

Upper Delaware Scenic Byway, Inc.

August 24, 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 Cochecton rep., Secretary/Treasurer
Bianca Velez, Town of Lumberland rep.
Josh Felderstein, Town of Tusten rep.
Ginny Dudko, Town of Deerpark rep.
Teresa Spradling, City of Port Jervis rep.
Jeff Skelding, incoming Village of Hancock rep. (attended presentation)
Freda Eisenberg, Sullivan County alternate
Bill Dudko, Town of Deerpark alt.

Non-voting members:

Ingrid Peterec, National Park Service Upper Delaware Scenic and Recreational River (via phone)
Kris Gilbert, NYS Department of Transportation (via phone)
Carmela Hugel, Sullivan Renaissance (via phone)
Laurie Ramie, Upper Delaware Council

Guests:

Christine Colley, NYS DOT Scenic Byways Program Coordinator (via phone)
Steve Schwartz, presenter
Laurie Stuart, River Reporter
Janet Strain (attended presentation)
Larry Fuchsman (attended presentation)
Leona Dean (attended presentation)
John Erik Karkula, Callicoon Business Association and Depot Committee (joined by phone at 8:23 p.m.)

Call to Order: Chairperson Pizzolato called the meeting held at the Upper Delaware Council office in Narrowsburg to order at 7:02 p.m.

Presentation: “Knotweed: A Tough Love: Managing Knotweed for Containment; Benefiting from Knotweed’s Gifts”: Jeff Skelding introduced himself as the executive director of Friends of the Upper Delaware River, Inc., (FUDR) the non-profit organization based in Hancock which successfully applied for and received a grant through the federal 2019 Delaware River Watershed Conservation Fund for a project to address the Japanese Knotweed proliferation in the river valley. Steve Schwartz is the project leader. They hope to put a substantive effort into tackling this scary invasive plant species. He introduced Schwartz to deliver a PowerPoint presentation. The slides will be shared with the committee and are available upon request to provide detailed information.

Schwartz said that, to date, the extent and impacts of Japanese Knotweed have not been quantified. Part of this project will involve conducting that research. Two years ago, we had a particularly wet summer and Japanese Knotweed (JK) exploded. The more you look, the more you see people trying to do something about it. In Japan where it originated, it’s under control from natural predators. JK has some interesting benefits too, which is the reason he is calling it “a tough love”.

There are three species of knotweed: Japanese (8-10 feet high); Giant (which can be 13-16 feet high; patches of it are locally evident on the county road from Rt. 97 leading to the Cochecton Firehouse); and Bohemian (a hybrid). Which ones are prevalent where? Part of this study will look into the distribution of

those various species. JK is pernicious and pervasive. It spreads through seeds and rhizomes. It loves disturbed soils. It crowds out all the native riparian vegetation and inhibits growth. It's bad for water quality and sediment transport. It leaves no roots to hold soil in place. This study will examine all of those impacts.

Information gained from aerial photography flights will be translated into Geographic Information Systems-based maps to show distribution. A fifth such flight is scheduled this Wednesday. The flights have occurred at different times to show it at different growth stages. Shippensburg University will develop an algorithm to create the maps. They are using visible light and infrared cameras. The Stroud Water Research Center will do soil analyses to answer questions such as how deep are the roots.

Schwartz said the goal is not to eradicate JK. He hopes this study's findings will offer methods to contain, control, and foster succession, meaning what else could be planted or seeded to take its place? Containment is feasible with repeated attention each year. They will develop three test plots at Skinners Falls, the Deposit Village Park, and the Hancock Firemen's Field to try out six management techniques, including maintaining one control plot: 1) repeated mechanical cutting; 2) covering with geotextile membrane; 3) herbicide foliar application; 4) herbicide injection; 5) foraging (goats or sheep); and 6) burning (difficult due to water content).

At the same time we talk about JK being problematic, we have also learned that people who raise honeybees love it. It provides pollen and nectar for two weeks per year on which the bees thrive. JK also provides nesting habitat for Red Winged Blackbirds and cover for deer and other mammals. Its young shoots are deliciously edible. It is similar to rhubarb and plenty of recipes abound. The rhizomes provide a good source of resveratrol to use for medicinal purposes such as treating Lyme disease and other illnesses. It even seems to provide fiber for use in flatware and other products.

Schwartz recounted while showing a photo taken from the river that last weekend, they were doing a distribution survey and came across a property which the landowner had bought about a year ago that included a robust stand of JK. He went at it with a weedwhacker to shape hedges and mazes out of it. Schwartz suggested that perhaps a contest could be sponsored to judge the most creative way of dealing with Japanese Knotweed.

In answers to questions, Schwartz said that the USDA has been researching a biocontrol method which is a type of wasp to see if it would establish here in the U.S. Their concern is whether it would destroy any commercial crops inadvertently. The herbicides to be utilized in the test plots have been well-designed to avoid harming any soil or water, though Schwartz emphasized that he is not advocating for that or any particular treatment method. The Skinners Falls test site will be located within 30 feet of the river, for example.

Schwartz said their objective is really to try to get people to do something about JK. Scientists have suggested that the Delaware River has the largest biomass of Japanese Knotweed they have seen, but most of us remember a time when there was none or very little of it here.

Pizzolato thanked Schwartz and Skelding for such a compelling presentation. He said that UDSB, Inc. has been hesitant to give out its Scenic Vista Enhancement grants to properties that have a lot of Japanese Knotweed since there is no universally acceptable way to treat it, which means it could pop right back up again despite the investment. Skelding said that this project hopes to develop some preliminary information but there will be a need for more work, which costs money. He pledged to keep the UDSB Committee informed since he was recently appointed to represent the Village of Hancock on the board. Pizzolato speculated that JK could have its own section under the new UDSB website's Homegrown tab,

where we could mention the edible and medicinal benefits. A whole local industry could evolve around that with its own festival.

Business Items:

a.) Approval of July 27, 2020 Meeting Minutes:

On a **motion** by G. Dudko, seconded by DeCristofaro, last month's minutes were approved, with Richardson abstaining due to his absence from the meeting held at Catskill Provisions in Callicoon.

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. 1) She pointed out that Heather Jacksy had inquired about the status of the ESRI Story Map app for the NYS Scenic Byways System that DOT had commissioned and for which she on behalf of the UDSB and the Delaware Highlands Conservancy had contributed Upper Delaware text and photos. Christine Colley had responded on 8/4, "Unfortunately, the project was put on hold back in March when state workers were told to work remotely. As far as I know the state has stopped working with the ESRI consultant until further notice. I am sorry to have to report the bad news. We are optimistic that this project will pick back up once the quarantine restrictions are over. NYS DOT offices are still at 25% staffing." 2) An updated voting membership directory was handed out which adds Jeff Skelding's contact information as the new Village of Hancock UDSB representative. Ramie sent a Membership Update Form to Village Mayor Carol Ann McGrath to request its return for the organization's records.

c.) Treasurer's Financial Report:

Richardson reviewed his written report. The current balance is \$56,627.45. This includes a \$285 payment to cover the registration fees of three members in the National Scenic Byway Foundation's Byway Leader Training program, a \$.17 invoice from Phone.com for the UDSB toll-free hotline, and the deposit of a \$25,000 check received from Sullivan County for its 2020 contribution. Pizzolato said that UDSB, Inc. is very grateful for this support which was based on the original UDSB request of \$30,000, a preliminary cut to \$20,000, then the final allocation of \$25,000. Since the Sullivan County Legislature has suspended its Discretionary Contract Program for non-profits next year, this funding may have to be stretched. The county's Aug. 17 news release announcing "Discretionary Funding on Hold for 2021" was included in the packets. Applications would normally be solicited now for next year's budget.

d.) UDSB Ad Renewal in 2021 Sullivan Catskills Travel Guide:

Ramie referred to the handout from the Sullivan Catskills Visitors Association offering a 20% discount to advertise in the 2021 travel guide for placements paid in full by Sept. 25. They will print 100,000 copies. A list was provided of where the guides will be distributed. The UDSB currently has a ¼ page ad. The discounted cost to renew that would be \$1,128 vs. \$1,410. Digital ads on the Sullivan Catskills website and weekly e-news features are also offered. Pizzolato said he would like the Marketing Committee to discuss this. Dudko said that Sullivan County is giving funds to promote the byway so we should use some of it for that purpose. Pizzolato said he agrees; it's just a matter of how much to budget for this promotion. Richardson noted that this group doesn't meet again before the deadline. He made a **motion**, seconded by Dudko, to give authority to the Marketing Committee to make a determination about this advertising offer, with all in favor.

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

Ramie reported that no applications were received this month. Pizzolato said he would like to send a letter to each municipality describing what grant programs the UDSB organization offers, particularly the butterfly habitat promotion and signage since the vista enhancements funding has been largely allocated for this year. We would like all of our communities to be represented in these programs. Spradling said

this would help show the value of the organization. DeCristofaro said she is concerned that we may need our available funds for some other big projects such as the visitor center now that funding is becoming a challenge. Richardson suggested keeping the letter to one page for better readability and so towns can post it easily. Pizzolato said that we still have underutilized funds in those two grant programs. Eisenberg said that Sullivan County no longer has funding available for community signage currently. Pizzolato said that he recently met with Sullivan County Legislature Chair Rob Doherty and County Attorney Mike McGuire to discuss how the county has a new voucher system pending among other issues.

f.) **Other Business Items:** None

Public Comment: None

Discussion Items:

- a) **Grant Support Letter for Town of Delaware & Fremont River Trail Plan Application** – A sample support letter requested by the Town of Delaware was handed out. The project is to develop a river trail plan extending work done in the Town of Hancock downstream through the Towns of Fremont and Delaware. The UDSB letter would be submitted in support of a Technical Assistance Grant (TAG) application due to the Upper Delaware Council by Aug. 28. Pizzolato said this is tricky since the Town of Fremont has chosen not to be involved in this organization and hasn't supported UDSB, Inc. at large. One benefit of membership is advocacy. Eisenberg noted, however, that the UDSB's mission is to promote and enhance this highway corridor and this project dovetails with that. Pizzolato said maybe actions like this could entice the Town of Fremont to join us. We could certainly mention in the letter that Fremont is not a member but this is in support of a grander vision for the byway. Richardson said he can't go along with it for that reason of feeling that the organization's advocacy should be reserved for its members. On a **motion** by Eisenberg, seconded by Spradling, a support letter for the Town of Delaware's TAG application to be provided by the Aug. 28 deadline was approved, with Richardson opposed and Dudko abstaining.
- b) **Hawk's Nest Graffiti Removal Request and Law Enforcement Assistance Options** – A draft letter prepared by Ramie to NYS Department of Transportation Region 8 Regional Director Lance MacMillan regarding Graffiti Removal at Hawk's Nest, NYS Route 97, Town of Deerpark, which requests assigning the DOT's contract crew to remove the spray painting that has marred the stone walls and scenic overlooks, was reviewed. On a **motion** by Richardson, seconded by DeCristofaro, the letter was unanimously approved to be sent under Chairperson Pizzolato's signature. Pizzolato said that he had attended an Aug. 18 forum hosted by the Upper Delaware Council's Water Use/Resource Management Committee to discuss public safety issues associated with significantly increased river valley visitation, including parking over-runs and trash buildup. Deerpark Police Chief Richard Sztynдор was present and spoke about the town's implementation of 15-minute parking limits at the Hawk's Nest scenic overlooks as one way to potentially curb the congregating and graffiti vandalism. B. Dudko said maybe the DOT can leave the rumble strips in place that have been installed because of bridge construction to help slow people down in that area. Pizzolato suggested that the subcommittee of G. and B. Dudko, Velez, and himself get together after Labor Day weekend to discuss further ideas in order to see how the measures taken by the police and the town are working for the rest of the summer. The meeting packet included a copy of the Aug. 7 thank you letter that UDSB, Inc. sent to Chief Sztynдор for attending the July 27 UDSB meeting in Callicoon to discuss law enforcement issues at the Hawk's Nest.
- c) **2002 Enhancement Concept Plan Update** – Pizzolato suggested deferring this item until after the Byway Leader Training so participants can find out how other byways are approaching

updates of older corridor management plans. Ramie noted that NYS Scenic Byways Coordinator Christine Colley has graciously offered her assistance to work with the group on this project. Ramie had previously circulated Colley's emailed suggestions that include FHWA and NYS guidance and resources that can be used.

- d) **Eldred Preserve Wastewater Treatment Plant** – Pizzolato said that, absent receiving any further communications from Delaware Riverkeeper Network Director Maya von Rossum on this subject, there is no action to be taken. The Riverkeeper's legal filing to compel a public hearing over the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation's approval of a Halfway Brook wastewater discharge permit for the new Eldred Preserve development was denied.
- e) **Other** – None

Follow-up Actions and Committee Reports:

- a) **Callicoon Depot and Visitor Center Project Update** – Eisenberg said she had spoken with Project Manager Nicole Vallance, who said the Callicoon Depot Committee is still waiting for Central New York Railroad to sign the lease and for the Environmental Protection Agency to review the Phase I Environmental Assessment that was done for the site. B. Dudko said he has come across some old images of the train depot that are very interesting. Postcards are available on eBay. Eisenberg said that the Depot Committee has invited Sullivan County Historian John Conway to give an overview of the Callicoon Depot and learn more about the importance of the railroad to the river valley through a Zoom meeting on Aug. 31, at 7 p.m. Pizzolato thanked Ramie for providing a project history for newer UDSB members on how the UDSB visitor center project had evolved over the years. He said that he has had conversations with Vallance about the organizational structure to manage the Depot. This is a big undertaking and we need to pool our resources. We don't want the onus to be placed on volunteers to run it. We all must assure that it receives proper funding to be operational. He was pleased to learn that the Callicoon Business Association (CBA) and the Depot Committee is organizing the structure of the non-profit entity to include representation from the UDSB. Pizzolato said that the county is in full support of this project also. Hopefully funding can be secured to create a position to hire someone ultimately to manage this. Besides the UDSB visitor center and small office, there are plans for a We Work-type shared space to generate revenue and a small museum/exhibit space. At that 8:23 p.m. time of the meeting, Construction Coordinator John Erik Karkula joined the meeting by phone. Asked if he had any report to give, Karkula said that CBA has approved proposals based on the recommendations of the Depot Committee from a civil engineering firm to develop plans to level the property, build a retaining wall, and organize parking spots among other tasks, and has hired an architect to do preliminary design drawings ahead of construction. This is in the interest of preparing for work to begin as soon as site control is gained via the lease.
- b) **The Kate Project Progress by The Delaware Company** – Pizzolato said that Debra Conway is working to advance the UDSB Vista Enhancement Grant-funded portion of this work and to gather additional resources to fully fund the project. He said it was unfortunate that the Highland columnist who writes for the *Sullivan County Democrat* had taken liberties in attaching that project more to the UDSB rather than The Delaware Company, and she also got a lot of details wrong in describing the byway structure in general. He, Ramie, and Conway will work on a Letter to the Editor correcting the factual errors.
- c) **NYS Department of Transportation Report** – UDSB Liaison Kris Gilbert reviewed her written report which was included in the packets. The Rt. 97 guiderail work currently underway in the Towns of Delaware and Cohecton is anticipated to be completed in October. The sections in Fremont and Delaware that require slope stabilization work are anticipated for late 2021, early

2022. In the Town of Tusten where trees were removed north of Grassy Swamp Road to around Lackawaxen Road in Spring 2019, that project remains a candidate for long-term restoration work in late 2021, early 2022. That would include removal of invasive species, and encouraging the growth of rhododendrons, mountain laurel, and lowbrush blueberries. A Harsh Winter Paving project in Delaware County from John Deck Road to Lordville Road is due to begin later this year. There are no specific updates on rehabilitation work planned for the Cochection and Callicoon Bridges. Eisenberg asked whether there was any consideration of switching the sidewalk on the Callicoon-Damascus Bridge to the north side, which was raised at a DOT public hearing on the rehabilitation. Gilbert said she will find that out specifically. DeCristofaro offered kudos to DOT for the amazing work they are doing between Big Island Road and the hospital in Callicoon to correct the guiderails, which she had been fearful of driving that section due to their disrepair and eroding pavement. She said she is a “very happy resident” that DOT has that under control. G. Dudko reiterated the UDC’s interest in dealing with the heavy traffic at river accesses that has been experienced this summer during the pandemic. She asked whether DOT can think about adjusting speed zones seasonally in those problem areas of Rt. 97. Gilbert said she knows that NYS DOT Sullivan County Resident Engineer Ed Mall attended that Aug. 18 meeting. He has made the Traffic and Safety Group well aware of this request. Lowering speed limits requires a very involved analysis. Ramie noted that Sullivan County Legislator and Upper Delaware Council Town of Lumberland Representative Nadia Rajsz has arranged for Mall and members of the Traffic and Safety Group to do a walkthrough of the vacant corner property across from the NYS DEC Mongaup Access on Sept. 3 at 9 a.m. to discuss potential options for overflow parking.

- d) **UDSB Website Development Status and ADA Compliance Quote** – Pizzolato projected the home page and other tabs of the developing new website while explaining its categories and navigation. The tabs include: Home; About & History; Visitor’s Center; Experiences (on which he noted a title misspelling); Health & Wellness; Homegrown; Shop; Directions & Transportation; Support Us; Bookstore; and Membership. The photos on the site are by professional photographer and UDSB Town of Lumberland Alternate Noah Kalina. The block formats will be mobile-friendly if scrolling through the site on a hand-held device. Pizzolato said he will send out a link of this draft site to people to review on their own. He also asked everyone to look at the current content of www.upperdelawarescenicbyway.org to offer their opinions on what aspects to retain. Richardson said the Town of Cochection had asked him whether the new website will be ADA-compliant. Pizzolato said that Steve Franzken from Mid-Hudson Web actually had provided him with a proposal to add that on to his contract for \$300, representing his estimate of 10 hours at \$30/hour. On a **motion** by Richardson, seconded by Dudko, the committee unanimously approved the \$300 quote from Mid-Hudson Web to assure ADA-compliance of the new website. Dudko commented that if we’re introducing a whole new website, we should make sure to do it right. Pizzolato said that the Visitor’s Services tab is more than the Callicoon Depot project; it refers to businesses and amenities that would be valuable for tourists or residents bringing company to this region. B. Dudko asked if there will be any ads on the website? Richardson said this organization originally intended to generate some revenue through promotion on its website. DeCristofaro said the problem in the past has been, who is going to solicit and manage these ads? That’s a big job. Pizzolato said one idea would be to hire a photographer to be responsible for taking fresh photos of the businesses for the listings that the website offers under Shop. Then that person could sell those images back to the business to be incentivized. He suggests being inclusive of all businesses that cater to visitors rather than excluding those who don’t take ads. Eisenberg said she agrees that this website should be a big resource for everybody, not just members. Perhaps the members could be spotlighted though. Richardson said we talked about differentiating various business levels, such as bronze to platinum. If businesses pay something for this extra promotion they’ll receive, they could get

something extra like a blurb or featured placement. Velez said in general reaction to the website, let's think about who we want to attract here and make the information and photos as accessible as possible. Spradling asked what would the difference be between collecting money to advertise on the website or collecting money to have a business become a UDSB member? Pizzolato said that when UDSB does its Escape Brooklyn campaign that the board agreed to in its 2020 marketing strategy, we will ask then for advertising sponsors. Businesses that participate in that should see a boost in their social media followings. We can formalize that incentive package when that time comes.

- e) **Anti-Littering Community Signage Update**– Pizzolato reported that Paul Hahn at NYS DOT told him that the Greater Barryville Chamber of Commerce must renew their highway work permits then could take the lead on this project. The new signage will add a circular logo stating “Please Keep [insert community name] Beautiful & Clean; No Littering” to the existing posts underneath the UDSB logo highway signs. The holes are there; we would just need the hardware. Pizzolato asked the municipal members that will have these signs sponsored to identify the most appropriate, existing route marker locations to attach these anti-littering logos.
- f) **UDSB Trademark Registration Status** – In referencing the U.S. Patent and Trademark Office certified copy handout of the UDSB logo trademark, Ramie noted that she had contacted that office to see if the registration was current and whether any action is required on the organization's part. She learned that the Oct. 31, 2017 original registration remains in effect for six years and that a “courtesy email” will be sent to the info@upperdelaware scenicbyway.org email address they have on file when its renewal comes due in 2023. It appears that the fee would be \$225. Any notices from companies offering to renew it for set fees are scams. That office does not send its materials by mail.
- g) **Byway Leader Training by National Scenic Byway Foundation** – G. Dudko, Eisenberg, and Pizzolato will participate in the six-session training program that will run for 90 minutes each on 9/15, 16, 17, 22, 23, and 24, and report back to the committee.

Next Meeting Date: 4th Monday, September 28, 2020 at 211 Bridge St., Narrowsburg.

Adjourn: On a **motion** by Eisenberg, seconded by Spradling, the August 24, 2020 UDSB meeting adjourned at 9:04 p.m.

Minutes prepared by Laurie Ramie, 8/30/20