

Upper Delaware Scenic Byway, Inc.

September 28, 2020 Meeting Minutes

Attendance:

Voting members:

John Pizzolato, Town of Highland representative, Chairperson
Rosie DeCristofaro, Town of Delaware rep., Vice-Chair
Larry Richardson, Town of Cohecton rep., Secretary/Treasurer
Bianca Velez, Town of Lumberland rep.
Ginny Dudko, Town of Deerpark rep.
Teresa Spradling, City of Port Jervis rep.
Heather Jacksy, Sullivan County rep.
Josh Felderstein, Town of Tusten rep. (by phone at 7:06 p.m.)
Bill Dudko, Town of Deerpark alt.

Non-voting members:

Nicole Vallance, Callicoon Business Association and Depot Committee
Laurie Ramie, Upper Delaware Council
Ingrid Peterec, National Park Service Upper Delaware Scenic and Recreational River (by phone)
Carmela Hugel, Sullivan Renaissance (by phone)

Guests:

Christine Colley, NYS DOT Scenic Byways Program Coordinator (by phone at 7:19 p.m.)
John Erik Karkula, Callicoon Business Association and Depot Committee (by phone at 7:45 p.m.)

Call to Order: Chairperson Pizzolato called the meeting held at the Upper Delaware Council office in Narrowsburg to order at 7:03 p.m.

Business Items:

a.) **Approval of August 24, 2020 Meeting Minutes:**

On a **motion** by Richardson, seconded by G. Dudko, last month's minutes were approved, with Jacksy abstaining due to her absence from the meeting.

b.) **Correspondence Report:**

Ramie handed out a report of outgoing and incoming correspondence, a list of informational requests through the website and hotline, memberships and book sales, and voting membership status since the last meeting. The 3-page written report is available upon request. She noted that this time of the year brings many fall foliage status requests on the hotline. She refers callers to the iloveny.com website for its Fall Foliage Report which is updated every Wednesday to show the percentage of color changes in the various regions of New York State.

c.) **Treasurer's Financial Report:**

Richardson reviewed his written report. The current balance is \$54,299.12. This includes the \$1,128 payment to Sullivan Catskills Visitors Association for the quarter-page ad in the 2021 Travel Guide as recommended by the Marketing Committee. Richardson said that another invoice from Phone.com was received for \$.17. He tried to pay that last month via the UDSB debit card they have on file. When the second invoice was received, he called to find out why, discovering that the company's system won't process a charge for less than 50 cents. Richardson agreed to deduct a payment for that amount and the UDSB account will be credited for the balance. Otherwise, the bill would keep coming until it equaled or exceeded 50 cents. Richardson continued that this is the time of the year when UDSB, Inc. typically makes its annual donation to the Upper Delaware Council for its organizational support and use of this

facility for meetings. On a **motion** by Richardson, seconded by Dudko, the committee approved a \$1,200 donation to the UDC, with all in favor. Dudko said that she could present the check to UDC Chairperson Larry Richardson at the Council's Oct. 1st monthly meeting.

d.) UDSB, Inc. Seat on the Callicoon Depot, Inc. Non-profit Board:

Pizzolato explained that the byway has been offered a seat or two on the non-profit board that is being organized for the Callicoon Depot project. He has been attending their last several Zoom meetings. UDSB, Inc. and the Depot Committee have been harmoniously developing the concept for the visitor center at the Depot site. Other organizations involved in the overall project will be invited to join too. He asked Vallance to offer a summary. Vallance said the non-profit will be organized as a 501(c)(3) under the IRS Tax Code, unlike the Callicoon Business Association (CBA) which is a 501(c)(6). It will be opened up to recognize new partnerships and be representative of all stakeholders. The goal is for the Depot to be self-managing eventually. Vallance noted that many of their current volunteers wear different hats. They include Callicoon residents DeCristofaro, Ramie, and Freda Eisenberg who are with both of these groups, while Ramie also represents the Upper Delaware Council and Eisenberg represents Sullivan County. Ramie has volunteered to be secretary of Callicoon Depot, Inc. Pizzolato said that UDSB is unique and lucky to have three people associated with UDSB participating in the project now but we must look toward the future when new people are involved. There needs to be a real focus on funding for the Depot so it's not a hand-to-mouth organization that will require our members to take turns sitting in the visitor center to keep it running once it opens. Vallance noted that the CBA must remain involved until the three large grants from DASNY for the capital construction work, the USDA for equipment and furnishings, and the Sullivan Renaissance Silver Feather Award for project expenses are spent down since those funds are coming through that group or the Town of Delaware. The CBA and UDSB have a Memorandum of Agreement in place now. CBA expects to have the property lease signed by the railroad soon. They are currently answering questions raised by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency on the Environmental Assessment that Tectonic Engineering prepared under its contract with Sullivan County. The questions were relatively minor. A second visit by a geologist is being arranged to provide some of that requested information. Central New York Railroad wants environmental remediation recommendations back from the EPA before they sign the lease. These will be recommendations and not requirements, intended to set a baseline of existing conditions at the site. Vallance said to apply for the non-profit organization, a 7-person interim board is envisioned which will include a president, vice-president, secretary, treasurer, and three at-large members. Elections can take place after it is launched. The vice-presidency has been offered to Pizzolato. She presumes that currently active members of the Depot Committee, including Kate Hawk who is the presumptive incoming CBA president after Vallance and Depot Committee Co-Chair John Erik Karkula, will want to continue their involvement. Pizzolato said that he made the recommendation to invite someone from the Sullivan County Clerk's Office to participate. He foresees that the visitor center would be a location to sell licenses for hunting and fishing, and that involvement would make it part of the county's infrastructure. Jacksy asked whether there will be any representative from the Town of Delaware on the board. Vallance said that can be explored. Pizzolato agreed that a town official should be included. It furthers that connectivity for this project that will include the visitor center, an event/exhibit space, We-Work area, public restrooms, and an office for UDSB. He asked if anyone else from the UDSB Committee is interested in a board seat. Velez said that she would love to contribute in some way. DeCristofaro said that she doesn't consider herself part of the Depot Committee and primarily listens during the meetings as a UDSB representative, speaking up sometimes but not voting. When asked if she would like to be an official member, she said not really. She asked Vallance whether this non-profit board will replace the current group that meets. Vallance said yes but it's expected that many of the same people will want to remain involved. She will be the president. Karkula's role is being figured out. Pizzolato said it would be great to see new positions created out of this board, whether it's an executive director, project manager, construction coordinator, or whatever title. There becomes a point where people need to be compensated for these roles. Vallance said she always felt that a staff position needs to be created to make this sustainable and the operating budget does include

that. She said she has shepherded this through the CBA for the last three years, largely becoming CBA president to help assure its success, and the goal now is just trying to get it built. In order to incorporate, certain roles need to be filled for the application. She said maybe we need to raise it to a 9-person board. She reviewed that the officers could be herself as president, Pizzolato as vice-president, Ramie as secretary, and said there hasn't been a lot of interest in the treasurer position. Pizzolato said he could do that by setting up a QuickBooks account and didn't consider that intimidating. Vallance said it wouldn't be a lot of work since the funds for those grants have to be administered through the CBA or the town. Velez asked how the group meets. Vallance said it's on the 1st and 3rd Mondays at 7 p.m. by Zoom. The next meeting is Oct. 5. Velez said the treasurer's role sounds doable if that help is needed. Pizzolato suggested that she take these offers to the Depot Committee then report back on their final decision for the number and composition of board members. Richardson recommended keeping the board on the small side now then allowing for its expansion through the bylaws. Vallance acknowledged that Depot Committee Co-chair Karkula joined the call then at 7:45. Richardson continued that he feels that the UDSB chairperson or his/her designee should be the representative on the Callicoon Depot, Inc. board. In other words, we are not designating the role to a municipal member; it's to a particular person.

e.) Grants: Vista Enhancement; Butterfly Promotion; Business & Non-profit Signs:

Ramie noted that John Erik Karkula had submitted a Promoting Butterfly Habitat grant that she had forwarded to the group earlier. Pizzolato asked him to give an overview. Karkula reported that the Trust for Public Land is having a "River Harvest" public outreach event on Oct. 10 at the property they are proposing in Callicoon for a new riverside park. He is assisting as the event coordinator. There will be a series of mini-classes and local food purveyors there from 10-3. To encourage care of the natural environment, they would like to provide two presentations on the importance of creating butterfly habitats. They plan to give away 1-2 native perennial pollinator plants sourced from Hickory Grove Nursery in Callicoon. He said that UDSB, Inc. is welcome to have a table at the event to promote the Callicoon Depot Visitor Center and show their support for the Riverside Park. The application includes a list of plants that are being offered at wholesale rates for \$990, which is the amount of the grant requested for this overall \$2,140 project. Richardson commented that this is a good project in the vein of what we approved in Hancock this year. He suggested providing the list of plants to the National Park Service to make sure these natives are appropriate. Pizzolato said the goal is to assure there are no invasive species involved. Peterec suggested forwarding the list to Jessica Newbern at the NPS Resource Management Office. Karkula said that was fine while adding that he had reached out to Sullivan Renaissance already and there were no issues raised. Dudko said we should be clear in any grant award that we are not funding the food and entertainment components of this project to be fair to our guidelines. Karkula said none of this money would go to anything except the plants itemized on the invoice. Pizzolato said he could pass along contacts for foragers who may be able to offer demonstration programs for the event, which Karkula said he would welcome as he exited the call. On a **motion** by Spradling, seconded by DeCristofaro, UDSB, Inc. approved the Trust for Public Land's application for a Promoting Butterflies on the Byway Grant in the amount of \$990, with all in favor. Asked if there were any other grant applications this month, Ramie said the only other business was the completion report submitted by the Hancock Community Education Foundation. Its Executive Director Linda O'Brien had sent along an additional group of photos from their kid-friendly butterfly stations project that Ramie will forward.

f.) Other Business Items: Pizzolato said he wanted to revisit the Highland River Access project, which remains stymied due to the need for \$5,000 to complete the engineering drawings before the improvements that have been funded through a \$250,000 Delaware River Watershed Conservation Fund grant administered by the National Fish and Wildlife Foundation can be implemented. The overall project's \$567,156.36 budget includes matches or in-kind services anticipated from the Town of Highland, Sullivan County, Sullivan Renaissance, NYS Department of Transportation, NYS DEC, Department of State, and the National Park Service, according to a handout provided by Jacksy. She said that Molly Oliver from the Friends of the Upper Delaware River, Inc. had alerted her to a grant

opportunity through the O'Connor Foundation which offers up to \$5,000 but has a 50% match. She is looking into whether that requirement could be waived. Jacksy will be requesting a contribution at the Highland Town Board meeting on Thursday. She is trying to line up other options and asked whether UDSB, Inc. could approve \$2,500 for that O'Connor Foundation match. Pizzolato said he realizes this falls outside the UDSB's existing grant programs but when he was discussing this with the Sullivan County Legislature chairperson, Rob Doherty suggested that since Sullivan County had provided UDSB, Inc. with an extra \$5,000 it did not expect to receive during this year of financial crisis for the county, it would be appropriate for UDSB to consider funding this. Pizzolato said that the Greater Barryville Chamber of Commerce is willing to provide a nominal amount, \$500, to be a partner as well. He feels that this is an appropriate UDSB project to partner on also since this access on Rt. 97 is very visible to the traveling public and this support will resonate with our river valley communities. Jacksy said it's not always clear that this is an actual river access since it's just a bare pull-off with no organized space or amenities. It is owned by the Department of Transportation and located between Barryville and Cedar Rapids. B. Dudko said Sullivan County used to store their sand pile there which Pizzolato said was unsightly. Jacksy said if she could secure these final drawings this fall, everything will be in place to start construction in the spring. Pizzolato said once it's in play, the in-kind matches can begin. Jacksy said that is true with the exception of the National Park Service's anticipated \$25,000 contribution since this federal grant doesn't allow for matching federal funds. Jacksy reiterated that she will ask the Town of Highland this week if they can provide the funding or match. Pizzolato asked if the committee would be open to earmarking \$2,000 to supplement \$500 from the GBCC's Beautification Fund. B. Dudko asked if this would set a precedent for UDSB, Inc. since it's out of the norm. Richardson said UDSB, Inc. did not budget for this. Jacksy asked whether budget modifications are possible. Richardson said we may not get any money from Sullivan County next year and need to be careful. Pizzolato said this does extend beyond our normal grants but pointed out that we had hit a pause on our marketing campaign due to COVID-19 shutdowns and that we have \$1,000 left in our Vista Enhancements Grants budget. He would like to see UDSB, Inc. be a catalyst to get this project started. The Sullivan County Legislature gave us special consideration this year when other groups had their funding pulled. They don't want us to hoard that money. Velez said creating a more attractive resource for the byway is part of marketing. We are getting ready for future seasons, and making this public facility better and more organized will help with that. Jacksy said there are landscaping, signage, invasive plant removal, and butterfly habitat promotion elements to this project. Pizzolato said this would also show the Town of Highland that they are valuable members of this organization to justify our request for reciprocal support. Jacksy said the O'Connor Foundation grant was due on Oct. 1 but she has received an extension until Oct. 5 to file it. She said it's possible this UDSB funding won't be needed but she doesn't know right now. On a **motion** by Velez, seconded by DeCristofaro, a vote was approved to contribute up to \$2,000 toward a match for the O'Connor Foundation grant if needed and the Town of Highland does not contribute, with Richardson and G. Dudko opposed, and Jacksy abstaining. On a **motion** by Spradling, seconded by Velez, a vote was approved stating that the \$2,000 maximum will be funded by reallocating \$1,000 from the 2020 Vista Enhancement grant program and \$1,000 from the 2020 Marketing budget lines, with Richardson and G. Dudko opposed, and Jacksy abstaining. Richardson said if this is not important to the town, it shouldn't be to us either and funding engineering plans is not a UDSB responsibility. Jacksy said the town is behind this project but they didn't have the funds to offer. Pizzolato said clearly, an improved access is a benefit to them. Jacksy said that this is at a point where \$5,000 is needed to leverage a half-million project.

Public Comment: None

Discussion Items:

- a) **Marketing Committee Updates** – Regarding the update of the UDSB website, Pizzolato reported that they are working with a photographer, Mariah Wolfe, who was referred by Noah

Kalina to photograph approximately 120 businesses and attractions along the byway route including the historical downtowns in Port Jervis, Barryville, Narrowsburg, Callicoon, and Hancock, scenic pull-offs, river accesses, and tourism-oriented businesses to populate the Eat, Stay, Play, Shop listings. She will charge \$720 for this service at \$30/hour for her road trip and submit the photos to website developer Steve Franzken as per his specifications. No attractions or businesses in non-participating towns will be included. The funds are coming out of the Marketing budget. Since the window of opportunity to promote fall foliage through the Escape Brooklyn promotion was missed, that frees up some funds. Ramie noted that Pizzolato is handling a request from the national photo editor for Time Out Media who requested high-resolution UDSB images for a branded content piece with the NY Lottery featuring seven NY road trips and activities to do this fall.

- b) **National Scenic Byway Foundation's Byway Leader Training Lessons** – Dudko thanked the committee for supporting the costs for Eisenberg, Pizzolato and her to participate in this training which involved 9 hours over 6 days and included homework assignments. The main points she took from it were about: balancing protection with promoting; finding out that the three of them chose different answers when asked what they value most about the byway; visitors today want experiences and not just scenery; think about coming up with itineraries for what people can do for stay, eat and play or themes we suggest for one or more days; making decisions on how far you want the byway to extend; getting historic postcards so we can show what the views used to be from the road; we should all take road trips on our byway occasionally to reinforce what we have; and we should update our municipalities regularly on UDSB activities. Pizzolato said the other participants were very impressed by the UDSB Vista Enhancement grants since vegetation is such a problem. They stressed that Corridor Management Plans need to be about something and not just a huge book. Dudko said the plan shouldn't sit on a shelf and ours is almost 20 years old. Jacksy commented that the UDSB Enhancement Concept was developed for the purpose of nominating Rt. 97 to the NYS Scenic Byways System, which obviously it accomplished in 2002. Pizzolato said this was a good, dynamic group. Some of the time was spent promoting membership on the National Scenic Byway Foundation, which he said we could consider joining. Richardson said he does present a monthly report about UDSB to his town board. He suggested that the three participants in the training compile their notes into a written document that we can enter into the minutes.

- c) **UDC River Traffic Public Safety Task Force Update** – Ramie reported that the UDC's Water Use/Resource Management Committee held a preliminary task force meeting on Aug. 18 and decided to pursue two objectives to address issues with the Hawk's Nest in the Town of Deerpark and overflow parking at the NYS DEC Mongaup Access in the Town of Lumberland. A site visit at vacant property located across Rt. 97 from the Mongaup Access and owned by Eagle Creek Renewable Energy took place on Sept. 3 as arranged by Sullivan County Legislator and former Lumberland Town Supervisor Nadia Rajsz. It involved the NYS DOT, town officials, National Park Service, and UDC, who opted to contact Eagle Creek and see if that company would be amenable to developing the former Tri-State Diesel site for parking due which had become habituated, though illegal there and along the Rt. 97 shoulders, during the dramatic increase in the access site's use this season. Ultimately, it was determined that a more viable option is to work with the NYS DEC to explore opportunities to expand parking capacity on its lands, which the agency has agreed to do, particularly since people with equipment crossing the state highway would continue to be hazardous. The task force is aware that UDSB has been working with the Deerpark Police and town to address congestion there.

- d) **Other** – None

Follow-up Actions and Committee Reports:

- a) **NYS Department of Transportation Region 9 Report** – Kris Gilbert provided a written report and added notes answering questions from the last meeting. Regarding the Callicoon Bridge sidewalk location, a final decision has not yet been made on which side of the bridge it will be placed. Any group, municipality or individual is welcome to submit formal comments about preferences to the DOT referencing the job number (PIN 980417). All comments will be considered as the design process continues. Regarding the request to lower speeds seasonally near the Mongaup Access and Indian Head sites, please send this request in writing to Tony Signorelli, the Region 9 Traffic and Safety Engineer. His unit can initiate a traffic study to formally assess the situation. He is interested in specific information about when the locations of concern are busiest so that the traffic conditions can be assessed during that time. He noted that this year the DOT deployed mobile electronic signs to these areas to alert drivers to the extra traffic at these locations, and that this could be done again, when needed. Gilbert also reported that the Spotted Lanternfly invasive insect has been detected in Port Jervis near the I-84 corridor. State agencies are encouraging the public to be aware of and report this pest. There is a link to a Spotted Lanternfly Reporting Tool on the website for agriculture.ny.gov.
- b) **Hawk's Nest Repairs, Graffiti Removal, Filming Activity** – The NYS DOT Region 8 advised Ramie that they would begin repairing the stone walls at the scenic overlooks immediately as of Sept. 16 and anticipate completing that work within three weeks. Additionally, they will be installing several 18 x 12-foot signs mounted to the stone walls that read "15 Minute Parking" to address safety concerns caused by loitering. The Town of Deerpark requested the signs to assist with their enforcement actions. Ramie noted that Deerpark Police Chief Richard Szyndor sent news that a film project for a Lincoln car commercial was permitted on Sept. 24 at the Hawk's Nest. He provided copies of the Operations and Safety Plan from the production company and DOT permits with insurance certificates. B. Dudko stated that they use the Sparrowbush Fire Department to stage equipment and he believes that graffiti removal had occurred prior to the filming. Ramie referenced a Sept. 21 letter in the packets from NYS DOT Region 8 Director Lance MacMillan to Pizzolato acknowledging the UDSB correspondence regarding the condition of the pull-off areas and stone walls at the Hawk's Nest. He stated, in part, "We have a plan in place to address the graffiti and repair the damaged wall sections along this stretch of Route 97. We anticipate the repairs will be completed by the end of the current construction season."
- c) **Callicoon Train Depot and Visitor Center Project Update** – To supplement prior discussion, Vallance said that NYS Senator Jen Metzger's office had checked in with her about the project and assured her that the NYS grant was secure. Vallance said she will be sure to provide regular progress updates to the senator's office since Metzger's predecessor John Bonacic had secured that \$250,000 for the visitor center construction. She also mentioned the Callicoon Parking Study for which the Creighton Manning firm has been hired and that construction drawings for the Depot have been completed by Uli Wagner. Ramie will forward copies of the Scope of Work for the parking study and the drawings that Karkula had sent to their attention.
- d) **The Kate Project Vista Enhancement Progress** – Debra Conway submitted a written report: "The Delaware Company is happy to report it has received an additional \$20,000 funding for viewshed/riverbank clearing. That means, coupled with the generous grant of \$10,000 from the UDSB, we are now able to selectively clear the entire ½-mile section between the terminus of the NPS Towpath Hiking Trail (below the Roebling Aqueduct) and the Barbara Yeaman Eagle Observation Blind! We and the (lowest-bidding) contractor have submitted the application to NYS DOT for a work permit, and it has cleared the local (Monticello) office and been sent to the Regional office in Binghamton for final approval. They requested – and received that day – a minor tweak, which was about 10 days ago. So, we are anticipating the work permit any day,

enabling the work to commence post haste, and hopefully be far along by next month's meeting. We also received a very generous separate donation to be used specifically for the educational/interpretive signage we envision going there, and for the excavation/transportation cost of moving a snubbing post (or two) to that location should we be the lucky recipients of a donated snubbing post (or two) that we are also currently pursuing. Once the Phase I work has begun, we will get some nice Fall foliage photos and make an official announcement about The Kate Project (overall) and the donors and grantors who have made possible this first part of the initiative. Stay tuned. This dream is coming true!"

- e) **Anti-Littering Community Signage Update**– Pizzolato said he will send around locations for these signs when they are confirmed, which involves attaching the anti-littering logos to the existing byway route markers. He needs to pursue permission for the signs in the DOT Region 8 area.
- f) **9/2 Letter to the Editor** – A copy was provided of the UDSB chairperson's Letter to the Editor of the Sullivan County Democrat correcting errors made in Paula Campbell's Aug. 18 "Highland" column regarding the UDSB and The Kate Project. The letter was published by the newspaper on Sept. 22. Pizzolato said that the columnist had obtained some incorrect information from Wikipedia after she wasn't able to connect with Debra Conway to confirm facts.
- g) **Other** – 1) Jacksy shared copies of a Sullivan O&W Rail Trail Map brochure. This was an effort to connect the existing segments of the O&W trail led by Sullivan County to link businesses and amenities in nine hamlets and two villages. Jacksy said that it includes a spur from Monticello to Port Jervis. 2) Richardson displayed and praised a column by Sullivan County Historian John Conway that appeared in the latest *Sullivan County Democrat* which discusses the Upper Delaware Scenic Byway and other roads.

Next Meeting Date: 4th Monday, October 26, 2020 at 211 Bridge St., Narrowsburg.

Adjourn: On a motion by G. Dudko, seconded by DeCristofaro, the September 28, 2020 UDSB meeting adjourned at 9:07 p.m.

Minutes prepared by Laurie Ramie, 10/3/20