

# **D&H Transportation Heritage Council**

## **January 26, 2022 Quarterly Meeting Minutes**

### **Held by Zoom videoconference**

Participants:

**Bill Merchant (chair)**, D&H Canal Historical Society and Museum, High Falls  
**Cliff Robinson, Jr. (vice-chair)**, Neversink Feeder & Canal Conservancy (departed at 2:20 p.m.)  
**Donna Durland (incoming treasurer elected 1/26/22)**, Mamakating Historical Society  
**Laurie Ramie (secretary)**, Upper Delaware Council  
**Brian Scardefield**, Sullivan County Parks, Recreation and Beautification (departed at 2:18 p.m.)  
**Burt Thelander**, Outdoor Club of Port Jervis, Orange County Pathways Committee (departed at 2:20 p.m.)  
**Debra Conway**, The Delaware Company  
**Jane Varcoe, (outgoing treasurer)**, Waymart Area Historical Society  
**Judy Gumaer Testa**, Neversink Valley Museum of History and Innovation  
**Karen Tolcz**, Mamakating Historical Society  
**Kathy Land**, Waymart Area Historical Society  
**Kenny Christianson**, Lackawaxen River Conservancy  
**Kerron Barnes**, Town of Mamakating  
**Kerry Engelhardt**, Upper Delaware Council  
**Michael Robbins**, Town of Mamakating Supervisor  
**Michael Ward**, Outdoor Club of PJ, Port Jervis Transportation History Center (departed at 2:52 p.m.)  
**Michael Worden**, Town of Deerpark Historian  
**Norma Schadt**, Town of Deerpark 1863 School House Museum volunteer  
**Peggy Johansen**, Mamakating Library (departed at 2:50 p.m.)  
**S. Robert Powell**, Carbondale Historical Society  
**Sally Talaga**, Wayne County Historical Society's D&H Canal Park at Lock 31  
**Susie Kaspar**, National Park Service Upper Delaware Scenic and Recreational River

**Call to Order:** Merchant called the business meeting to order at 1:14 p.m. after resolving an unexpected Zoom log-in request for a passcode.

**Acceptance of October 27, 2021 Minutes:** On a **motion** by Talaga, seconded by Durland, the minutes of the last quarterly meeting held in Cuddebackville, NY were approved.

**Treasurer's Report and Membership Update:** Varcoe presented an accounting of activity from Oct. 28, 2021 through Jan. 25, 2022, with three deposits made and one check written. The balance is \$3,930.73. Annual membership dues have been received from 10 organizations and individuals to date. Varcoe said that she will arrange to meet with the incoming treasurer to transfer financial records and bank account information since she is retiring from the position.

**DHTHC Legislative Liaison Don Drewett Report:** Drewett had notified officers in advance that a jury duty conflict prevented him from attending today's meeting. Merchant said they have been working on a two-page DHTHC fact sheet that can be presented to elected officials to introduce the organization. They will send that draft document to the whole group for input. Barnes virtually introduced Michael Robbins as the newly-elected supervisor for the Town of Mamakating. Robbins said hello to everyone and noted that he would be able to listen in to the meeting until approximately 2 p.m.

**Business and Discussion Items:**

- a) **Election of Secretary and Treasurer for Jan. 1, 2022-Dec. 31, 2024 Terms** – Nominations were made at Oct. 27's last meeting of the year for the two offices that come up for election in even years: secretary and treasurer. On a **motion** by Robinson, seconded by Talaga, Laurie Ramie was elected to continue as Secretary and Donna Durland was newly elected to serve as Treasurer. Members thanked Varcoe for her many years of service, noting that there have only been two treasurers in the Council's history. Peter Osborne from the Minisink Valley Historical Society in Port Jervis had preceded her in the role. Durland said she would send out her contact information so that membership dues after today can be sent to her. [Note to minutes: Donna Durland, P.O. Box 102, Wurtsboro, NY 12790; [durlanddhthc2022@gmail.com](mailto:durlanddhthc2022@gmail.com).]
- b) **Delaware & Hudson Transportation Heritage Council Certificate of Incorporation** – Merchant said "it's now official" that The University of the State of New York Education Department Board of Regents granted the DHTHC's application as an education corporation under IRS Section 501(c)(3) effective December 14, 2021. A copy of the Certificate of Incorporation was included in the meeting handouts. The first trustees are: William E. Merchant, Clifford Robinson, Jane Varcoe, Laurie Ramie, and Kerron Barnes, and the principal office shall be located at 211 Bridge St., Narrowsburg, NY 12764. Robinson said, with this new designation, the corporation can name its own officers and trustees, as well as consider appointing an executive director. Merchant suggested sticking with our current format for this meeting and addressing corporate reorganization at the next DHTHC meeting. He said the next step would be to file for 501(c)(3) financial status so we can accept tax-deductible donations. Merchant said he donated the \$100 fee for the Certificate of Incorporation and would pursue the 501(c)(3) application as well, though he's unsure what that fee is. On a **motion** by Barnes, seconded by Conway, the Council agreed to pay the to-be-determined filing fee from the treasury. Barnes asked if the organization needs to apply for a DUNS number. Merchant said that will be critical when the corporation goes after government grants. Currently fundraising takes place through our individual groups. We have some time to build a history of operations.
- c) **NPS Rivers, Trails and Conservation Assistance (RTCA) Applications due by 3/1/22** – Merchant met with Shanasia Sylman, the RTCA Outdoor Recreation Planner, to discover that this is a federally-funded agency that assists municipalities, non-profits, and individuals with trail developments and improvements. They provide technical consultation rather than being a grantor. Member organizations may want to take advantage of their assistance. The current deadline to apply for their services is March 1<sup>st</sup>.
- d) **Status of National Historic Landmark Update Project** – Merchant reported that the two-year process to update the 1966 National Historic Landmark designation is moving along well. He met with National Park Service Historian Amanda Casper on Friday. Merchant was subcontracted to serve as local historian and guide to consultant Richard Grubb & Associates. They traveled the 125-mile canal route in four days rather than the two weeks they had expected it to take to further document the 300+ extant canal features. He previously circulated that list. Merchant said it was exciting to go out and see every lock in person. Robinson asked whether the next step is to whittle down that list of 300 items. Merchant said no, they hope to include them all so the listing is as comprehensive as possible with a goal of protecting them. They just need to be converted into the preferred format for the National Register. He noted this all started because a couple historic buildings in Cuddebackville weren't included in the original D&H canal designation, which made them vulnerable.

- e) **Inventory of Historic DVD Series and Filming for Chapter 4** – Talaga reported that that we haven't received our order of 50 additional copies of Chapters 2 and 3 yet. That will cost \$450. Pre-payment was not required. There are 26 copies left of Chapter 1. When those 50 copies of 2 and 3 are delivered, that will be our total inventory pending completion of Chapter 4. Varcoe said she would check on their readiness. Talaga suggested placing orders in April to restock museum shops and sales outlets, then determine if we need to order more. Robinson said that videographer Bill Bollinger would like to get the footage for Chapters 4 and 5 simultaneously starting this spring. Interviews can be done over the winter, then get outside for filming after the snow melts.
- f) **Planning a Bus Tour from Port Jervis to Spring Glen** – Robinson said the Fall of 2022 would be the earliest this bus tour could happen to coincide with release of DVD Chapter 4 and have time to organize it.
- g) **Planning for D&H 200<sup>th</sup> Anniversary Events** – Merchant said we have to start ramping up for the first potential events to commemorate in 2023 based on 1823 D&H milestones. He, Talaga, and Barnes agreed to form a new committee. Talaga asked the individual organizations to look at the historical timeline she previously distributed and tell them what type of event is appropriate for their sites. Merchant said there are some events that aren't associated with any particular locations, so organizers could take their pick. That ground work has already been done. They'd like to hear back from people within the next month. Conway asked if those documents could be circulated again. Talaga challenged everyone to propose an anniversary event or multiple events they would be willing to host at their sites in order to review that list at the April DHTHC meeting and start compiling a calendar.
- h) **Website ([www.dhthc.org](http://www.dhthc.org)) & Facebook Postings** – Ramie reported that she is compiling the list of 2022 members as dues are received. She will provide that information to Dorene Warner of W Design to update the website directory. Anyone with other changes to the website should contact Ramie so she can present them collectively.
- i) **Other** – Thelander said that he had mentioned at the October meeting that the Open Space Institute has a proposal for the O&W railroad grade from Port Jervis to Kingston. He attended a meeting of the Orange County Transportation Council yesterday and brought up promotion of the D&H Canal Towpath. Gathering more collaborators will help over time to increase public and political support. He has discussed grant options with Congressman Maloney and NY Senator Martucci. Merchant agreed that the more interest we can raise about uniting trails, the better. He said that trail development enhances tourism and creates jobs. Rail-trails are trending and are very do-able.

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

**Sally Talaga** – The 9<sup>th</sup> Annual Canal Festival is on for August 20, 10 to 4 at the D&H Canal Park at Lock 31 on Rt. 6 between Hawley and White Mills, PA. Any related organization is invited to put up a 10 x 10' information tent. If interested, RSVP to [sltalaga@gmail.com](mailto:sltalaga@gmail.com) ASAP. The park has a new neighbor to the north who has put up a chain and "No Trespassing" sign across the towpath. Talaga introduced herself and the Wayne County Historical Society to him. The Hawley bar owner said he has been sued several times and is fearful someone might do the same on this property. Fortunately, he bought two parcels. The towpath/canal is on one parcel and his business (indoor yard sale) is on the adjoining lot. He is not interested in an easement or selling the

towpath/canal property now. Their plan is to revisit him in the spring and may put feelers out for donation(s) to buy. The neighbors' parcel to the south is up for sale but its canal/towpath has been filled in and the Hawley Trails project routed the trail along Rt. 6 in front of this parcel, so they're not interested in purchasing it even if they had the funds to do so. WCHS will soon have two quotes to finish the pavilion's canal "boat" details. They hope to have it completed by the Canal Festival.

Donna Durland – She hopes to get more involved in the organization in the future.

Debra Conway – The Delaware Company has taken over management of the Fort Delaware Museum of Colonial History in Narrowsburg under contract with Sullivan County. That is taking most of their attention now. They are making "glacial" progress on the Kate Project. They cleared a ½ mile path from Roebling's Delaware Aqueduct to the Highland River Access with the eagle blind. They have funding to develop a hiking trail to extend the National Park Service's Towpath Trail. It will include benches and interpretive signage. The Town of Highland received the Silver Feather Award from Sullivan Renaissance and this is one project that they're doing, therefore, the town is the fiduciary. The next step to undertake is a property survey to identify the boundaries of the New York State Department of Transportation right-of-way. Then they will work with the town engineer to lay out the concept. With DOT approval, they hope to start construction in spring or summer. This is a multi-phase project. Eventually, they want to install a statue of a young girl (hoggee) leading a mule along the towpath. That will require raising funds. She believes that people will be moved by hearing the lesser-told story of these child workers on the canal. Conway said that she is looking for snubbing posts to mark the boundary of the property, if anyone can help her find some.

Kerron Barnes – The Town of Mamakating is making progress with its trail. They completed the first section behind the town hall and supermarket complex through the woods to the towpath. There was a Sept. 24 groundbreaking. The second piece is at the northern end of the Village of Wurtsboro, Ferguson Lake to the new firehouse, but they can't do much with snow on the ground. They are using two state grants to fill in sections of the trail between those two ends. Orange & Rockland Utilities has agreed to move a substation and replace the trail where the existing building is at their expense. (Merchant noted that he would like to add these sections to the D&H Trail Google map with photos.) Barnes also announced that he will be leading a series of six trail walks starting in April. These hikes are listed on the 2022 Basha Kill Area Association Calendar of Events pages that Ramie sent out with the meeting agenda. Barnes welcomed the group to come to the Mamakating Environmental Education Center this summer to test out the new Travel Stories app that offers narration.

Kerry Engelhardt – She started employment at the Upper Delaware Council in November 2021 as the Resources and Land Use Specialist. She moved to Lackawaxen in 2015 on property that has been in her husband's family since 1951. Their survey includes a bridge abutment and apparently remnants of D&H Canal Lock 28, which is largely filled in; their neighbor has Lock 27. (Merchant said he was hoping to meet a property owner in that vicinity of the canal and asked if he could arrange a visit to take photos for historical documentation, to which Engelhardt agreed.)

Norma Schadt – Participating in the meeting from Florida, Schadt said that she has passed the Town of Deerpark Historian baton to Michael Worden, a retired police officer, historian, author, and current town justice, after she held the position for 25 years. Worden has taken over operation of the 1863 Schoolhouse Museum and their committee is organizing programs that will include a lecture by Frank Salvati, a needlework craft demonstration, the O&W Railroad, and an Oct. 15 bus tour of the 1778 Brant raid route.

Kathy Land – The Waymart Area Historical Society will hold its first 2022 meeting in March to plan the April reopening of their museum and events such as the June Pride and Patriotism Parade. Land gave a “shout-out” for Jane Varcoe’s 81<sup>st</sup> birthday on Jan. 27 and showed a photo of S. Robert Powell being presented with a surprise cake for his birthday in December.

Kenny Christianson – The Lackawaxen River Conservancy met last Tuesday. They are continuing to pursue federal designation under the Wild and Scenic Rivers system, which they have been discussing with Congressman Cartwright. They are exploring a potential merger with the Delaware Highlands Conservancy and plan to upgrade their website.

Susie Kaspar – She was traveling while listening in, noting that Ingrid Peterec and Lauren Hauptman who typically participate in the Council had a conflict with a management meeting at NPS Upper Delaware today. The National Park Service’s Zane Grey Festival will return in Lackawaxen on July 16. Exhibitors are welcome and can contact her for more information. Kaspar offered to create a social media post requesting the donation of snubbing posts that could be shared by sites searching for them.

Judy Gumaer Testa – She is working on a Lock 53 project privately and assisting the Neversink Valley Area Museum and Mamakating historian with historic markers.

Bill Merchant – His society has purchased the Telegraph Office property next to Lock 15 for \$4,000. It was built in 1850 originally as a toll collector’s office when the canal company was rerouted in High Falls. That was a watered section. It’s listed on an 1854 survey map and they have an oral history of the historic building’s usage. The property is now being cleared of a derelict trailer that sits on it. They hope to extend the Five Locks Walk to include this area.

**Next Quarterly Meeting:** D&H THC will meet on the 4<sup>th</sup> Wednesday, **April 27, 2022**. On a **motion** by Talaga, seconded by Christianson, the meeting will be hosted by the D&H Canal Historical Society in High Falls, NY. It will include a tour of the new Mid-Hudson Visitor Center and D&H Canal Museum set to open in the spring, the newly-acquired Telegraph Office property, and Merchant will look into arranging an optional hike and lunch.

**Adjourn:** The Jan. 26, 2022 DHTHC meeting adjourned at 3:18 p.m. on a **motion** by Talaga, seconded by Christianson.

*Minutes submitted by Laurie Ramie, 2/15/22*