

D&H Transportation Heritage Council

February 4, 2015 Quarterly Meeting Minutes

1863 Schoolhouse Museum, Town of Deerpark, Huguenot, NY

Attendance at business meeting:

Cliff Robinson, Jr. (chair), Delaware & Hudson Canal and Gravity Railroad Conservancy President

Bill Merchant (vice-chair), D&H Canal Historical Society and Museum President

Jane Varcoe (treasurer), Waymart Area Historical Society President

Laurie Ramie (secretary), Upper Delaware Council Executive Director

Lynn Burns, Town of Deerpark Historian

Kerron Barnes, Town of Mamakating Intergovernmental Coordinator

Kathy Land, Waymart Area Historical Society Volunteer

Paul C. King, New York City College of Technology Associate Professor

Steve Skye, Neversink Valley Museum of History and Innovation President (arrived at 1:34 p.m.)

Call to Order: Chairperson Robinson opened the business meeting at 1:00 p.m. following an optional 11 a.m. gathering to view the exhibit “Neversink Valley Transportation Corridor” and 12 p.m. ordered lunch at the 1863 Schoolhouse Museum. The Council’s 4th Wednesday in January quarterly meeting had been rescheduled from Jan. 28 to Feb. 4 due to a winter storm warning.

Additions to the Agenda: Robinson said he wanted to announce a March meeting for a Western Orange County Trails Forum.

Acceptance of Minutes: On a motion by Varcoe, seconded by Burns, the minutes of the October 22, 2014 meeting of the D&H Transportation Heritage Council were accepted.

Treasurer’s Report and 2015 Membership Update: Varcoe summarized her written financial report. She reported balances of \$311.30 in the checking account after paying one bill to Hillside Application Service of \$240 for annual website service; \$805.70 in the savings account; a 94-day Certificate of Deposit (CD) valued at \$1,063.37; and a 59-day CD valued at \$822.39. Total D&H THC assets = \$3,002.76. Varcoe had received dues payments from five voting members as of the report’s preparation and had additional payments to process as of today. She will send out a reminder message since a few people who had indicated they would bring dues payments to the January meeting had not been able to attend on the rescheduled date. On a motion by Merchant, seconded by Burns, the Treasurer’s Report was approved.

New Business:

- a) **Campaign to Solicit Individual Memberships** – Robinson encouraged everyone to help spread the word about the individual membership opportunity and to provide the sign-up form to anyone interested. Ramie referred to her draft news release, “D&H Canal and Gravity Railroad Enthusiasts Invited to Show Support”, that she had circulated in advance. She explained that the historic information came from the new brochure and the organizational description was based largely on our bylaws. Ramie said that Dave Hulse had provided editorial suggestions and felt that we should include a specific invitation to businesses to join the Council. He said that the group could consider purchasing plastic placards that a business could display to indicate its membership. Robinson agreed that the whole D&H corridor could offer a business advantage but said it’s a Catch-22. It would take a lot of legwork by the committee to solicit businesses and we don’t currently have a program or category in place to accommodate them. Varcoe said if we could focus on developing a D&H bus tour between Carbondale and Kingston, that would be great

for local businesses since they would benefit from being included in the itineraries. It could run once or twice a year. People are always looking for something to do and this would appeal to history lovers. Burns acknowledged that it takes a lot of work to get a tour like that started but once it's been planned, it tends to be successful. After further discussion, the meeting participants decided it was premature to introduce a business membership category at this time and to proceed with the effort to gather a constituency of individual, non-voting members. Any business that agrees with the Council's mission is certainly welcome to join under the affiliated/individual category to exhibit support. Robinson suggested deferring to Ramie on the final wording of the news release regarding edits. Ramie said she would send the article to her regional NY and PA media list for publication, and will provide council members with a list of those contacts so they could circulate it to any additional newspapers that aren't covered. She also urged site stewards to include a solicitation for DHTHC members in their newsletters or other outreach publications.

- b) **Brochure Supply and Distribution Status** – The balance of the 4,000 brochures received at the October 2014 meeting is currently being stored in High Falls and Huguenot. Varcoe will take approximately 500 to supply the Honesdale, Waymart, and Carbondale areas. Burns said she will deliver some to the Minisink Valley Historical Society in Port Jervis. Merchant will bring a box to the April meeting to continue the distribution to anyone who needs more. Ramie noted that Pike County Historian George Fluhr has been a good ambassador for the brochure by introducing it to several organizations of which he's part as a new historic resource.
- c) **Sullivan County Trail Committee Established** – Ramie reported that Sullivan County Legislator Alan Sorensen and the Planning Division have initiated a county-wide trail task force as a recommendation of the county's 2008 Open Space Plan. The first meeting took place on Jan. 13 and they plan to meet monthly. The committee includes representatives from government agencies, municipalities, non-profit organizations, recreation groups, and businesses. Ramie and Sullivan County Parks, Recreation and Beautification Department Director Kristin Porter are among the committee members who also serve on this Council. The goals are to inventory existing county trails, identify potential new trails, explore linkages, improvement needs, promotional opportunities, maintenance, and funding issues. They will likely establish a subcommittee specifically dedicated to discussing D&H Canal Towpath projects in Sullivan County. At the Feb. 10 meeting which will focus primarily on mapping existing trail networks, Robinson and Barnes were invited to attend to share their first-hand knowledge of D&H trails.
- d) **DHTHC.org Website, Facebook Page and "Did You Know" Trivia Postings** – Robinson asked if anyone can provide the URL or a link to the DHTHC Facebook page since he has been unable to access it. Ramie noted that the National Park Service Interpretation Division had developed that series of canal-related trivia facts specifically for Facebook and she thought they had been posted. Unfortunately, Ingrid Peterec was not here to ask since she broke her leg in a skiing accident. Regarding the website, Ramie noted that she had worked with Mike at Hillside Application Service to add the 2015 membership form, meeting notices, and some new photos to the gallery. Varcoe will provide him with the updated voting members list once the 2015 dues are paid. Burns said that the Town of Deerpark Museum needs to add its contact information.
- e) **Video Production Update** – Robinson said he hopes to get this project going again in the spring. As reported in October, scripts for the informational video segments on the canal and gravity railroad are ready but we need to get footage with narration, and professional sound and editing services. The Council authorized a price cap to hire a videographer of \$500 per video.

- f) **Designation of a Repository to Store DHTHC Records and Archives** – Ramie noted that George Fluhr raised the issue at the last meeting that the Council should have a physical location to keep its major records rather than relying on individual officers and risking their loss over time. Paul King suggested that DHTHC could set up an administrative website that would provide access to all its records electronically. It could list categories of information and offer a searchable database. His students at the New York City College of Technology could develop such a website. Most of the records already exist in digital format; others would have to be scanned. Robinson said this subject is very important since it's how we document this organization's history dating back to at least 1998. Varcoe said she inherited two large binders of financial information from previous treasurer Peter Osborne. She also has a box of records from former chairperson Andy Helgesen. Ramie said that she has a plastic case file containing folders on various Council subjects from former secretary Sally Talaga. Robinson thanked King for the gracious offer of assistance and said that compiling a centralized digital file with all of the DHTHC minutes should be the first priority. At the April meeting, he asked everybody who has Council records to please bring them for collection and inventorying.
- g) **Western Orange County Trails Forum** – Robinson announced that the Orange County Citizens Foundation, which has the Orange County Pathways as a subcommittee, will sponsor a Western Orange County Trails Forum on March 26 from 6:30 to 8 p.m. at the Deerpark Town Hall in Huguenot. His conservancy has been asking for such a session for a couple years. Orange County doesn't currently have a map of their trail system. At the forum, they want to solicit public comment on existing trails, discuss how they could be expanded or improved, and hear what questions the public may have. There will be short presentations given on trails that coincide in the tri-state area including the Appalachian Trail, D&H, Shawangunk Ridge, High Point, etc. Robinson said some of the rumors about hosting trails will be addressed, such as the impacts on property values and crime. Robinson asked Ramie if she could attend to represent the Upper Delaware Scenic Byway, which is a highway corridor trail. She agreed.
- h) **Other** – 1) Skye said that since DHTHC is not a 501(c)3 incorporated organization, donations by individuals will not be **tax deductible**. This should be made clear. Robinson said that anyone wishing to qualify for a tax deduction could go through one of the member fiduciary organizations, which would then turn the donation over to the Council. That would require making the check payable to that organization with a memo note that it is for DHTHC dues. Ramie said that could be added to the membership form. Robinson asked her to draft a statement and circulate it for review. Once approved, the membership form posted on the website will be replaced. 2) Barnes reported that he has a new contact person at **Canadian Pacific Railway** in Montreal regarding the **D&H Company records** they possess. This archivist said that they have completed inventorying 50 banker boxes of records and are looking to donate this material somewhere in New York State. The railroad's collection includes a beautiful set of maps which are in bound books, not easy to scan. They won't loan out the books or let them leave the building. Robinson said that he had a company that was available to digitize the maps on site in Montreal but permission would be required. King said he might be able to appeal for access on an academic level if the Council would like him to pursue it. 3) Barnes asked Ramie to send out with the minutes a copy of a recent presentation given by Beautiful Earth Group, developers of the proposed **Spring Glen Resort** in the Town of Mamakating. They plan an "eco-friendly resort" which would capitalize on the old Homowack site's proximity to the D&H Canal with hiking trails.

Announcements of Member Accomplishments, Concerns, and Upcoming Events:

Bill Merchant – The D&H Canal Historical Society and Museum is excited to have won a \$500,000 grant from New York State, which is being matched by the Open Space Institute (OSI), to acquire the DePuy Canal House, the 1797 tavern in High Falls that was purchased by the canal company in 1830. This project has been three years in development. OSI has hired the society's grantwriter to be the project liaison as it moves forward. Merchant also reported that he had three interns from SUNY New Paltz who worked on archives, cataloging their collections, and starting a database of canal workers that currently has 1,500 names on the list. He will share that information with anyone interested.

Kerron Barnes – The Town of Mamakating was awarded a grant of \$1,057,190 from the DOT Transportation Alternatives Program to develop 7,977 feet of an Americans with Disabilities Act-compliant trail on town-owned property from Ferguson Lane south through the village to Rt. 17. Since the town must put up a 20% match, this is a \$1.3 million project in total. Some in-kind services will count toward the match. It was looked upon favorably because it connects all of the services in the town and links the residential and business districts. They are now in the preliminary design and engineering phase. The project is expected to go to bid in April 2016. Construction should take three months. The grant completion deadline is Sept. 30, 2016. Barnes introduced New York City College of Technology Associate Professor of Architectural Technology Paul King, who has offered to have his program help the town with a website, signage, visitor center, and similar projects associated with the canal trail. Barnes displayed large-scale maps depicting the project area. There are five trails that converge in the town and the supervisor likes the idea of developing a trail network.

Paul King – King, who has a house in Yankee Lake, said that he will have students develop a master plan for the Town of Mamakating Trail System. They also can work on designing a visitor center, and rebranding Wurtsboro and the canal. One idea is to access a GIS database, get historical photos of the canal, take that same photo to show what the view is like now, then develop it into QR codes that could be clicked on during a trail hike to show those images. King said that he was at the DHTHC meeting to find out what sort of resources everybody has and how he and his program may be of help to the site stewards. Barnes joked that Mamakating has first dibs though. In addition to creating the administrative website for Council records, King said his students could also create a database where everyone could upload their historic photos so that there is a common gallery. Lastly, King reported that he will give a talk on the D&H Canal at the Society of Industrial Archeology Conference being held in Albany on May 28-31.

Lynn Burns – The six bus tours conducted of Joseph Brandt-related sites involving 220 7th graders were hugely successful and will be done again in 2015. In addition to the bus trip, they have an assembly. Another theme could be the canal and railroads. Port Jervis will be holding a Stephen Crane Day on June 20 and local historical societies are invited to have displays, not necessarily related to Crane. The Town of Deerpark Historian's Office will celebrate the 325th anniversary of the town's settlement at its open house on the fourth Sunday of September. It will feature colonial artisans. At the Grange building next door to the museum, a Friends group has been created who wants to convert it into a community center. The town owns the building and has committed to restoring it, but then wants to turn it over to a non-profit group. It is a national historic site.

Laurie Ramie – The Upper Delaware Council has been dealing with numerous meeting cancellations due to weather. All three committees and the full Council will therefore meet on Feb. 5. The biggest recent news was New York State Governor Cuomo's decision to ban high volume hydraulic fracturing in the state. That was a divisive issue for the UDC board, but the organization will continue to monitor developments in Pennsylvania and by the Delaware River Basin Commission. Ramie was asked to provide an update on the status of replacing the Pond Eddy Bridge, which is now moving forward with bid-letting in April 2016 and the new bridge targeted for completion in 2018.

Jane Varcoe – Varcoe reported that Carbondale Historical Society's Robert Powell was in Harrisburg today because he was invited to be the subject of a one-hour interview by the Pennsylvania Cable Network about his 1,200-page history of the Gravity Railroad. She noted that the Waymart Area Historical Society has been contacted by PennDOT to be a consulting party on a pedestrian bridge project in Milford. Lastly, the Gravity Depot Museum will be closed until May. Varcoe introduced Kathy Land, who she said has

taken an interest in local history and offered to help the society. Land said she likes a hands-on working environment. She thanked the meeting participants for their contributions to DHTHC and said it's a shame that the public isn't more aware of their effort and the canal sites.

Steve Skye – The Neversink Valley Museum was part of the Brant bus tours. Their next fundraising event is a Valentine's Day Chocolate Social Feb. 14 from 1-4, for which he handed out raffle tickets for a 7 lb. chocolate bunny. Lastly, Orange County had land up for tax sale in Cuddebackville near Canal Lock 55 that the museum now owns. They plan to put in a parking lot with a kiosk.

Cliff Robinson – More than half of the breaches along the canal route in the Town of Deerpark have been successfully bypassed now. His conservancy has done a design for Hornbeck's Culvert and presented that sketch plan to the county three weeks ago. Birdsall's Basin also needs to be addressed. They do have a plan in mind for hydraulics and site engineering.

Next Council Meeting: The quarterly meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, **April 22, 2015**, in Wurtsboro, NY at 73 Sullivan St. (building across the street from the canal trailhead in the Pat Moore Memorial Park). The tentative plan is to gather at 11 a.m. to walk along the towpath trail, have lunch at Danny's Restaurant at noon, and the business meeting will be from 1-3:30 p.m. The final itinerary will be announced, with lunch reservations solicited, in the spring.

Adjourn: The Feb. 4, 2015 DHTHC meeting adjourned at 3:20 p.m. on a motion by Merchant, seconded by Barnes.

Minutes submitted by Laurie Ramie, 2/13/15

Summary of Action Items:

1. Send out a reminder about 2015 dues being due to retain voting member status.
2. Consider developing a D&H bus tour between Carbondale and Kingston.
3. Finalize the individual membership solicitation news release, send it to media, notify the committee of where it's been issued, encourage further distribution and to include in newsletters.
4. Continue distributing the new DHTHC brochures. Bring spare copies to the next meeting to replenish supplies.
5. Advocate for establishment of a D&H Towpath Trails Subcommittee as part of the Sullivan County Trail Committee.
6. Share a link to the DHTHC Facebook page, anyone who can, and continue updating the www.dhthc.org website including the current membership list.
7. Resume work on the video production project in the spring by securing the services of a videographer.
8. Work with Professor King to set up an administrative website for DHTHC minutes, etc.
9. Bring all records belonging to the Council to the April meeting to centralize and inventory them.
10. Attend the Western Orange County Trails Forum on Mar. 26 in Deerpark, all interested.
11. Circulate proposed wording on tax deductibility of DHTHC donations to the voting members for approval before revising the membership form to add this clarification.
12. Consider what next steps to take to gain access to the D&H maps in possession of Canadian Pacific Railway in Montreal.
13. Confirm logistics for the Apr. 22 DHTHC quarterly meeting in Wurtsboro, issue an advance meeting notice and agenda, and take lunch reservations.