

# **D&H Transportation Heritage Council**

## **October 28, 2020 Quarterly Meeting Minutes**

### **Mamakating Environmental Education Center, Wurtsboro, NY**

Attendance at business meeting:

**Bill Merchant (chair)**, D& H Canal Historical Society, High Falls  
**Cliff Robinson, Jr. (vice-chair)**, Delaware & Hudson Canal and Gravity Railroad Conservancy and Neversink Feeder & Canal Group  
**Jane Varcoe (treasurer)**, Waymart Area Historical Society  
**Laurie Ramie (secretary)**, Upper Delaware Council  
**Kerron Barnes**, Town of Mamakating  
**Lauren Hauptman**, National Park Service Upper Delaware Scenic and Recreational River  
**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

Guests:

**Jackie Broder**, Mamakating Environmental Education Center Director  
**Peggy Johansen**, Mamakating Library Director  
**Karen Tolcz**, Mamakating Historical Society  
**Janet Lybolt**, Town of Mamakating Supervisor (2 p.m. arrival)

Call to Order: Merchant called the business meeting held at the Mamakating Environmental Education Center to order at 1:10 p.m. following an optional morning hike in Wurtsboro on property south of the intersection of Routes 209 & 17.

Additions to the Agenda: Discuss January meeting (Talaga); Fusco Engineering Report (Robinson)

Acceptance of July 22, 2020 Minutes: Talaga referenced on page 4 of the July 22 minutes a statement attributed to Kenny Christianson's member announcements: "The Lackawaxen River Conservancy finalized interpretive signs from Lock House 31 to the Settlers Inn." Talaga clarified that the signs are located between the end of the Lock 31 Park and Settlers Inn, but not in the canal park itself. Secondly on page 5, Talaga's report under member announcements read, "The circa 1880 well cover was repaired, painted, and now hides the modern well cover in the front lawn of the lock house. A photo of both was distributed." Talaga clarified that the repaired well cover was not actually part of the historic property original to the site. On a **motion** by Barnes, seconded by Varcoe, the minutes of the July 22 meeting were approved as amended.

Treasurer's Report: Varcoe presented her written report, which included an accounting of three deposits totaling \$236 and no withdrawals made since July 22. The current balance is \$2,975.09. There are 16 full memberships and 11 affiliate memberships, which she said is the most the Council has ever had.

New Business:

- a) **January Meeting** – Talaga proposed to either cancel or hold the quarterly January meeting by a video conference platform such as Zoom due to the uncertainties of winter weather. Robinson said we could handle any pressing business by email. He felt it would be difficult to have so many people involved in a Zoom meeting. Merchant asked if there

were any objections to the idea of canceling the meeting. Hearing none, on a **motion** by Talaga, seconded by Robinson, the January 27, 2021 meeting of the D&H Transportation Heritage Council is canceled unless there is time-sensitive business to conduct, with all in favor.

- b) **Notarize Petition for New York State Charter to Incorporate DHTHC** – Merchant produced a two-page “Petition for Provisional Charter to the Regents of the University of the State of New York” which listed six trustees: Merchant, Robinson, Varcoe, Ramie, Barnes, and Kenny Christianson. Due to Christianson’s absence from the meeting, it was determined to proceed with the minimum number of five trustees since Schadt was prepared to notarize the document today which may then be filed for processing. Merchant said the intention is to formalize the Delaware & Hudson Transportation Heritage Council under the 501(c)(3) Internal Revenue Code to become “a more vigorous” organization. “This is an important story that all Americans should know,” he said.
- c) **National Historic Landmark (NHL) Designation Update; 11/4 Consultants’ Meeting** – Hauptman reported that the firm of Richard Grubb & Associates was awarded the contract for this project after two initial bids came in above the allowable cost, which resulted in reissuing the Request for Proposals. The National Park Service grant is for \$50,000. The NHL Update Committee will meet with the consultant via Zoom on Nov. 4 at 9:30 a.m. for the first time. Anyone else who is interested is welcome to join. Amanda Casper from NPS will be sending out the link.
- d) **Planning for the 200<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the D&H** – Merchant proposed forming a subcommittee to spend time on this. Talaga said at the last meeting, she had proposed that we individually try to figure out what dates and events in the D&H chronology could be celebrated at our sites. An example is marking the July 13, 1825 groundbreaking, when contracts were let for construction of the canal, at the site of a snubbing post and marker for Dr. John A. Morrison located near the Chase School in Wurtsboro. Another date was the Jan. 7, 1825 event at the Tontine Coffee House on Wall Street in New York City to watch the burning of anthracite coal. On January 23, 1823, the Wurts Brothers helped to incorporate the D&H Canal. Merchant said he has a copy of that incorporation document. October 16, 1829 was the first day a boat traveled the entire length of the canal. Barnes said that each community along the canal route may have held some kind of ceremony to mark the groundbreaking and/or opening of their sections. Larry Lowenthal’s book identifies many of those. Agreeing to serve on a subcommittee were Bill Merchant, Sally Talaga, Cliff Robinson, Norma Schadt, Kerron Barnes, and Shannon Cilento. Merchant said he will reach out to the Pike County Historical Society and Ellenville Library to make sure the entire geographic region is covered. The subcommittee’s tasks will be to do additional research, develop the chronology of significant dates, and invite sites to participate. A report will be provided at the April meeting.
- e) **Planning a Bus Tour from Port Jervis to Spring Glen (DVD Chapter 4 Route)** – Robinson said the vicinity of Locks 33-35 would be the next route to interpret in a bus trip but it’s up in the air due to coronavirus. He spoke with videographer Bill Bollinger, who has been in quarantine and unable to shoot footage for DVD Chapter 4. Robinson said that may be able to occur by the end of November, then post-production and editing could take place over the winter to prepare for a spring release. The bus trip isn’t viable now but filming can be done in a socially distant manner.

- f) **Pennsylvania Historical Marker Program** – Cilento offered a handout in which she had condensed information from the Pennsylvania Historical & Museum Commission website to alert individuals, private organizations, local or county governments, and public agencies of the Dec. 1 deadline to submit nominations for historic markers. There is a sponsor cost for these markers, unlike the William G. Pomeroy Foundation which has a national scope and a specific program for canal markers with source documentation required. Varcoe asked if this program is to restore or replace markers. Cilento said she believes an applicant would need to go through the same procedure and cost to replace any. Talaga said that PA still provides cast-iron markers whereas Pomeroy’s markers are non-standard signs. Schadt said even to replace an existing sign, the history must be proved through documentation.
- g) **Neversink Feeder Engineering Report** – Robinson reminded all that Orange County had authorized a study to investigate re-watering the dry Neversink Feeder Dam in Cuddebackville. Fusco Engineering has now released its report. It offered three general ideas: 1) Make no repairs and create a D&H Canal Ruins Park at \$236,500; 2) Rebuild some of the structures at \$2.3 million; or 3) Do a historic rehabilitation of the dam and waste weir at \$5.7 million. Robinson said it’s an excellent study but the county is unlikely to go for it at those costs. He and Rob Honders are looking at an alternative. They believe water can get to the bottom of the feeder gate, which is open by about four inches now. They just need a stream to trickle through that. They’d like to come up with a plan that can be self-funded in case the county isn’t going to move forward after paying for this study. The #1 problem is that there is a hole under the dam. Beavers have been building their own dams there which are proving to hold back water. It doesn’t need to serve as a dam anymore; it could be more of a diversion wall. That could eliminate well over \$1 million from these plans, which also included ongoing maintenance costs. The study says the river is too low to get water into the canal. Robinson disagrees with that. Merchant asked about the possibility of Orange County transferring this property to another entity. Robinson said that’s not a bad idea. The county may consider it a liability. An individual who had been assigned to maintain it is no longer doing that. A new organization has been created, the Neversink Feeder and Canal Conservancy, of which Robinson is the vice-president. He said he would bring up that idea of transferring the deed at their next meeting. Mamakating Town Supervisor Janet Lybolt joined the meeting then and asked if Robinson thought Orange County might be interested in leasing it long-term. Robinson said it’s a no to the lease idea. Schadt said that the canal belonged to Orange & Rockland Utilities in her youth and was used extensively for public recreation. She observed there was more freedom for that property when it was in private hands than during the county’s ownership.
- h) **Other** – None

Old Business:

- a) **Delaware & Hudson Canal and Gravity Railroad Conservancy’s Orange County License** – Robinson said he had been trying in vain to get his Conservancy’s 1999 10-year lease associated with a \$125,000 grant renewed to do trail work in Orange County from Port Jervis to Westbrookville, but it expired in October 2019. That effectively threw away \$60,000 of the grant since the work could not continue. During that period, the entire administration had changed with the original supporters no longer there. This license was now regarded as a liability issue and they said any such work on county property had to be done under prevailing wages policy, even

though Conservancy members are volunteers. Basically, the county didn't want to work with non-profits, Robinson said. Since there is no license to pursue and the mission statements and scope for DHTHC and the Conservancy are the same, Robinson announced that the Delaware & Hudson Canal and Gravity Railroad Conservancy is ending as an organization in December 2020.

- b) **Production Status and Inventory of Historic DVD Series** – Talaga reported that she has 44 copies of Chapter 1 (Carbondale to Honesdale), 10 copies of Chapter 2 (Honesdale to Lackawaxen), and 13 copies of Chapter 3 (Lackawaxen to Port Jervis) remaining in the inventory. They are available for sale at the \$7 wholesale rate and retail for \$10. She doesn't feel we should reorder any now going into the winter season when many sites will be closed. On a **motion** by Talaga, seconded by Varcoe, DHTHC gifted one copy of each DVD to Supervisor Lybolt, with all in favor.
- c) **Website Updates and Discussion of Posting Videos** – Ramie reported that Dorene Warner from W Design has continued to update [www.dhthc.org](http://www.dhthc.org) as requested. Provide any website changes to Ramie to pass along collectively. Referring to a promotional video of the canal in Sullivan County using drone footage which Parks Director Brian Scardefield had shared, Ramie asked if the group would like this and other video content to be added to the site. They agreed. Merchant said that he has been producing a tremendous amount of videos during COVID-19. Robinson said that he has asked Bollinger to produce a “teaser” video to help promote the Council's first three DVD chapters. Since that only requires some voice-over work, he thinks that can be done by the end of this year. A recent addition to the website is the Google map of the canal corridor, which Merchant described as a living document. He requested any corrections and new images for it. He will look into whether he can put a tracker on it to quantify its use.
- d) **Other** – 1) Varcoe complimented the newsletter of the Basha Kill Area Association (BKAA) as very professionally done with great photos. She wishes they would consider joining DHTHC. Lybolt said she is a BKAA member and will contact Paula Medley about the membership opportunity. 2) Robinson said that the New York State Department of Environmental Conservation is looking for stewards of their properties. Once DHTHC becomes official, it would be automatically covered by the State's Workers' Comp insurance. We can promote these properties and get help with them. The goal is to keep these trails open for the public. He said he hopes the charter petition gets approved quickly. Barnes said there had been a stewardship agreement for 9/10 of a mile on Rt. 17 going south on the canal to where it crosses on Rt. 209. He asked whether that has expired. Robinson said yes. Barnes said they found all sorts of infrastructure for the canal in that short section. He believes that individuals can apply to be stewards as well as organizations.

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

**Sally Talaga** – Talaga reported that they have completed the lockable storage area on the south end of the pavilion at Lock 31 Canal Park and are currently furnishing the canal “boat” cabin. They found one photo of an interior and specifications to use as a model to be as historically accurate as possible. Engineering and permits are needed to continue work on the canal “boat” façade. The next plan is to electrify the pavilion in order to extend its usage. She would like to host the DHTHC meeting in July. The next D&H Canal Festival is scheduled for Saturday, August 21, 2021. The Wayne County Historical Society's Main Museum is open from 10-4 on

Fridays and Saturdays. The Stourbridge Line Rail Excursion has been underway with capacity limits since June. They have been leading museum tours after the train trips which assists with visitation.

Karen Tolcz – The Mamakating Historical Society operates a small museum in Summitville in an old schoolhouse. Their president recently passed away and they are making some changes. They were open on Tuesdays and by appointment, but the site is now closed as of yesterday.

Janet Lybolt – A county resolution was approved in 2017 to allow taking over the Lock 50 Bova Road museum but the Town of Mamakating didn't pursue it at that time. She and her husband are interested in building a 40-foot replica canal boat to put in the dry dock. On August 27-28, there was a horrific thunderstorm that swept through the canal path into Wurtsboro Hills. There was so much damage between Ferguson Lake and Hornbeck Basin that you couldn't get through parts of it. The Sullivan County Parks Department has been cut back to two employees.

Kerron Barnes – Regarding progress on the town's 2014 federal grant for the D&H Canal, all the bids received in September came in too high and were therefore rejected. They are reworking the design to re-bid it. He remains hopeful construction can start next year. With their senator's help, they received \$100,000 to match their share of the federal grant. Barnes displayed a sketch of a canal boat for which he is seeking the source. (See attached). Since it may be from a National Park Service publication, perhaps Sandy Schultz would know its origin. He also distributed new brochures for the Sullivan O & W Rail Trail, in which he said Mamakating is well-represented for those 50 miles that comprise the Sullivan County section. It would be a multimillion dollar, multi-year project to develop all of that rail-trail.

Laurie Ramie – Ramie distributed copies of the Summer 2020 issue of "The Upper Delaware" newsletter that was released on August 3 and a booklet summarizing the achievements of the 2020 River Valley Awards honorees. The typical April awards banquet, which would have been the 32<sup>nd</sup> annual, was canceled due to COVID restrictions. This color publication is also available online at [www.upperdelawarecouncil.org](http://www.upperdelawarecouncil.org).

Shannon Cilento – The Upper Delaware Council is about to launch social media sites on Facebook, Instagram, and LinkedIn to extend its public outreach and help promote activities. One regular feature will highlight historic markers in the river valley region.

Cliff Robinson – For a report that he is preparing on the importance of the Neversink Feeder, he would appreciate receiving contributions of a paragraph or two of people's memories of when that canal section was watered and what it meant to them. He wants to hand that out to every member of the Orange County Legislature by the end of this year. They need a groundswell of support. Please include your name and credentials, and send it to [robmech@outlook.com](mailto:robmech@outlook.com).

S. Robert Powell – Volume 27 in his book series has now been completed. Powell distributed copies of the November 2020 issue of the Bridge Line Historical Society Bulletin which features his article, "A New Door Has Been Opened on the History of the D&H Canal." It details information gleaned from the record of proceedings from the 1857 lawsuit of the D&H Canal Company against the Pennsylvania Coal Company. He has found early 20<sup>th</sup> century blueprints of gravity railroad cars and acquired several hundred professional photographs of railroad companies taken before 1902 as a baseline for any damage claims. These are valuable in that they show at least 15 structures in Carbondale that no longer exist. He has been out in the woods lately doing field research of Gravity Railroad Level 4, Plane 5 during the 1845 configuration of the

line. Even with that passage of time, evidence was found which proves that engines were made by a particular manufacturer.

Lauren Hauptman – Hauptman is working on the National Park Service’s Cultural Landscape Report and mentioned ground penetrating work for the aqueduct. Ingrid Peterec is currently serving as interim superintendent for the Upper Delaware Scenic and Recreational River since the last appointed acting superintendent completed his assignment on Oct. 3<sup>rd</sup>.

Bill Merchant – They now own the DePuy Canal House free and clear, thanks to the Open Space Institute and having raised \$1.2 million so far. Their current building in High Falls is up for sale. They have been busy moving over the museum collections, utilizing best management practices. A new HVAC system has been installed at DePuy to improve the climate control and a professional exhibit design is underway. They didn’t reopen the museum this season. Instead, they have focused on posting approximately 35 videos and new content to their D&H TV. They look forward to being able to open the DePuy Canal House in early 2022.

Norma Schadt – Copies of “Deerpark Diary” newsletters from June and September 2020 were shared.

**Next Quarterly Meeting:** No January 27, 2021 meeting is currently planned. The next DHTHC quarterly meeting after that will take place on the 4<sup>th</sup> Wednesday, **April 28**, 2021 at a location to be determined.

**Adjourn:** The October 28, 2020 DHTHC meeting adjourned at 3:20 p.m. on a **motion** by Robinson, seconded by Ramie. Schadt notarized the incorporation application signatures by the trustees.

*Minutes submitted by Laurie Ramie, 11/9/20*