

D&H Transportation Heritage Council

October 25, 2023 Quarterly Meeting Minutes

Held at the Mamakating Public Library in Wurtsboro, 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
Bill Dudko, Town of Deerpark Museum at the 1863 School House
Burt Thelander, Orange County Pathways
Debbie Bigelisen, Phillipsport Community Center
Ginny Dudko, guest
Jack Weiser, Phillipsport Community Center
Jon Rubin, individual member
Judy Gumaer Testa, Assistant to the Mamakating Historian and Neversink Valley Museum of History and Innovation, Cuddebackville
Kerron Barnes, Town of Mamakating
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 Historian

Call to Order: President Merchant called the business meeting held at the Mamakating Public Library to order at 1:05 p.m., following an optional Canal Trail Walk in Wurtsboro and lunch at Danny's Restaurant.

Acceptance of July 26, 2023 DHTHC Minutes: On a **motion** by Talaga, seconded by Durland, the July 26, 2023 minutes were approved, with all in favor.

Additions to the Agenda: Barnes announced that he arranged a call with Lori Solomon from the Sullivan Catskills Visitors Association later in the meeting to address the Council about promotional planning for the D&H 200th anniversary celebration. Thelander suggested discussing the Open Space Institute's West of Hudson Feasibility Study, which Merchant said he regularly mentions that since he serves on that committee.

Treasurer's Report and Annual Dues Rate: Durland reported that the treasury has an account balance of \$534.16. After Jan. 1st, she will send out a reminder that dues are needed by the first DHTHC meeting of the year in April 2024. She had provided a list of 26 members in her advance report circulated electronically and said she will add some individual names that are not on it. Annual dues are currently set at \$40 for full voting members and \$20 for individual/affiliate members. Following group discussion, Weiser made a **motion** seconded by Bigelisen to recommend raising the amount of the DHTHC annual dues in 2024 to \$50 for full voting members and \$25 for non-voting individual and affiliate members, with all in favor. [Bylaws Section 3 - Dues: a) Annual dues will be set by the Board of Trustees; b) Annual dues will be paid in April of each year. Failure to pay dues by June 30 will result in loss of membership.]

Nomination of Secretary and Treasurer: The bylaws state that officers with expiring terms will be nominated and elected at the last meeting of the year. Terms shall be for two years: May 1 to April 30 (formerly two-year terms from Jan. 1-Dec. 31). The Secretary and Treasurer are voted

on in even years, with the most recent election taking place on 1/26/2022. The President and Vice-President will be elected in odd years, with that most recent election occurring on 2/22/2023 due to winter meeting rescheduling. The President may serve no more than 3 consecutive terms in office. Merchant noted that we are starting with a fresh slate after becoming incorporated as a 501(c)3 organization. On a **motion** by Talaga, seconded by Weiser, Donna Durland was nominated as Treasurer and Laurie Ramie was nominated as Secretary, with their elections to those offices from May 1, 2024 to April 30, 2026 unanimously reaffirmed.

DVD Chapters 5: Phillipsport to High Falls and 6: High Falls to the Hudson; and Series Inventory: Bollinger reported that principal shooting for these next two chapters is complete. He would like to set up a date for on-camera interviews for both chapters at the D&H Canal Museum in High Falls in early November. He is seeking out better quality photos for the still shots, then will have music and text to add, and final editing. They will also need DVD cover photos for the two chapters. Bigelisen asked if there were any canal sections near Spring Glen that they couldn't access? Merchant said yes, between Locks 46-49. Bollinger said Lock 42 was the last one they had filmed. Bigelisen said she would help to arrange for any needed property access. Regarding the inventory of the historic DVDs, Talaga asked if Chapter 5 is expected to be ready in March and this group meets next in April, should we authorize printing copies in advance? Bollinger said the cost decreases per DVD based on the higher quantity ordered. On a **motion** by Talaga, seconded by Weiser, DHTHC pre-ordered 50 copies of DVD Chapter 5: Phillipsport to High Falls at a \$4.50 per unit price, with all in favor. Talaga replied to a question that the DVDs are available to members at a wholesale price of \$7 and they retail for \$10 each.

Planning for Next Canal Bus Tour – Vice-President Cliff Robinson, Jr. could not attend today's meeting due to a family situation, but he had turned over \$400 from the May 23 Canal Bus Tour from Port Jervis to Phillipsport at the July meeting. Talaga remarked it was good news that there was a small profit made. Merchant said we await a financial breakdown for the organization's records when Robinson's accounting software is functioning again. Merchant will start organizing a bus tour to follow the Chapter 5 route, starting at the Ulster County line, in March. Rubin suggested early April instead since there may still be a threat of snowstorms in March. Merchant agreed that weather would be a consideration. The new Phillipsport to High Falls DVDs will be sold during the bus trip.

Congressional Sponsorship to Seek National Historic Trail Designation – Merchant reported that Representative Pat Ryan has drafted language to sponsor a bill seeking National Historic Trail designation for the D&H Canal and Gravity Railroad, but he hasn't heard any updates about it for a couple of months. He will reach out and keep everyone informed.

D&H 200th Anniversary Events; Publicity Platform; Commemorative Postage Stamp – Merchant reported that they have an ambassador contact who continues to advocate for the commissioning of a U.S. postage stamp to commemorate the 200th anniversary of the D&H Canal. Barnes reported that the Sullivan Catskills Visitors Association (SCVA) has generously agreed to help promote the D&H 200th Anniversary and will work with the tourism agencies in Ulster and Orange Counties, NY, including setting up a publicity platform for events. Merchant said it's important to remember that we have two states and six counties involved, and that the D&H Transportation Heritage Council will take the lead role while welcoming help. The landing page for events should be on www.dhthc.org. He will generate a culled-down list of milestones in the history of the D&H Canal and Gravity Railroad that organizations can commit to observing which are appropriate for their areas and capabilities. 2025 will be the big year to celebrate the groundbreaking but it could extend through 2029.

Joining the meeting by speakerphone, Lori Solomon introduced herself as the Vice-President of Trade and Experiences for SCVA. They work regularly with Orange and Ulster County Tourism offices and the I Love NY program. Solomon was the Director of Tourism Development and Marketing for the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor formerly and noted that 2025 is also their anniversary. She said the goal of SCVA's involvement would not be to create any events but just to market them through their local, regional, domestic, and international outreach. She suggests utilizing the New York State Path Through History model which provides a platform for communities to sign up their events then organizations like SCVA can serve as the marketing arm. Merchant said he appreciates this assistance with the New York side but mentioned that we have Pennsylvania sites to include as well. Solomon said she would love to explore how we can partner across states. She'd like to work with a designated representative from DHTHC to collaborate. Visitors don't restrict themselves to certain counties so they're happy to work across boundaries. Merchant said this also coincides with the 250th anniversary of the Revolutionary War so there will be a lot of "competition" and we'll need help from all entities to get the word out about the D&H significance. We have a country-wide story to tell, such as how ¾ of the world's anthracite coal came through Pennsylvania. That's why we are working on a National Historic Trail designation. Solomon said yes, let's have a conversation. As DHTHC president, Merchant said he will provide his contact information to Solomon within the next week.

After Solomon ended the call with the group's thanks for her participation, Barnes passed around copies of a preliminary online form that SCVA created to list D&H Canal 200th Anniversary events, as well as four sample anniversary logos their Marketing staff created for consideration. Merchant noted that Joe Tantillo had designed a great new logo for DHTHC that we are now using. Ramie asked Barnes if he could forward those logos electronically for everyone's review.

Project Goals and Fundraising Strategies – The most short-term fundraising need is to redesign the DHTHC website so that we have a functional landing page for the 200th anniversary public outreach and to prioritize soliciting donations considering that we have only \$534 in the treasury, Merchant said. The Board of Trustees has a greater responsibility now to discuss this topic in depth, but all ideas are welcome.

National Historic Landmark Nomination Update Status – Merchant is working with Richard Grubb Associates as the federal contractor for this update. He sent them modern maps which they overlaid onto the historic maps to create 412 GPS points for extant canal features. The National Park Service is a year and a half late on their review of the nomination paperwork, but he's heard no timeline for when to expect that. He's happy to share the documents with anybody interested.

Map Discoveries – Barnes reported that because the O&W Railroad runs parallel or close to the D&H Canal, they purchased some of the maps from the Delaware & Hudson Co. He's been comparing those maps he got from Jeff Otto's O&W archives in Slate Hill to the two books of maps that Robinson photographed in Montreal as well as the Barber maps, finding different calligraphy and dates in some cases. Merchant said we've been aware that there are two different sets. This points out that the Canadians don't have exclusives on their collection and that there are maps in the public domain.

DHTHC Brochure, Website, and Social Media Updates – Graphic designer Joe Tantillo is providing his professional services to revamp the DHTHC brochure, but Merchant said we don't have the funds right now to print any. He's been working with Tantillo on messaging, specifically what does DHTHC represent and what are we trying to do? Talaga suggested asking Tantillo if he'd like to create a 200th anniversary logo that we could review in conjunction with the ideas provided by the Sullivan Catskills Visitors Association. Hearing yes, she said she will do that

ahead of the January Trustees meeting. Regarding the DHTHC Facebook page, Merchant thanked Gumaer Testa for her postings. Ramie reminded him that she had asked to become an administrator so she can post photos from canal walks and information on DHTHC meetings.

Announcements of Member Accomplishments, Concerns, and Upcoming Events:

Burt Thelander – He has been involved with promoting the Open Space Institute (OSI) initiative which received a \$1 million grant from New York State to conduct the feasibility study to unite sections of the D&H Canal and O&W Railroad, while Congressman Ryan is pursuing a \$3 million federal grant. Orange County Pathways is working on a bike lane project.

Sally Talaga – The pavilion at the D&H Canal Park at Lock 31 is available for rent. Talaga distributed Wayne County Historical Society brochures for their sites and activities, while noting that a new one will be printed in the spring.

Virdanna Lawrence – She’s happy to see so many Mamakating representatives in attendance.

Sean Moore – Last Sunday, the Sullivan County D&H Canal Interpretive Center in Summitville invited Cliff Robinson, Jr. to speak on “The Mamakating Section of the D&H Canal”. They had standing-room-only attendance of 37 people. Moore would like to start 4th grade student groups coming to the site next year but the transportation is proving to be challenging. He is developing program themes. Gumaer Testa suggested that they go into the schools instead. Moore noted that the Sullivan County workforce will be clearing the overgrown vegetation at their canal section in the spring.

Jack Weiser – The Phillipsport Community Center has hosted candidate nights ahead of the election and have been active with posting on Facebook.

Judy Gumaer Testa – The Neversink Valley Museum of History and Innovation remains locked out of Orange County’s D&H Canal Park in Cuddebackville, unable to access its collection that it continues to insure or the facilities it previously occupied. Gumaer Tests said this is alienating the community from its history.

Donna Durland – The Mamakating Historical Society now has Internet service!

Kerron Barnes – The O&W Rail Trail Alliance, working to create a 50-mile trail from Wurtsboro to Livingston Manor, has chosen the Trailkeeper 501(c)3 to serve as its fiscal sponsor. They’re a 21-member group looking at parcels needed to fill in the gaps of the existing trail sections. He has been coordinating exchanges with property owners. The Wurtsboro Board of Trade has agreed to celebrate the 200th anniversary of the D&H Canal groundbreaking as its theme for the July 13, 2025 Founders’ Day. The couple who owns the Wurtsboro property where that took place will generously allow use of their back yard and participate since they are historic re-enactors with access to costumes, musicians, and other resources.

Bill Dudko – He is representing Norma Schadt and Town Historian Mike Worden today. The Town of Deerpark Museum in Huguenot held an Oct. 22 program with Frank Salvati speaking about George Washington and the French and Indian War.

Bill Merchant – The D&H Canal Society and Museum purchased a \$13,000 folk art painting by Sarah Parker that shows their building in High Falls. The auction acquisition will be installed next year. This weekend will feature the telling of scary stories by a theater group that bases their performances on actual events. There will also be a fundraiser on Saturday at Windows of the World.

Other: Moore said that the Ellenville Public Library has two open areas where he has suggested it would be great to display D&H Canal artifacts. He has sent an email to that effect. Merchant said he has a diorama he'd like to find a place to display on a long-term loan basis.

Next Meetings: The DHTHC Board of Trustees will meet on the 4th Wednesday, **January 24**, 2024 at 2 p.m. at 211 Bridge St., Narrowsburg, NY. The DHTHC full membership will meet on the 4th Wednesday, **April 24**, 2024, tentatively at the D&H Canal Historical Society & Museum in High Falls, NY.

Adjourn: The October 25, 2023 DHTHC meeting adjourned at 2:50 p.m. on a **motion** by Moore seconded by Durland.

Minutes submitted by Secretary Laurie Ramie, 11/1/2023