

D&H Transportation Heritage Council

October 27, 2021 Quarterly Meeting Minutes

Orange County D&H Canal Park, Cuddebackville, NY

Attendance at business meeting:

Bill Merchant (chair), D&H Canal Historical Society and Museum, High Falls
Cliff Robinson, Jr. (vice-chair), Neversink Feeder & Canal Conservancy
Jane Varcoe (treasurer), Waymart Area Historical Society
Laurie Ramie (secretary), Upper Delaware Council
Don Drewett, D&H THC Legislative Liaison
Norma Schadt, Town of Deerpark 1863 School House Museum and Historian's Office
Donna Durland, Mamakating Historical Society
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
Jamie Myers, National Park Service Upper Delaware Scenic and Recreational River
Kerron Barnes, Town of Mamakating
Lauren Hauptman, National Park Service Upper Delaware Scenic and Recreational River (virtually)
Judy Gumaer Testa, Neversink Valley Museum of History and Innovation
Dave Lybolt, Mamakating Local Development Corporation
Chester Hartwell, new affiliate member
Burt Thelander-guest, Outdoor Club of Port Jervis and Orange County Pathways Committee

Call to Order: Merchant called the business meeting held at the Orange County D&H Canal Park to order at 12:55 p.m. following an optional morning hike led by Deerpark Historian Norma Schadt and Orange County Legislator Tom Faggione, and lunch provided by Schadt.

Additions to the Agenda: 1) January meeting plans - Talaga proposed meeting by Zoom on Jan. 26 instead of in-person. The Council decided to attempt it in-person at a central location if the weather appears to be cooperative a week ahead of time. Cliff volunteered to check on the availability of the Port Jervis Youth Center to book as a meeting location that day. 2) Election of Officers - Laurie noted that she had neglected to include nomination of officers as a business item since this is the last meeting of the year.

Acceptance of July 28, 2020 Minutes: Talaga corrected two items in an announcement attributed to Don Drewett which should have read: Sally Talaga will participate as the "token weaver" for the Wayne County Arts Alliance Open Studio tour on Aug. 27-29. On a **motion** by Lybolt, seconded by Varcoe, the minutes of the last quarterly meeting were approved as amended.

Treasurer's Report and Membership Update: Varcoe presented her written report which included an accounting of activity since July 18, with four deposits made and no checks written. The current balance is \$3,630.73. She asked everyone to review the list of Full and Affiliate Members. Robinson said that she can delete "D&H Canal and Gravity Railroad Conservancy" since that organization no longer exists. There are now a total of 20 voting members and four non-voting members. Welcomed as two new affiliate members are Chester Hartwell and Rob Honders from Honderosa Valley Consulting. She passed around two copies of the latest Basha Kill Area Association newsletter. Merchant reminded everyone that Varcoe would like to retire from the treasurer's position. Durland said she would be willing to take on that job, with Merchant thanking her for stepping up to volunteer. When Varcoe noted that the DHTHC account is with Wayne Bank, Durland said they have a branch in Wurtsboro which means no changes would be necessary. Varcoe offered to meet with Durland after the meeting to discuss the transfer of

responsibilities, observing that there has traditionally not been a lot of financial activity. Merchant said we will need to check on which offices are subject to election in 2022 for two-year terms but regardless, Varcoe could opt to resign as of the January election.

Business and Discussion Items:

- a) **Nomination of Officers for 2022** – [Note to minutes: DHTHC Bylaws, adopted as revised 10/24/2018, state under Article V. Officers: “Section 1. Officers of the Council, from the full-membership, shall be: a) Chairperson; b) Vice-Chairperson; c) Treasurer; d) Secretary. Section 2. Nomination and Election of Officers: a) Terms shall be for two years: January 1 to December 31. b) Nominations for officers will be made by Nominating Committee or from the floor at the last meeting of the year. c) Election of officers for new terms will take place at the last meeting of the year as follows: The Chairperson and Vice-Chairperson will be elected in odd years. The Secretary and Treasurer will be elected in even years. d) The Chairperson may serve no more than 3 consecutive terms in office. e) Vacancies shall be filled by the Executive Committee, to serve until the next election. f) Only full voting members are eligible to hold an office. The office is held by the individual and not the organization.”] Ahead of confirming that information, members took the following actions. On a **motion** by Durland, seconded by Varcoe, Bill Merchant was nominated as 2022 Chairperson. On a **motion** by Merchant, seconded by Talaga, Cliff Robinson, Jr. was nominated as 2022 Vice-chairperson. On a **motion** by Merchant, seconded by Varcoe, Donna Durland was nominated as 2022 treasurer. On a **motion** by Robinson, seconded by Durland, Laurie Ramie was nominated as 2022 Secretary. The election will be held at the Jan. 26 meeting. Varcoe said we also need to determine the rate for dues for the membership renewals that will come up in January. Merchant floated the idea of raising the current \$40 voting and \$20 affiliate dues to \$50 and \$25 respectively. Robinson remarked that when we get approved by New York State as an official organization, we will need to do some fundraising since we won’t be able to subsidize our operations from the dues alone. We also still have two DVDs to produce. He would have no problem with \$50 and \$25. Varcoe suggested keeping the dues amount the same until the corporation issue is settled. On a **motion** by Talaga, seconded by Barnes, the dues structure for 2022 will remain at \$40 for full membership and \$20 for affiliate membership. Varcoe noted that if anyone joins during the last quarter, she counts that as a member for the next year. Renewal notices will be issued toward the end of this calendar year.
- b) **NPS Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance (RTCA) Program Presentation** – Hauptman reported that unfortunately Shanasia Sylman, the Outdoor Recreation Planner with RTCA, had to go out on the road today and wasn’t available to offer a presentation as planned. She would like to reschedule that for the next meeting. Merchant said that she and Drewett participated in a call with Sylman on Monday to find out more information about the RTCA. They are a federally-funded agency that does this work all over the country in assisting municipalities, non-profits, and individuals to be an ally for trail developments and improvements. Our objective would be to get as much D&H Canal properties united as a single trail as possible. While RTCA has no financing available to give out, they provide technical assistance. Barnes asked how to find out more information, to which Hauptman said she was circulating a link to the NPS RTCA website (www.nps.gov/orgs/rtca). She added that applications for RTCA assistance are due in March. They ask anyone with an interest to contact them to describe their idea. They will walk you through the process, which Hauptman said is not onerous and there are no fees. Merchant said it is a wonderful program to help navigate groups and

individuals through the regulations, policies, and agencies involved through their experience and good connections.

- c) **National Historic Landmark Designation Project Update** – In his role as Lead Historian subcontractor to the National Park Service’s consultant, Richard Grubb & Associates, Merchant reported that the historic significance narrative report is due on Friday. He started with the existing landmark report, corrected errors, expanded on it, and put it into the National Register format. Merchant will circulate that approximately 24-page draft which incorporates information contributed by Powell for review. Next will come field work starting on Nov. 1. They plan to begin in Kingston and work westerly at the rate of approximately 10-12 miles per day, intending to complete the entire course in two work weeks. The contractor requests, if anyone is aware of canal elements that are not normally accessible but should be visited, that they arrange for a visit by contacting Merchant with the location and permission. Merchant said he will share a list of 186 extant canal and gravity railroad features and seeks any additions on the basis that we would like to have all of these extant elements included in the final report. We found previously that it complicated work plans and fundraising efforts for historic preservation when certain features were not listed in the original National Historic Landmark designation. Features that could be referenced include structures, waste weirs, canal prisms, lock houses, dry docks, foundations, and remnants associated with the D&H Canal and/or Gravity Railroad. Photos could be useful but this is primarily a narrative document. Merchant noted this is a \$50,000 project and may not happen again in our lifetime, so it’s important to be as thorough as possible with this update.
- d) **Status of New York State Regents Certificate of Incorporation Application** – The State agency asked Merchant to submit an operating budget, which he did after consulting with the officers, so that indicates that the application is being actively processed. The DHTHC budget for Fiscal Year 2021 (calendar year) that he provided was \$2,121.24 in total, comprised of \$1,000 for Fall video sessions; \$475 for DVD duplications; \$450 for website maintenance; and \$194.26 for annual website hosting service. While no timeframe was offered, it’s conceivable that we may have news to share at the January meeting. Merchant said we expected it would take around six months ultimately.
- e) **Chapter 4 Video Filming Status and Inventory of Historic DVD Series** – Robinson and videographer Bill Bollinger plan to start filming for the Port Jervis to Spring Glen section on Nov. 13, weather permitting. Much of the canal along there is buried but they will select locations and Robinson will contact appropriate speakers. Robinson said COVID delayed progress on this DVD for which the Council had paid \$750 in November 2019 and Robinson noted also that Bollinger’s wife had died. Merchant offered to send a condolence card to express sympathy on behalf of the group. Regarding the inventory, Talaga reported that she has 27 copies of Chapter 1 in stock, and that Chapters 2 and 3 are both sold out. She said we could have sold more if we had them based on interest. On a **motion** by Talaga, seconded by Schadt, Sally Talaga will contact Bill Bollinger to request the duplication of 50 copies each of the historic DVDs Chapters 2 and 3. The cost per unit has fluctuated over the years.
- f) **Report by DHTHC Legislative Liaison Don Drewett** – Drewett reported that he is collaborating with Merchant on developing a strategy and a one-page D&H THC summary document to provide when speaking to elected officials about the Council. This is a good time on the Congressional calendar to approach our representatives since they

are preparing to vet spending bills through their committees. He believes the federal government will be operating under Continuing Resolutions for a while. Having a document to share will be helpful to get the word out about this group's efforts.

- g) **Report by Cliff Robinson, Jr.: World Canals Conference, 8/30-9/3, Hagerstown, MD** – Robinson thanked his board at the Neversink Feeder and Canal Conservancy for subsidizing his trip to Maryland for the World Canals Conference, which he said was well-organized with interesting excursions. There were 50-60 people in the session where he presented a PowerPoint and 10-minute teaser video about the D&H Canal and Gravity Railroad. Due to the pandemic affecting travel, the focus at the conference was primarily on the Chesapeake and Ohio (C&O) Canal so his departure from that was well-received. Robinson displayed and explained photos from his field trips. He said that he was impressed by how the C&O Canal has become a tremendous tourist attraction and focus for history buffs. He could see what was possible with the right marketing and investment of federal funds, in their case. He was also fascinated by how unique the D&H Canal is in comparison to the C&O for its infrastructure and operation. Ramie asked Robinson to send a link to the DVD series teaser video that Connor Simon had voluntarily produced so that it can be uploaded to the DHTHC website and provided to members for their use.
- h) **Planning for a Fall Bus Tour from Port Jervis to Spring Glen** – Since the DVD for this section isn't ready and there are still concerns about organizing bus tours due to COVID, this will be deferred until Spring 2022.
- i) **Planning for D&H 200th Anniversary Events** – Merchant reiterated the request for any site interested in hosting an event to contact him so we can generate a list since not all events that we will celebrate are site-specific. This will be a multi-year affair that will vary from site to site.
- j) **Port Jervis Transportation History Center's D&H Canal Projects** – Ramie reported that she had emailed DHTHC member Mike Ward from the Outdoors Club of Port Jervis to request a brief presentation on this new alliance's D&H Canal projects but didn't hear back from him. Thelander said that Ward has been busy but he could share some information. They have been communicating with Orange County Planning Commissioner Alan Sorensen about trails. The Open Space Institute wants to promote a trail from Port Jervis to Kingston. Merchant noted that a section between Ellenville and Accord follows the D&H Canal route. He would love to see a connection made to the Empire State Trail. Thelander said they also discussed with Sorensen developing a trail from Port Jervis to Huguenot. Orange County is not likely to approve the request to give that section to the Neversink Feeder and Canal Conservancy. There is an interest in non-motorized trail opportunities to reduce dependence on fossil fuels as a long-term goal. Merchant said Orange County is doing an Open Space Plan for which he and Barnes had suggested including canal trails and Rails-to-Trails. They have a historic gem here that should be exposed. Thelander said that Ward is aware of the Council's interest in the Port Jervis Transportation History Center, for which more information is available at www.pjthc.org. Since all of this is related, we should be combining our efforts.
- k) **Website (www.dhthc.org) & Facebook Postings** – Ramie reported that Dorene Warner from W Design had made all the website updates that Ramie requested following the July meeting. The new affiliate members will be added with information from this quarterly meeting, including the teaser video link as discussed earlier. Merchant said he appears to be the only person posting to the Facebook page currently, but he would be happy to

provide administrator access and to share other D&H sites' postings. He posted a fresh photo from this morning's walk of the Pomeroy Foundation's new Neversink historic marker on the Orange County D&H Canal Park property that Schadt had secured and was just installed by the Town of Deerpark Highway Department along the river. Varcoe noted that website hosting and domain renewal fees will come due on Dec. 10, according to past billing. Merchant said he would forward any invoices that he receives to the treasurer.

Announcements of Member Accomplishments, Concerns, and Upcoming Events:

Sally Talaga – The Canal Festival on August 21 was a success with 1,600 attending, doubling the previous record of 800. Photos of the event are inside the front cover of the fall issue of Wayne County Historical Society's newsletter, which was passed out. Regarding the house at Lock 31: They were able to get a one-year extension to our plaster restoration grant from the PHMC, so the work now needs to be completed by September 30, 2022. The electrical and smoke detection systems upgrades need to be done prior to the plaster work. Building Permit application has been submitted for this work and since the building is still considered a residence, their skilled volunteers will be able to do the electrical rather than a licensed PA electrician. Historic Paint Finishing Study for the signature/graffiti room was completed by Matt Mosca, which they highly recommend for that type of restoration work. Now they know what colors the room was originally when restoring that room. The report was passed around.

Dave Lybolt and Kerron Barnes – The first section of the grant-funded D&H Canal Trail in the Village of Wurtsboro and the Town of Mamakating has been completed and is open. Barnes displayed photos. Another 1,000 linear feet are under construction for the next section. Barnes distributed copies of the Sullivan O&W Rail Trail Map brochure, running 50 miles through Wurtsboro to Livingston Manor and crossing the canal trail. They applied for a Congressional earmark and other funding sources to undertake \$9 million in improvements. The Open Space Institute bought a 247-acre property on the Wurtsboro Mountain ridge (Shawanga Lodge) which they intend to sell to the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation. Lybolt's Mamakating Local Development Corporation raised \$8,000 to create a Travel Stories app with GPS reference points that works on Apple and Android phones to explain what you're looking at while on the trail. Barnes thanked MLDC for initiating that project as a non-profit which the town would not have been able to do.

Donna Durland – She is pleased to represent the Mamakating Historical Society as a new member of DHTHC.

Laurie Ramie – The Upper Delaware Council's Resources and Land Use Specialist, Shannon Cilento, had her last day of work at the UDC on October 15. She has accepted a new position as Community Development Director at Sullivan Renaissance starting Nov. 1. Ramie said they were sad to lose Cilento, who was excellent at her UDC job for 15 months and contributed valuable historic preservation experience to this group, but she is staying in the area and is destined for future success. An interview with a promising candidate had taken place last night and resulted in an offer being extended for her replacement.

Jamie Myers – No report; she is attending on behalf of National Park Service Upper Delaware Scenic and Recreational River Chief of Interpretation Ingrid Peterec.

Kathy Land – The Waymart Area Historical Society is planning a Halloween event. Land handed out rack cards promoting the D&H Gravity Depot Museum at 118 South Street in Waymart, open May through September or by appointment. Email wahs1851@gmail.com or visit them on Facebook.

Norma Schadt – Orange County Legislator Tom Faggione, chair of the Recreation Committee, had initiated the idea of restoring all of the 55+ historic markers in town. The Deerpark Highway Department retrieves them and volunteers paint them at a station set up at the Grange building in Huguenot. They have refurbished 22 markers since the summer. Schadt announced that she will be resigning effective Jan. 1 as Deerpark Town Historian after more than 25 years, saying it's time for someone else to step in and noting that she is 88 years old. Her successor will be Mike Worden. Schadt said she will continue attending DHTHC meetings and applauded the Council for “coming a long way” since its meetings began.

Judy Gumaer Testa – She introduced herself as secretary of the Neversink Valley Museum of History and Innovation, and a local historian with a very active presence on Facebook.

S. Robert Powell – An 8 x 10” color print photo depicting Delaware & Hudson Caboose 35964 at its new site next to the Carbondale City Hall was provided to everyone. The 1923 rail car had been moved four times since 2010 before finding a permanent home on a panel track installed by the Delaware-Lackawanna Railroad. Powell said there were \$40,000-\$50,000 in very appreciated donated services to make this possible. They have received lots of positive feedback. Powell provided copies of his article published in the Bridgeline Historical Society Bulletin: “The Use of Inclined Planes on the D&H Gravity Railroad and Canal”, October 2021.

Chester Hartwell – Hartwell said he was attending his first DHTHC meeting. He is a member of Friends of Historic Saugerties and other historic groups who collects a lot of imagery that he shares on Facebook.

Bill Merchant – Merchant’s first peer-reviewed article focusing on Marginalized Populations on the D&H Canal will be published in the Hudson River Review this month. This canal could not have been built without immigrants. The D&H Canal Historical Society and Museum purchased the oldest known extant D&H telegraph station for \$4,000. This will enable the 5-Locks Walk to become a 6-Locks Walk eventually. The Society, which has its own You Tube channel at D&H TV, has received a grant to create a video explaining the D&H Canal to children. The new Mid-Hudson Visitor Center and D&H Canal Museum is on track to open next spring. Events will be held leading up to the opening which will be promoted online.

Next Quarterly Meeting: D&H THC will meet on the 4th Wednesday, **January 26**, 2022 at the Port Jervis Youth Center if the weather complies or by Zoom if it does not. Details of the itinerary will be circulated in advance.

Adjourn: The October 27, 2021 DHTHC meeting adjourned at 3:24 p.m. on a **motion** by Drewett, seconded by Powell.

Minutes submitted by Laurie Ramie, 10/31/21