

# **D&H Transportation Heritage Council**

## **October 28, 2015 Quarterly Meeting Minutes**

### **High Falls, 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  
**Kristin Porter**, Sullivan County Parks, Recreation & Beautification Director  
**David Hulse**, Sullivan County Director of County Historical Sites, D&H Canal Linear Park, Summitville  
**Kerron Barnes**, Town of Mamakating Intergovernmental Coordinator  
**Kathy Land**, Waymart Area Historical Society Member  
**Ingrid Peterec**, National Park Service Upper Delaware Scenic and Recreational River

Call to Order: Following an optional morning tour of a D&H canal towing path section in Accord guided by Bill Merchant and a lunch gathering at The Roost in Stone Ridge, Chairperson Robinson called the business meeting held at the D&H Canal Historical Society and Museum in High Falls to order at 1:00 p.m.

Acceptance of Minutes: On a motion by Varcoe, seconded by Robinson, the minutes of the July 22, 2015 meeting of the D&H Transportation Heritage Council were accepted.

Treasurer's Report and Membership Update: Varcoe summarized her financial report handout. One check was written for \$1,000 to Bollinger & Rutter Video Production on July 22. Current balances are \$655.08 in the checking account; \$1,006.05 in the savings account; and a 59-day CD valued at \$823.19 (0.15% interest) which will mature on 11/16/15. Total DHTHC assets = \$2,484.32. There are 10 full voting members and 14 affiliated or individual members. Varcoe said she would like to develop a membership renewal postcard and seeks a photo that shows the gravity railroad and canal. Robinson suggested that mailing would be a good opportunity to provide an accomplishments list for the organization. Porter said adding a list of the meeting dates for 2016 would also be helpful. They are Jan. 27, April 27, July 27, and Oct. 26, with locations to be determined. *Land volunteered to compile a bullet points list of accomplishments, including a photo, which will be emailed first to the Executive Committee (Council officers) for review. Ramie will provide an updated 2016 Membership Form.* On a motion by Porter, seconded by Ramie, the Treasurer's Report was accepted, with all in favor.

Old Business:

- a) **Support Letter Sent 7/23/15 for Town of Mamakating's NYS Grant Application** – Robinson reported that Ramie wrote this letter as requested by the Town of Mamakating on the Council's behalf. Barnes added that the town has applied for \$256,000 for building improvements on Sullivan Street in Wurtsboro. The state is expected to announce the awards in December. It's a highly competitive program. Only about one-third of the projects get funded. Robinson said if this work brings more tourists to Wurtsboro, it will help the adjacent canal.
- b) **List Current Public Hiking Areas of the Canal by Mile Marker Points Per County** – Robinson said the goal is to post this helpful information on the dhthc.org website. He suggests consulting Dave Barber's book because it lists mile markers that may be used as a common point of reference. The Orange County section is done. *Robinson asked Bill Merchant to write up Ulster County, Kristin Porter to do the Basha Kill area of Sullivan*

County, Ingrid Peterec to do the Delaware River area of Sullivan County, Kathy Land to do Wayne County, and George Fluhr to do Pike County, and to prepare this information before the next meeting. List the parts that are accessible. Robinson estimates that over 65% of the canal route is open when roadways are included in addition to trails. Doing this inventory will also show where easements are needed between sections. Peterec said she needs the mile marker information for Sullivan County since she doesn't have Barber's book.

- c) **DHTHC.org Website and Facebook Page** – Robinson said he will contact Lynn Burns to find out the status of *setting up a new Facebook page* that she had volunteered to do. Regarding the website, Ramie said she had belatedly sent the July minutes to be posted before this meeting. Barnes reported that his town set up a new website on Labor Day, Mamakating.org, that offers a page on the canal and provides a link to dhthc.org. He said we should *push for county and state tourism websites to link to the D&H site* also.
- d) **DHTHC Records Inventory, Digitization and Administrative Website Set-up** – Ramie said that Professor Paul King had previously suggested *holding a work session to discuss establishing a filing system for these records*. Barnes reported that King is in California through November.

#### New Business:

- a) **Nomination of Secretary and Treasurer** – The DHTHC bylaws provide that the secretary and treasurer offices will be voted on in even years, while the chairperson and vice-chairperson offices will be voted on in odd years. On a motion by Porter, seconded by Robinson, Laurie Ramie was nominated as secretary and Jane Varcoe was nominated as treasurer, with all in favor. They will stand for *election at the Jan. 27, 2016 meeting*, when other nominations may be made from the floor. Ramie and Varcoe both accepted the nominations, but Varcoe said she only intends to serve for one more term.
- b) **Video Production** – Robinson reported that videographer Bill Bollinger shot the footage for the Gravity Railroad to Honesdale section in September from numerous locations. He has just received still photos to weave in to his editing process. Robinson said Bollinger took many takes from different vantage points and was very professional. Narration will be done to accompany the video. The other half of the cost will be due when the project is ready. Robinson said *this first video should be ready for display at the next meeting*.
- c) **Cost-Sharing Proposal for D&H Company Maps and Records in Montreal** – Barnes reported that he continues to touch base with the archivist from Exporail, the depository that received three truckloads of material in March from Canadian Pacific Railroad. The first book that the woman opened was the 1865 revision of the 1856 canal maps, approximately 82 pages. An inventory had been done of the 50 banker boxes of D&H Company records but Barnes said nobody there knows where it is or seems interested in finding it. There are three books of maps in total containing approximately 165 pages. The company has offered to professionally photograph them, after they're all located, for \$40 per page in Canadian dollars, which is valued at \$.75 per dollar in American currency. The ballpark figure would be \$5,000. Barnes said there are five counties which have portions of the canal. If we could get \$1,000 from each, it would cover the cost. That \$1,000 could be pieced together from local historical societies. Porter asked what the product will be and what rights we would have for its use. Barnes replied that it will be a set of compact discs. Those are good questions about whether we'd be able to reproduce or sell them. Varcoe said she thought we already had purchased a set of these maps under funding that Gene Woock from the National Park Service's Northeast Region in Philadelphia had secured many years ago. Robinson said he doesn't think they are the same maps. The maps in question were found in a round barn in Plattsburgh. Barnes noted that this is the only set we know of that's complete and in decent condition.

They're bound and the pages are fragile. Robinson agreed with Porter that we need to know what our rights would be regarding the maps before we pursue this. He also asked Varcoe to locate the CDs she has with maps and share the exact contents. Varcoe said that there may be grants available, though Robinson said the materials' location outside of the U.S. complicates it. *Merchant said he'd look into funding sources in New York State. Varcoe said she would check with the Lackawanna Heritage Valley Authority in Pennsylvania.* Barnes said he would anticipate providing copies of the CDs to universities, museums, libraries, and historical societies. Robinson said he doesn't believe the maps should be sold commercially but wondered if they could be used as a non-profit fundraiser to cover their expense. *Varcoe said she would check to see exactly what's on the CD she has, and Robinson said he would send her some images of the maps he photographed informally in Montreal for comparison's sake.*

- d) **National Geographic's Geotourism Project for Upper and Middle Delaware River** – Ramie referenced a handout from a Sept. 30 meeting of the “Scenic, Wild Delaware River” Geotourism Stewardship Council on which she serves. She explained that the National Geographic Society Maps Division is proceeding with a geotourism project for nine counties of the Upper and Middle Delaware River watershed in NY, PA, and NJ that is funded by a two-year, \$675,000 grant secured by the National Parks Conservation Association. Deliverables include an interactive MapGuide website branded by National Geographic to which local people submit nominations of places and activities that make this region special. There will also be a Strategic Plan for Sustainable Tourism developed by the Stewardship Council to keep the project going, and assistance with public outreach and marketing. Her notes included a timeline for community meetings in early November in each of the nine counties, a 90-day public nomination period once the site is ready, and a May 2016 launch of the MapGuide. Ramie said she will forward the Council details about the community meetings where the site nomination process will be explained as soon as that information is available. Ramie noted that it would seem natural to have a page devoted to the D&H Canal as a thematic story.

#### Announcements of Member Accomplishments, Concerns, and Upcoming Events

**Kerron Barnes** – The preliminary design phase for the \$1 million trail grant project in Wurtsboro is underway. The survey team was out. They didn't originally anticipate any need for property acquisition but found some temporary easements will be needed from Sullivan County for Ferguson Road. The surveyors found two places where the canal was built on private land. The owners seem cooperative. The hired project consultant must handle those negotiations. The project must be approved by the State Historic Preservation Office. This preliminary design phase will be followed by the right-of-way phase. Next March, it is expected to go into final design with the preparation of construction documents to seek bids. They hope to be under construction by September 2016. The trail will not be paved. The surface will be a porous material with a binder. Secondly, Barnes showed Mamakating D&H Canal Trail Maps which depict how the trails will be connected to existing features and areas for improvement.

**Jane Varcoe** – The Waymart Area Historical Society hopes to have a 24-foot-long coal car exhibit that came from Farview Mountain set up for display at the Depot Museum by next summer. It had been in storage for six years.

**Laurie Ramie** – Fall/Winter 2015 issues of “The Upper Delaware” newsletter were distributed. Ramie noted that the Upper Delaware Council has submitted a Community Service application to Leadership Sullivan, a business leadership class sponsored by the Sullivan County Chamber of Commerce Foundation, for a clean-up project at the National Park Service's Corwin Farm property. A decision will be made in mid-November. She read from the application, “Our community service project addresses natural resource protection and historic preservation of an intact, local portion of the 108-mile Delaware and Hudson Canal, which operated from 1828 to 1898. We propose a spring 2016 clean-up at the NPS Upper Delaware Scenic

and Recreational River's Corwin Farm property located along the New York State Route 97 Upper Delaware Scenic Byway in the Town of Lumberland. The site, formerly known as the NPS South District Ranger Station, includes a complex of buildings associated with an adjacent D&H canal lock including a lock tender's house, barn, and outbuildings, set within a landscape of mature trees, orchards, and lawns. Although it no longer holds water, the canal's stone retaining walls, earthen/gravel towpath, and bridge/causeway crossing still convey its masterful 19<sup>th</sup> century design and use. Since 1898, the most significant change to the Corwin Farm landscape is the abandonment and dewatering of the canal. Non-historic vegetation, much of which is also non-native, now fills the canal bed and has begun to cover and damage some of the stone walls, while several large trees grow between the canal and the towpath, an area that historically would have been kept clear. The objective of this project is to remove small trees, shrubs, non-native plants, and select native herbaceous vegetation from the canal in order to protect and preserve the stone walls and allow a more accurate interpretation of the site's history." It goes on to state how that would be done, expected costs, a timeline, and NPS commitments for an orientation program and supervision. Thirdly, Ramie said that the Town of Lumberland has requested the National Park Service's assistance with preservation techniques for a historic D&H retaining wall on the former Tri-State Diesel property located across NYS Route 97 from the Mongaup River Access. A clean-up of that Dry Dock Basin area is the subject of the town's application for state funding for which the awards will be announced in December, as Ramie reported on at the July meeting.

**Ingrid Peterec** – An interpretive panel is being prepared for display near the Pond Eddy Bridge to talk about the D&H Canal. She's finalizing content for it by the end of the year. The National Park Service received funding for a 2016 Centennial project that will create a virtual tour of the 73 miles of the Upper Delaware Scenic and Recreational River. It will rest on the [nps.gov/upde](http://nps.gov/upde) website and may be downloaded anywhere when available in 2016. The D&H Canal and Roebling Bridge will be a big part of that virtual tour. Through President Obama's Every Kid in a Park Initiative, all fourth grade students are entitled to visit a national park free of charge. They can download a voucher from a website to get a pass for the calendar year. The National Park Service will have a Find Your Park float in the Rose Bowl Parade to help kick off the Centennial celebration. NPS Upper Delaware submitted a transportation grant application for \$8,000 to enable them to expand the D&H Canal Days programs which are also targeted to fourth graders. Save the date of July 16, 2016 for the annual Zane Grey Festival in Lackawaxen, PA.

**Kristin Porter** – Sullivan County signed an agreement in September to accept the Roebling Delaware Aqueduct Model from the National Park Service. They're at least four weeks out from being able to pick it up due to the election season and awaiting a response from NPS. They expect to get the model by the end of this year. It will require cutting a hole in the side of the building at the Summitville site to get it in and creating a new door frame. A re-watering project at the D&H Canal Linear Park has been in the county's capital plan for many years. The county manager has developed an interest in it for tourism's sake. In his tentative 2016 budget, he has included \$100,000 toward a feasibility study for this project. We'll see if it makes it to final adoption. This would enable opening that canal section to boats. The U.S. Environmental Protection Agency is directing the NYS DEC to deal with the lead issue that was discovered in approximately 2012. There were once three lead mines in the side of the hill there. Testing is showing very high levels in both directions of the owned canal section. Signs have been put up. They may eventually need to dredge four feet deep to abate it. This activity ties into the re-watering project for recreational opportunities.

**Bill Merchant** – Their 3 ½ year quest to buy the DePuy Canal House has come to fruition thanks to a \$1 million grant from the state which includes a \$500,000 match from Open Space Institute. The D&H Canal Historical Society Board approved to move forward with the purchase by a vote of 9-1. The closing is scheduled for one week from today, hoping to beat the bank's auction, and they would like to move the facilities within two years into the former canal offices and tavern space there. Approximately \$150,000 must be raised for renovations. OSI assistance is expected with that also. This new building will help brand High Falls as a canal town. Regarding the 5 Locks Walk, a Town of Marbletown and NYS Department of Transportation grant restored four out of the five locks a few years ago. The bridge there had been too short, tilted, and then fell in after stones were undermined. A Hudson Valley Greenway grant of \$7,500 has been received and they need to raise \$2,500. This is a reimbursement project. They would also like to get interpretive signs for the trail. The museum will have its exhibit on Romeo Muller on display through the

winter. Muller, who lived in High Falls, was a thespian, playwright, writer, and worked on Rankin Bass and Lord of the Rings projects.

**Cliff Robinson** – A big tree came down on the NYS DEC section between Rt. 209 and Rt. 17 at Graham's Dry Dock. It has been removed. The issues with the Delaware & Hudson Canal and Gravity Railroad Conservancy's grant continue. New managers at the bank won't continue their line of credit, so there is \$60,000 left of the grant that they can't access. They were told that they need to show a cash flow income. To assist with that, the Conservancy has developed a Historical Marker Sponsor Agreement program as a fundraiser. Individuals or organizations can sponsor these signs, which will feature signs showing how the site looked historically. The initial cost would be \$25 per month or \$300 for the year, then the cost would decrease for the next two years. Each sign will be credited to the donor and include a Quick Response code. Robinson shared a flyer (see attachment) and asked if the D&H THC would be willing to become a sponsor. The Port Jervis to Westbrookville section is being worked on now.

Next Council Meeting: The quarterly meeting is scheduled for Wednesday, **January 27**, 2016, from 1:00-3:30 p.m. at the Upper Delaware Council office, 211 Bridge St., Narrowsburg, NY. Details on a lunch gathering tentatively planned for 11:45 a.m. at The 1840 Narrowsburg Inn and Grille will be circulated in advance.

Adjourn: The October 28, 2015 DHTHC meeting adjourned at 3:40 p.m. on a motion by Robinson, seconded by Varcoe.

*Minutes submitted by Laurie Ramie, 11/10/15*