report: Varcoe presented her written report, which included an accounting of 12 deposits and two checks written since October 28. The current balance is \$3,089.73. She reviewed the membership dues she received for the balance of 2020 and new applications and renewals for 2021, with five additional payments received today. Varcoe said she will compile an updated list of full and affiliate members to provide to Ramie for the website directory. She also brought copies of the Basha Kill Area Association's newsletters with compliments for their contents. J. Lybolt noted that the BKAA is a 501(c) 3 organization supported by a large membership. They may be interested in joining the D&H THC. Merchant said no vote to accept the Treasurer's Report was necessary since "it is what it is".

Business and Discussion Items:

- a) **Adopt a D&H THC Code of Conduct and Ethics** – Merchant referenced the draft copy he had provided for circulation in advance of the meeting and for which a handout was available. To gain non-profit status, the organization is required to have a Code of Ethics. No revisions were suggested. On a **motion** by Talaga, seconded by Schadt, the D&H Transportation Heritage Council Code of Conduct and Ethics is hereby approved on April 28, 2021, with all in favor.

- b) **New York State Incorporation Charter Status** – Merchant said with the Code of Ethics now adopted, he is ready to submit the “Petition for Provisional Charter to the Regents of the University of the State of New York”. He offered to donate the \$100 filing fee and said that he would get it out in the next week.
- c) **Introduction of Don Drewett** – Merchant noted that Don Drewett had contacted him recently to express his interest in providing volunteer assistance to the Council. He asked Drewett to introduce himself. Drewett said he worked for the federal government for over 30 years while serving on a national legislative council overseeing federal prisons. He is now retired and developed a passion for the canal’s history after getting familiar with the historic resource through his work with USP Canaan in Waymart. He hears constantly about bureaucracy and roadblocks when it comes to seeking federal funding and advocacy. He may be able to help in developing a strategy to emphasize the message of national significance and potentially leverage state and county funds for D&H projects. He has been discussing ideas with Merchant and Robinson so far, and is happy to attend his first Council meeting. Merchant said there are trail systems that follow the Erie Canal route and examples such as the Empire State Trail that we could emulate or join, although we have missing pieces. There was previously a D&H Corridor Alliance which had a goal of linking those parts. Personnel from the National Park Service (NPS) took an interest and provided help. It seems like perfect timing to aim high if we can get enough traction. He said that Drewett brings a skill set and federal contacts that are welcome to this group. Barnes noted that New York has a canalway corporation that provides tourism funding and special designations to elevate the profile and opportunities for its designees. Merchant said unfortunately, that only operates at the state level for the Erie Canal and has no connection to the D&H. Talaga observed that having a canal that is located in two states has actually been a detriment to funding, so going the federal route makes sense. Drewett said he looks forward to helping connect the dots at the federal level. Merchant pointed out that NPS made a \$50,000 allocation for the National Historic Landmark designation update project which shows their willingness to invest federal dollars based on this canal’s continued value.
- d) **National Historic Landmark Designation Update** – Merchant noted that Richard Grubb & Associates was hired as the contractor for this project and his services as a local historian were retained to do some field work. He is preparing an outline which is due by April 30. If anyone would like to review the existing 1969 listing, he can share that. The original designation included five locations of special significance but the intention is to expand that. Powell clarified that this NHL designation does not recognize the entire D&H Canal and Gravity Railroad transportation system to include the origins of the canal. Merchant agreed that it is solely for the canal. Talaga offered a non-digital copy of a Historic Structures Report that has 182 extant sites for Merchant’s use if needed. Hauptman, remotely, confirmed the ongoing NHL work being coordinated by Amanda Casper, historian with the History and Perseveration Assistance office for NPS Interior Region 1, North Atlantic-Appalachian. She mentioned the National Park Service’s Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance Program which could be requested to help with any efforts to create a trail along the route of the canal. NPS-RTCA is a unique federal program that supports community-led projects by leveraging resources through diverse partnerships. They align the planning, design and technical expertise of NPS staff with the skills and abilities of project partners. She will provide information on their focus areas and application process.

- e) **Update by Neversink Feeder and Canal Conservancy** – Robinson said that, last year, Orange County commissioned Fusco Engineering to do a feasibility study to look into re-watering of the Neversink Feeder Dam in Cuddebackville. The report yielded three alternatives with these cost estimates: 1) Make no repairs and create a D&H Canal Ruins Park at \$236,500; 2) Rebuild some of the structures with bypass pumps at \$2.3 million; or 3) Do a historic rehabilitation of the dam and waste weir at \$5.7 million. There will be an April 29 meeting at the senior center in Huguenot led by Orange County Legislator Tom Faggione to discuss the report. Robinson said he is pleased to see movement on this, although his group disagrees with some of the findings. One reason for the high costs is that the engineers didn't feel there is sufficient gravity flow but NFCC members dispute that. Secondly, NFCC has a May 4 Zoom meeting with Orange County Parks over their proposal to take over that property through donation. He is eager to hear their ideas but doesn't expect there will be funding or motivation to accomplish this. They've had 33 years to fix the main canal while the site continues to deteriorate from inaction. The report says it would require grants or private funding sources for this work, but then says there aren't any available. Grants in New York State are extremely competitive now since the desire is to divvy up money among 62 counties. The Orange County Legislature has allocated \$3.2 million to the Heritage Trail with a plan to extend it to Middletown, yet they turned down Robinson's \$20,000 funding request on the justification that they don't have the money. Asked if the support letters that Robinson had solicited from D&H members were effective, Robinson said he has not presented them yet. He received around 10 and is also seeking personal accounts of the canal's significance in their lives. He will notify everybody of the outcome of those meetings. Barnes said the remaining dam has a hole in the bottom and the only thing slowing down its drainage is a dam that beavers built. The feeder is about 4,800 feet long. The infrastructure is from the early 1900s for use by the electric company. The feeder itself has failed and there are two major breaches in the towpath. It would need a culvert pipe or a lot of work to fix it. Alternative #1 to clean up the site and place benches would at least make it accessible for the public again as an amenity and wouldn't preclude pursuing the other options in the future. It would be a start. J. Lybolt said it would cost less than the estimated price tag if the county used their own labor and equipment. D. Lybolt spoke of his experiences in Sullivan County trying to rebuild the dry dock at the Bova Road canal site in Phillipsport. There was a \$1.1 million grant to build a museum. He wanted to set up a canal boat there for interpretation. The County Legislature passed a resolution for a five-year lease on the building and grounds, then would discuss a longer term or signing over the title to the Town of Mamakating. But the town took no action at the time and it was dropped. Now it's been brought back up again and the town remains interested. It will be discussed at a May 4 board meeting since the town would need to sign a Letter of Intent. He said it would cost the County Parks & Recreation Department less than \$9,000 to operate it in season, but the problem is that the Parks Department is down to two employees and this site is at the end of their county inventory. Giving it over to the town could enable them to connect their historic sites and trails from one end of Wurtsboro to the Mamakating Interpretive and Education Center. They could also seek better signage for the D&H Canal Linear Park. Robinson said even when a county has volunteers that are willing to step forward to provide stewardship and maintenance, they must do it the way the county requires. J. Lybolt said their objective is to improve the dry dock to accommodate a 40-foot canal boat. Merchant said that all these projects tie together and make a compelling case for why we need advocacy.
- f) **Chapter 4 Video Filming Status** – Robinson reported that videographer Bill Bollinger plans to resume filming on Chapter 4 for the historic DVD series in mid-May. He is in

the process of compiling an interview list for this Port Jervis to Spring Glen section. Anyone who would like to participate should please let Robinson know. They will choose an outdoor location, possibly Lock 50, to film those interview segments and Bollinger will also interweave historical photos with the footage to edit down to approximately 15 minutes. J. Lybolt said she could ask to get inside the museum building before Memorial Day if they'd like to do any filming there. Ramie noted that Bollinger had asked about using some of the aerial drone footage from Sullivan County's D&H Canal Linear Park video, so she had connected him with Parks & Rec Director Brian Scardefield and Communications Director Dan Hust, who provided permission with proper attribution. Varcoe found in her records that the Council had paid Bollinger & Rutter Video Production Services a \$500 deposit on 5/1/2019 and \$750 on 11/25/2019 for the Chapter 4 DVD. Talaga announced that she has copies of DVD chapters 1-3 with her; they are available wholesale for \$7 each and retail for \$10.

- g) **Bus Tour from Port Jervis to Spring Glen** – Robinson said the next bus tour will follow the same canal section and should coincide with the new DVD's release. He hopes we have that by this fall, which would be good timing for the foliage and scenery. It won't take long to organize it.
- h) **D&H 200th Anniversary Planning** – Merchant reported that he sent a list of significant D&H historic dates to the subcommittee for review. They will circulate that and ask people to fill in any gaps. The idea is to have multiple celebrations at multiple sites. Cilento said that she would like the Upper Delaware Council to partner with the National Park Service and The Delaware Company on a D&H event, perhaps at the Cowen Farm in the Town of Lumberland. Barnes said he has been contacting organizations within the Town of Mamakating to consider what they would like to do. In the process, he found out that the couple (a filmmaker and music professor) who last fall purchased Wurtsboro house where there had been an eyewitness account of the canal groundbreaking on July 13, 1825 also do professional 19th century reenactments with period costumes and music. They are excited to collaborate on a 200th anniversary event. D. Lybolt said he knows of two snubbing posts on private property. Maybe they would be willing to sell or donate those as a canal memorial. Talaga warned that relocating snubbing posts can confuse people as to where the canal ran when it's not historically accurate. Merchant suggested providing signage to clarify that fact. Powell said it's important to celebrate this 200th anniversary and urged that every organization should do it in their own way. While 1825 was the groundbreaking, the D&H Canal Co. itself declared 1923 as their 100th year anniversary, so 2023 might be an appropriate year to start the commemorations. Merchant agreed that 2023 was the logical start to him but there are many milestones to celebrate across 108 miles. On the timeline that will be distributed, people can start "claiming" dates and activities to plan at their sites. J. Lybolt said she foresees a brochure being published to announce all of the events and locations. It will be fun.
- i) **Website and Facebook Updates** – Ramie reported that Dorene Warner from W Design has continued to update www.dhthc.org in its present form after moving it to a new server. Warner had added the Sullivan County D&H Canal Linear Park drone tour recently. Since she charges for the time it takes to make changes, Ramie tries to gather and present updates collectively. The next additions would be for new members, the April minutes, and notice for the next quarterly meeting. On a **motion** by Kime, seconded by Talaga, the Council pre-approved an expenditure of up to \$400 to cover W Design's update of the website per DHTHC instructions, with all in favor. Merchant encouraged everyone to like and share the page www.facebook.com/D&HTransportationHeritage

Council. “Our Facebook presence is meager so please contribute,” Merchant added. He believes that the current administrators are only Peterec and himself, though he will happily provide the credentials to anyone else interested in posting content.

- j) **2021 World Canals Conference 8/30-9/3, Hagerstown, MD** – Robinson said that the Neversink Feeder and Canal Conservancy will sponsor his attendance and lodging for the World Canals Conference in Maryland. It will feature lectures and field visits along the C&O Canal. He will be allowed 20 minutes on the agenda for a presentation on the D&H Canal. Since the next conference will take place in Germany, this is a good opportunity to “schmooze” and spread the word about the D&H. He would like to show a video during his time. Ramie reminded all that Connor Simon, an associate of Bollinger’s and producer of the “Wally Life” show on Blue Ridge Cable, had offered to put together a teaser video including footage from the first three DVD chapters for that purpose. Robinson asked if Ramie could provide Simon with his contact information so they can make those arrangements. Talaga provided Simon’s phone number as well. On the subject of conferences, Merchant noted that he will be a presenter at the New York Canal Society coming up in Schenectady in September.

- k) **Other** – none

Announcements of Member Accomplishments, Concerns, and Upcoming Events:

S. Robert Powell – The Carbondale Historical Society museum and office has not reopened to the public yet, but membership has grown online. There has been a lot of outreach and sales of merchandise through the Internet. He has continued to do research and writing, finding that there is still a lot to be learned about the D&H. His latest articles were on the D&H telegraph system and huckleberries on the D&H railroad. On May 29, he will be giving a lecture on the Lackwaxen locks at Lock House 16 in Glen Eyre, PA for the Pike County Historical Society. There will be an old-fashioned barbeque starting at 4 p.m. Bring a lawn chair. The event cost is \$35 to benefit PCHS, and attendance is limited to 30 with reservations required to pikemuse@ptd.net or (570) 296-8126. Powell said, this summer, they are hoping to move their caboose into the middle of Carbondale. The caboose they acquired has been in storage for 15 years and relocated three times at a transportation cost of approximately \$20,000 while awaiting a permanent home.

Peggy Johansen – The Mamakating Library at 128 Sullivan St. in Wurtsboro offers a photo exhibit on the D&H Canal. It is open from 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. Monday, Wednesday and Friday, 10-7 on Tuesday and Thursday, and 10-1 on Saturday.

Kathy Land – The Waymart Area Historical Society held its first meeting since October on April 27. They hope to attract more volunteers; Land serves as the treasurer. They will re-open their museum in June, starting with Saturday hours of 12-2 per week. They will show films and have on display their gravity railroad car which brought coal from Carbondale to Honesdale.

Dave Kime and Bill Merchant – The D&H Canal Historical Society raised \$1.3 million to restore the DePuy Tavern building and has sold its former museum building. All artifacts and collections were moved into basement storage as the restoration work here continues under the care of an architect and designer. During COVID, they expanded their reach virtually and have been able to amplify this American story. Kime said he joined the board in 2014 and has become “a nut” about canal history. This facility will help depict the D&H Canal’s historic significance through a visitor center, museum, and pop-up exhibits. They expect it to open in a year. The visitor center will also focus on promoting the region, and they are making a loop trail of the Five Locks Walk.

Sally Talaga – The Wayne County Historical Society’s Main Museum in Honesdale will re-open May 22, with a current schedule of Wednesday through Saturday, 10-4. At the D&H Canal Park at Lock 31, they took down 13 ash trees due to the Emerald Ash Borer invasive pest under the advice of an arborist. There are plans for two guided walks in the spring and fall. The annual Canal Festival that had been slated for August 21 is in limbo, awaiting a final decision on whether the Wayne County Fair will proceed or not. They’ve committed to make that call by June 1. In the lock house, the historic architect’s plaster restoration project is ready to go. They will need a permit from the township to install some electricity in the house. The park pavilion is done and the canal boat cabin was completed in October. They only found one photo of a cabin interior to consult. It turned out well and has been a popular addition to the grounds. Talaga extended an invitation for DHTHC to meet there in Hawley in July.

Cliff Robinson – Robinson thanked everyone for taking the time to write support letters for the Neversink Feeder and Canal Conservancy’s cause. He would welcome any additional ones to be sent to him at robmech@outlook.com.

Norma Schadt – The 1863 Schoolhouse Museum remains closed for now. She spent the year decluttering, putting together two exhibits, and the floor has been painted. She also applied for new Canal Marker plaques, with a reminder to all that April 30 is National Historic Markers Day. Copies of “Deerpark Diary” newsletters from December 2020 (Vol. 17) and March 2021 (Vol. 18) were shared.

Janet Lybolt – On Earth Day, there was a groundbreaking for their section of the canal trail project for which a \$1,087,190 DOT grant had been received in 2014. When it was initially put out for bid, the costs came in way too high. Then they re-bid it in sections. Rutledge Excavating from Tyler Hill, PA won the bid. The Town of Mamakating’s maintenance crew took down trees initially to save some money. This project will connect the village to the shopping center and government offices. It should take 100 days to construct it. They continue working to get Lock 50 into the town’s possession from Sullivan County. The museum will be used by the Local Development Corporation as an office.

Kerron Barnes – Barnes is volunteering to lead a series of six walks on local trails and rail-trails, limited to 20 people and approximately 3 hours each, with the next coming up on May 16. [Johansen noted that this hike is fully reserved.] Lybolt added that Cornell Cooperative Extension of Sullivan County is coordinating a “people count” on June 5, which is National Trails Day, between 12-2 in Wurtsboro. Participants are able to enter a raffle to win a \$150 gift card. The information they collect will help show grantors the popularity of the local trails and consider the types of services that may be needed such as kiosks or bike repair stations. Visit www.mamakating.org for details on these events.

Laurie Ramie and Shannon Cilento – Copies of the Spring 2021 issue of “The Upper Delaware” newsletter were shared to provide updates of issues and activities in the Upper Delaware River Valley, including a profile on Joe Salvatore, the new NPS superintendent since Dec. 20, 2020. The UDC and NPS recently offered a training workshop for a new GIS-based Upper Delaware Scenic and Recreational River corridor mapping tool for NY and PA that is available for public use. It offers layers for parcel data, zoning overlay maps, and various conditions. This could be helpful for any property research related to the D&H Canal. The training session was recorded and is posted on the Upper Delaware Council’s You Tube channel.

Dave Lybolt – Since the D&H Canal runs behind the Poplar Grove Cemetery in Phillipsport for which he is president of their association, he mentioned that on Aug. 7 starting at 5 p.m., the sixth “Grateful We’re Not Dead” concert will take place at the cemetery, featuring a stage with five bands in a natural amphitheater with food. There is a \$5 donation for this family event for which proceeds go toward maintenance of the cemetery. See www.poplargrovecemetery.org for details.

Next Quarterly Meeting: The Council accepted Talaga’s invitation to meet on the 4th Wednesday, **July 28**, 2021 at the D&H Canal Park at Lock 31, located along Rt. 6, 1.5 miles from Hawley, PA. There will be an optional morning activity to walk the connector trail to the Settler’s Inn at Hawley and lunch arrangements will be made. The park offers an outhouse for a restroom. Itinerary details will be announced in July.

Adjourn: The April 28, 2021 DHTHC meeting adjourned at 3:25 p.m. on a **motion** by Johansen, seconded by Kime.

Minutes submitted by Laurie Ramie, 5/5/21