

D&H Transportation Heritage Council

July 22, 2020 Quarterly Meeting Minutes

The porch of The Columns Museum, Milford, PA

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
Jane Varcoe (treasurer), Waymart Area Historical Society
Laurie Ramie (secretary), Upper Delaware Council
Lauren Hauptman, National Park Service Upper Delaware Scenic and Recreational River
Ingrid Peterec, National Park Service Upper Delaware Scenic and Recreational River
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
Kenny Christianson, Lackawaxen River Conservancy
Rolf Moeller, Shohola Railroad & Historical Society
Myra Snook, Warren County, NJ Canal Committee
Shannon Cilento, Upper Delaware Council
Kerron Barnes, Town of Mamakating (remotely)

Call to Order: Merchant called the business meeting hosted by the Pike County Historical Society to order at 1:03 p.m. following an optional tour of the new D&H Canal exhibit at The Columns Museum and lunch at the Milford Diner.

Acceptance of January 22, 2020 Minutes: On a **motion** by Talaga, seconded by Moeller, the minutes of the Jan. 22 meeting were approved. The Council's scheduled April 22 meeting was cancelled due to non-essential travel and gathering restrictions during the coronavirus pandemic.

Treasurer's Report: Varcoe presented her written report, which included an accounting of transactions since Jan. 22. The current balance is \$2,739.09. There are 15 full memberships and seven affiliate memberships.

New Business:

- a) **National Historic Landmark (NHL) Designation Update** – Lauren Hauptman provided a report on behalf of National Park Service Interior Region 1 Historian Amanda Casper: “We were able to secure additional National Recreation and Preservation Funds to cover the whole NHL update project. Amanda drafted a scope of work based on feedback from the initial meeting with the group, and there will be additional opportunities for input. The NPS will be soliciting for a contractor to conduct the project; experience with large cultural landscapes and history of engineering is required, familiarity with the D&H Canal is preferred, familiarity with preparing National Historic Landmark or National Register documentation is required. If any members have worked with firms that meet this description, please send their names and a sample of a report they produced for their site. Does the group have a committee established that Amanda can coordinate in the future on the NHL update?” Hauptman elaborated that, as of the last meeting, NPS had only been able to get 50% of the funding needed for this project but now have 100% in hand. This pertains to \$50,000 to update the existing 1968 NHL listing that names five D&H Canal sites. Merchant proposed Neil Larson and Associates as a contractor, which recently completed a report for Mamakating. Volunteering to serve

on the coordinating committee were: Steve Skye (Neversink Valley Museum of History and Innovation); Bill Merchant; Sally Talaga; Cliff Robinson, Jr.; and Shannon Cilento.

- b) **Petition for Provisional Charter to the Regents of the University of the State of New York** – Merchant thanked Barnes for getting this incorporation process started but said, after the last meeting, we realized that we needed to approach this as seeking a charter from the New York State Education Department. A draft copy was distributed. Among its clauses are: “First: The name of the proposed corporation is The Delaware & Hudson Transportation Heritage Council. Second: The purposes for which such corporation is to be formed are: To celebrate and disseminate the history of the Delaware & Hudson Canal, its Gravity Railroad and its Railroad network; to coordinate and cooperate with all the institutions that celebrate these histories.” The institution to be maintained by the proposed corporation is to be located at 211 Bridge Street, Narrowsburg, NY 12764. (This is the Upper Delaware Council office as the NY place of employment for the current DHTHC secretary.) The number of trustees is to be “not less than five nor more than 25.” (Listed in the draft are home addresses for Merchant, Robinson, Varcoe, Ramie, and Barnes.) Signatures of at least five of the trustees are required with notary acknowledgements. Any trustee beyond the minimum of five named who does not sign the petition will not be named as an incorporator and must submit a separate, notarized consent to serve as an initial trustee. Merchant said the trustees will have fiduciary responsibility for the corporation. Christianson asked if the Council carries Directors and Officers Liability insurance. The answer is no. Merchant said it would be convenient if there was a notary public in attendance at the next meeting so that the trustees could all sign it then; otherwise, the document could be circulated for people to take that responsibility individually. He understands that Kerron Barnes and Norma Schadt are notaries, and that this document could not be notarized at a PA location such as today’s meeting. He noted that this designation will give the Council tax-deductible status and fundraising capabilities. Robinson clarified that this State charter will not make the Council a 501(c)(3) charitable organization, but this is a first step on the way to potentially seeking that federal designation. Merchant said, once this corporation is established, only the trustees would have voting privileges. Varcoe questioned Clause #10 which states, “Upon dissolution of the corporation, the board of trustees shall, after paying or making provision for the payment of all the liabilities of the corporation, dispose of the remaining assets of the corporation exclusively for one of more exempt purposes, within the meaning of section 501(c)(3) of the Internal Revenue Code of 1986 (or the corresponding provision of any future Federal tax code), or shall distribute the same to the Federal government, or to a state or local government, for a public purpose...” Varcoe asked if we should designate it so the money doesn’t go to the government. Merchant said that only indicates that, if the corporation dissolves, we would need to designate a source for our assets. Robinson said it’s a stop-gap measure, while Talaga pointed out it’s an “or” option. Merchant asked members to further review the draft and expressed hope that we would be able to sign and notarize it at the October meeting.
- c) **Planning for the 200th Anniversary of the D&H** – Merchant said we have five years to plan this. Talaga noted that it’s important in public history to emphasize “the power of the place”. That drums up emotions. The #1 priority in creating events is to attach them to specific sites. She suggested using the provided Chronology of Important Dates Relating to the Delaware & Hudson Canal Company and The Pennsylvania Coal Company Gravity Railroads or general knowledge sources to associate planning an event with a site. Robinson said we know when the canal opened but it may be debatable about when it began. There could be a series of events and celebrations surrounding specific dates.

The groundbreaking occurred in July 1825. 1828 is recognized as the starting year historically, but 1829 was the opening of the railroad and the first full season in which boats operated on the canal. He suggested looking at some pivotal dates in each community. Some are specific to the railroad or canal. We could build anticipation from 2023 onward. 2098 would be the 200th anniversary of the canal's closure. Merchant said this is an opportunity to continually put the story of the D&H Canal out there. Powell said that 1823 and 1829 are key dates to him. He proposed reading the entire speech from the groundbreaking, which is available. Talaga proposed looking at two examples of chronologies that were handed out by the next meeting with the task of compiling your own list of significant dates. This organization can then go through year by year to decide what we can do as a group.

- d) **Discuss Hosting a Bus Tour from Port Jervis to Spring Glen** – The section featured in the upcoming DVD Chapter 4 that covers the vicinity of Locks 33-35 would be the next route to interpret. Robinson said he spoke with videographer Bill Bollinger about the DVD status. The filming has been delayed by illness over the winter then the pandemic. That area is “a jungle now” but no clearing of it is allowed. Everything is on hold. Since he'd like to have the video done before the tour occurs, Robinson suggested pushing this to the fall and discussing its status then.
- e) **Other** – 1) Robinson said he started the Delaware & Hudson Canal and Gravity Railroad Conservancy in 2006 to cover the whole transportation route from Carbondale to Eddyville. He has been struggling with Orange County to get the conservancy's license renewed to keep a trail clearing grant which has a \$60,000 balance active. Vacancies in Orange County positions affected their progress. The grant administrators contacted the county about this also but the county won't renew it. If DHTHC incorporates, the conservancy becomes redundant. He is thinking about closing it down when this new charter becomes effective and absorbing the conservancy's activities into DHTHC, Inc. since it covers the same territory. Robinson would relinquish his vice-chairperson role and volunteer to become the executive director of DHTHC, Inc. That would allow him to continue with this group if the conservancy no longer exists. The executive director does not serve on the board. He would focus on seeking funds for the new corporation that could potentially result in the executive director becoming a paid position. Merchant said he and Robinson discussed this and, conceptually, Merchant feels it's a good aim. Powell commented that this organization needs continuity and Robinson's suggestion would provide that.
- 2) Robinson requested that people forward his article titled “Debate” that had been circulated by advance email on 7/14 to raise awareness of how and why the dam was removed at the D&H Canal Linear Park in Cuddebackville in 2004 which has resulted in the de-watering of the canal. Powell said that the article is a good summary of the history and implications of that decision, but suggested “we should back off on finger-pointing and accusations to focus on how we can cooperate to solve this problem.” Package it in a more positive way and show the benefits of re-watering the canal. Gather statistics on how this could have a positive impact on real estate values and marketing of an attractive historic resource. Robinson said yes, the advocates are talking to people who can document that. Currently, Orange County has commissioned Fusco Engineering to prepare a report detailing what it would take to repair the feeder system in order to re-water the canal but he has seen no evidence of it. This canal section is entirely located in the Town of Deerpark which has the least power and funding among the 24 legislative districts. It's important to get people to understand the significance of the canal.

Robinson said that when Orange County put out a map of trails, the D&H wasn't even on it. It will take a majority vote of the Orange County Legislature to approve funding any proposed repair project that results from the study. They simply don't seem to be aware of it, which is why he is intent on doing numerous interviews and putting out a booklet. Merchant said one big issue for a government is always insurance and liability. They worry about getting sued. That's why they haven't allowed the Conservancy to proceed with the license for its trail clearing work, Merchant said.

Old Business:

- a) **Production Status and Inventory of Historic DVD Series** – Talaga reported that she has 46 copies of Chapter 1 (noting that Bollinger's last order delivery was short by 8 DVDs), 21 copies of Chapter 2, and 25 copies of Chapter 3. She brought them with her today, available for sale at the \$7 wholesale rate. They retail for \$10. Robinson noted that he had asked Bollinger to produce a "teaser" video to help promote the DVDs. One use would be that there are three Facebook groups associated with the effort to re-water the Cuddebackville section of the canal. They collectively have about 1,000 members and would be a great audience to promote the availability of these historic DVDs. The teaser video could be sent out by e-blast. Hauptman suggested posting it on a YouTube channel as well for public accessibility. Robinson said people could order copies of the DVD by contacting Treasurer Jane Varcoe and making checks payable to DHTHC. Talaga maintains the inventory of DVDs. Talaga asked whether there will be a charge for Bollinger to produce the teaser video; if so, there should be a motion. Robinson said he will check.
- b) **Website Update Report** – Ramie reported that Dorene Warner from W Design has implemented the updates to www.dhthc.org that the Council has requested to date, keeping it in the same format which is limited but recognizes that the group doesn't have funding to upgrade the site to a new platform at this time. Merchant asked people to review the website within the next two weeks and provide any changes to Ramie to pass along collectively to Warner.
- c) **Google Map Created for Publicly Accessible D&H Corridor Hikes** – Merchant announced that the Google map has launched and is viewable. He asked Ramie to see if Warner can provide a link to it on the DHTHC website. It includes every lock, which people can click on and obtain additional information for that site. He has been shooting video out along his canal section in the High Falls area to add clips to the map. He welcomes more images and content from others. Christianson said he has information to send. Merchant feels this map has the potential to be a really great resource and would like it to be representative of the whole corridor.
- d) **Other** – None

Announcements of Member Accomplishments, Concerns, and Upcoming Events:

Rolf Moeller – The Shohola Railroad and Historical Society meets every first Wednesday of the month at 7 p.m. at the Shohola Caboose Museum.

Kenny Christianson – The Lackawaxen River Conservancy finalized interpretive signs from Lock House 31 to the Settlers Inn. On July 4th, they had an informal river parade with decorated vessels. The Rowland Cooperative has re-opened its grocery store. They plan to convert one room of that building where the DHTHC previously met into a history room.

Myra Snook – The Morris Canal in New Jersey did a video on Plane 9 last year which included photos of canal boats going up it. It is now posted on-line. She will send a link to the group. Warren County put up two new interpretive signs and is working on two others. One will show a change bridge. Their festival had to be cancelled this year.

Shannon Cilento – Cilento introduced herself, noting that she started employment at the Upper Delaware Council on July 15 as the Resources and Land Use Specialist. She holds a Master's degree in Historic Preservation and looks forward to learning more about this organization and the canal system.

Kathy Land – The Waymart Area Historical Society met at the end of the June and opened on July 4 but they are awaiting operational rules for the pandemic.

Ingrid Peterec – The National Park Service's D&H Canal Days and Zane Grey Festival were cancelled, but the festival has been scheduled for July 10, 2021 and they were able to carry over the bus transportation funding to allow school groups to attend Canal Days next year. A new painting of a mining town is ready for future educational programs. Hauptman and a Virtual Intern have been working on Cultural Resources web pages and a Story Map about the Cowen property that will be posted online.

S. Robert Powell – While the City of Carbondale offices are closed to the public, he has been able to continue working alone in the museum. Despite not sending out any promotional mailings, they have received an unusual influx of new memberships online and unsolicited support from across the country. He's been taking advantage of this quiet time to clean and organize. This led to the discovery of new material and writing 8-10 articles on the D&H. One subject involved researching the 1872 horse and mule pandemic in America and backed up 2,000 gravity railroad cars on the tracks during its 2-3 week duration.

Laurie Ramie – The Upper Delaware Council had to cancel its 32nd Annual Awards Ceremony on August 30 after three postponements, but the 32nd Annual Family Raft Trip on August 2nd will proceed. She distributed copies of the Spring 2020 issue of "The Upper Delaware" newsletter. The Summer issue will be released on August 3rd.

Lauren Hauptman – Hauptman elaborated on the Virtual Interns program, which is available through the federal Department of State. They work remotely 10 hours per week for college credits. If anyone has topics they want researched, let her know. The National Park Service pursued four projects.

Sally Talaga – Two volunteers who were out of work due to COVID-19 extended the Lock 31 park's Riverside Trail over the newly acquired 0.81 acres to meet the towpath. Now that PENNDOT recently cut the guard rail on Rt. 6, you can walk from the southern end of the park to Settler's Inn and beyond via the Hawley Trails. All 2020 events, including the 8th Annual Canal Festival, are cancelled. The pavilion in the canal bed and ADA ramp to it are finished. Talaga passed out photos. The final inspection by PA DCNR is tomorrow. The next steps are to construct under one end of the pavilion lockable storage for grounds maintenance equipment, tables and chairs; then electric service; and finally canal "boat" details when funding becomes available. Volunteers replaced the exterior basement door with a hand-made period reproduction. 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. Prior to a North Main Street, Honesdale building demolition, its 6 over 6 window sashes were removed and 16 of them are being restored by a volunteer and placed in eight of the lock house's first floor windows, which will be more period-

appropriate. COVID-19 closed all of the Wayne County Historical Society's museums and they are now open by appointment.

Bill Merchant – The museum in High Falls is likewise closed. During this pandemic, they created a virtual museum which offers a tour of the current building in anticipation of the DePuy Canal House opening. Merchant has been filming “Where is Our Historian?” video segments out in the field and showing them on Facebook Live. They had 2,000 people watch the first time. He posts a new video every week on their YouTube channel, which anyone may subscribe to in order to see the tours and other clips. Just search D&H Canal on YouTube; there are over 30 videos available. The newly-formed History Alliance of Kingston has provided a great way for 14 cultural organizations to collaborate, such as on a Hudson Valley History Scavenger Hunt next week. COVID-19 has really caused everyone to up their game in terms of creativity and technology usage.

Next Meeting: The next DHTHC quarterly meeting will take place on the 4th Wednesday, **October 28**, 2020. A Wurtsboro, NY area location with a Basha Kill hike was favored. [*Note to minutes:* Kerron Barnes has received permission for the group to meet at the Mamakating Environmental Education and Interpretive Center at 762 South Road in Wurtsboro. Itinerary details will be provided in advance.]

Adjourn: The July 22, 2020 DHTHC meeting adjourned at 2:55 p.m. on a **motion** by Ramie, seconded by Moeller.

Minutes submitted by Laurie Ramie, 8/18/20