

D&H Transportation Heritage Council

April 24, 2024 Quarterly Meeting Minutes

Held at the Mid-Hudson Visitor Center and D&H Canal Museum, High Falls, NY

Participants:

President Bill Merchant, D&H Canal Historical Society and Museum, High Falls

Treasurer Donna Durland, Mamakating Historical Society

Secretary Laurie Ramie, Upper Delaware Council

Bill Bollinger, Bollinger & Rutter Video Services

Jasmine Leung, National Park Service Upper Delaware Scenic & Recreational River

Kenny Christianson, Lackawaxen River Conservancy and Rowland Cooperative

Sally Talaga, Wayne County Historical Society, D&H Canal Park at Lock 31

Sean Moore, Sullivan County's Delaware & Hudson Canal Interpretive Center, Summitville

Virdanna Lawrence, Town of Mamakating and Village of Wurtsboro Historian

Call to Order: President Merchant called the business meeting held at the D&H Canal Museum to order at 12:35 p.m. He expressed the condolences of the Council in sharing the sad news of the April 2, 2024 death of Steven Skye, a founding member, historian, and past president of the Neversink Valley Area Museum (now known as the Neversink Valley Museum of History and Innovation) in Cuddebackville, NY. He had shared a tribute on the DHTHC Facebook page with a link to his obituary: <https://m.applebee-mcphillips.com/obituaries/events...> as originally posted by NVMHI Executive Director David Lawrence. As a quick update, Merchant noted that the Neversink organization has remained locked out of their museum facilities for over a year now. There may be some progress on that with the new Orange County Parks director agreeing to meet with representatives to explore reopening and maintenance of the buildings, including a needed roof repair. The National Register listing may assist with funding opportunities for such projects. The DHTHC stands ready to offer support. The Council also offers healing wishes for post-surgery recovery to S. Robert Powell from the Carbondale Historical Society.

Acceptance of October 25, 2023 DHTHC Minutes: On a **motion** by Talaga, seconded by Durland, the Oct. 25, 2023 minutes were approved, with all in favor.

Open Space Institute's O&W/D&H Trail Initiative: OSI is working on a \$1 million feasibility study to create a vision to transform and connect the 57-mile former O&W Rail Trail and the D&H Towpath corridor into a continuous multi-use trail. Once completed over a 10-year period, it will connect local communities from Kingston to Port Jervis through Ulster, Sullivan, and Orange Counties. Merchant serves on the committee and will be attending all three Open House meetings that will be hosted as follows: May 1, Ellenville Village Hall; May 6, Mamakating Town Hall; and May 14, Port Jervis City Hall. Participants can stop by anytime between 4-7 p.m. with no registration required. They have also launched a community survey to assess how people currently view and use trails, as well as what amenities they might want to see in a completed trail corridor in the future. Learn more about the project and find the survey link here: <https://experience.arcgis.com/experience/626de25f05f646f5831095fb5efcf111/>. Merchant said this is a wonderful development for the D&H.

200th D&H Anniversary and 175th Anniversary of the Opening of the Roebling Aqueducts:

The next dates from the chronology of milestones in D&H Canal history are Nov. 19, when New York State amended the D&H charter to allow for banking, admittedly not a very exciting event to interpret, and Jan. 7, when the stock was oversubscribed at the Tontine in Goshen, a coffee house where business deals were made in those days. Cliff Robinson, Jr. has expressed an interest in organizing a Goshen event to commemorate the latter date. In researching significant events,

Christianson calculated that April 26, 1849 was the date when the first boats crossed the Roebling Aqueducts. He has turned that 175th anniversary into a celebration on April 27 in Lackawaxen, PA that a small planning committee has been organizing over the course of five meetings. The capacity of 80 at the New Inn at Lackawaxen venue was reached the day before the reservation deadline for the 12-4 p.m. program and now there is a waiting list. Christianson reported that the day will start at 10 a.m. with a walking tour of Roebling's Delaware Aqueduct led by historian and professor Paul C. King, as introduced by Leung on behalf of the National Park Service. The indoors program will include a buffet lunch featuring era authentic Pork Float Stew as a recipe that came from the National Canal Museum and other dishes; remarks by King, Merchant, and Sullivan County Historian John Conway who will serve as master of ceremonies; showing the video on the Lackawaxen Aqueduct produced by Bollinger; and canal songs by musician Dan Engvaldsen. There will also be exhibits set up to include dioramas, posters, and photos. The Council will offer the historic DVD series for sale. All registrants will receive an illustrated program created by Leung and a commemorative tote bag ordered from Platform Industries in Honesdale, PA for \$6 each. Christianson thanked Merchant and King for immediately agreeing to lend their expertise; Leung for creating the poster, banners, and keepsake programs with the committee's input; Durland for handling the finances through Venmo, PayPal, checks and cash; Ramie for taking the \$25 per person reservations; John and Debra Conway for their participation, and everyone who worked well together on the planning committee to make this possible in a relatively short amount of time. The full committee membership is acknowledged in the program as well as the 11 sponsors who contributed \$2,550 collectively. Organizers discussed equipment needs and agreed to meet at 9 a.m. on April 27 for the set-up.

National Register, Historic Videos, Bus Tour, and National Heritage Trail Update –

Merchant said the ball remains in the National Park Service's court to review the inventory list prepared for the update of the National Register of Historic Places listing. Once their report is received, he has some minor changes to offer to finalize it. Bollinger reported that they are a bit behind schedule for the production of Chapter 5 of the historic DVD series, although he met with Merchant in February to start shooting for Chapter 6 as well. They still need to coordinate on-camera speakers and are looking for suggestions of other, diverse voices they can involve for the narrations. Bollinger is reviewing appropriate still photos for these sections. He'll also be filming at the 175th Aqueducts Anniversary event in anticipation of capturing some great material, such as Engvaldsen's music. Merchant said, by the July meeting, they hope to have made significant progress. He wants to start arranging for a fall bus tour that will cover the subject area from High Falls to the Ulster County line. Ramie said that we have received some inquiries from people who are eager for another D&H bus tour. Bollinger asked for permission to use a reel from the DHTHC videos in his portfolio to show potential clients. All agreed, saying that Bollinger has been wholeheartedly dedicated to this project for many years. He noted that we will need to find another source to duplicate copies of the DVD since the individual who had provided those services is in poor health. A new design will be needed for the Chapter 5 cover which we need to get printed and to purchase the plastic cases. Merchant said he's sure we can work that out. Talaga asked if there are plans to combine all six chapters into one DVD. Bollinger said that can certainly be done. Talaga said before that happens, she'd want to revise the images in the chapter that showed Lock 31 to indicate its current site status, such as the completion of the canal boat replica. Merchant said we have also discussed uploading these DVDs to an online video platform in the future. Lastly, Merchant reported that U.S. Congressman Pat Ryan has drafted legislation language seeking National Historic Trail designation for the D&H Canal and Gravity Railroad, but there's no update.

Announcements of Member Accomplishments, Concerns, and Upcoming Events:

Sally Talaga – They are doing restoration work on the kitchen at the Lock 31 house after receiving a \$19,000 donation in the fall from a member that is financing reinforcement of the floor, finish carpentry reproductions, and furnishings. The kitchen will also serve as the new Canal Store location. The goal is to have it ready by the August 17 date of the Canal Festival, which will run from 10-4 that Saturday.

Sean Moore – This will be his third season at the Sullivan County D&H Canal Interpretive Center in Summitville. He’s happy to report that they now have an Assistant Director for the Parks division, Fiona Feltman. With her hiring, they expect to expand programming. Merchant and John Conway will speak at upcoming programs. Moore requested assistance in developing programs for fourth graders, saying it would help him if he could observe what others do. Leung spoke of the Upper Delaware Scenic and Recreational River’s Canal Days that are for fourth grade students. Talaga said that the Wayne County Historical Society has three school districts coming to the Lock 31 Canal Park on May 30 from 9-2:30 p.m. The Wallenpaupack High School Local History Club gets an advance lesson and serves as docents for the 4th graders. Merchant said they do a lot of student programs at High Falls. He recommended having something tactile to interest them; they go to the cement site, for example. Talaga agreed that interactive programs are best and suggested that Moore consult with teachers. Moore continued by saying that Sullivan County is discussing doing a feasibility study to stabilize the lock tender’s house next to the museum with an eye toward restoring it. Merchant commented that would enhance the Summitville site greatly. Talaga advised that it’s important to have a Historic Structures Report prepared to document existing conditions and consult it for architectural updates.

Jasmine Leung – The National Park Service will host their annual Canal Days programs for local school districts rotating through stations surrounding the Roebling Bridge in May. She will check on the dates. The Towpath Trail underneath the bridge in Minisink Ford, NY has reopened after repairs from a washout. It’s safe now and it will be part of King’s walking tour on April 27. The Zane Grey Festival will take place on July 13 on the museum grounds in Lackawaxen, PA. That always gets a big audience and lots of involvement from local organizations.

Laurie Ramie – She handed out copies of “The Upper Delaware” Spring 2024 newsletter and displayed the article promoting the Roebling’s Aqueducts 175th anniversary with a postcard image of the last canal boat passing through Lackawaxen in 1899. Ramie mentioned other topics that were covered in that issue, which is available online at www.upperdelawarecouncil.org under Publications.

Kenny Christianson – This year marks the fourth anniversary of the Rowland Cooperative Market. The Lackawaxen River Conservancy participated in the UDC’s Upper Delaware Litter Sweep and will have a table at the NPS Zane Grey Festival.

Donna Durland – The Mamakating Historical Society has not yet opened for the summer season.

Bill Merchant – The D&H Canal Society and Museum underwent a strategic planning exercise and has started a sponsorship program to help keep this \$2 million facility open. They brought in around 5,000 visitors last year, half of whom were tourists driving past. Merchant saw a Canal Clean Sweep program advertised by Parks & Trails NY and asked how they could be part of it. They said it was actually for the Erie Canal, which he protested. They relented and added High Falls to their map of clean-up sites. Volunteers sign up and receive t-shirts for their help. It was held on April 21 and very successful; in fact, the director of that agency who is from Gardiner rode his bike to High Falls, enjoyed exploring the site thoroughly, and pledged to be an advocate. Merchants wants to encourage other New York State based D&H sites to get involved in these opportunities.

Viridanna Lawrence – Lawrence announced that she is now the Village of Wurtsboro Historian effective April 1 as well as filling that same role for the Town of Mamakating.

Treasurer's Report: Durland reported that the treasury has an account balance of \$2,719.58 as of April 24 following deposits of member dues, DVD purchases, and Aqueduct event ticket sales, and payment of bills since the last meeting. This is pending payment to the New Inn at Lackawaxen for the April 27 event. There are currently 15 DHTHC members on the books plus two renewals that Christianson presented today. Durland will send a reminder to organizations that have not yet renewed for 2024. She is also working on applying to New York State for a sales tax exemption certificate for DHTHC. She will provide a full accounting of 175th Aqueducts Anniversary donations, expenditures, and profit after the April 27 event.

Next Trustees Meeting: The DHTHC Board of Trustees will meet on the 4th Wednesday, **June 26, 2024** at 2 p.m. at 211 Bridge St., Narrowsburg, NY.

Next Council Meeting: The DHTHC full membership will meet on the 4th Wednesday, **July 24, 2024**, at the D&H Canal Park at Lock 31 in Hawley, PA. The itinerary will be an 11 a.m. tour of the updated rehabilitation of the Russell Daniels farmhouse, lunch at noon under the canal boat pavilion for which advance deli orders will be taken, and the business meeting from 1:00-3:30 p.m. in the same location. Those details will be sent out in advance to the DHTHC email list.

Adjourn: The April 24, 2024 DHTHC meeting adjourned at 2:25 p.m. on a **motion** by Talaga seconded by Merchant.

Minutes submitted by Secretary Laurie Ramie, 5/10/24