

Upper Delaware Scenic Byway, Inc.

December 7, 2020 Zoom Meeting Minutes

Attendance:

Voting members:

John Pizzolato, Town of Highland representative, Chairperson
Rosie DeCristofaro, Town of Delaware rep., Vice-Chair
Larry Richardson, Town of Cochection 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.
Heather Jacksy, Sullivan County rep.
Freda Eisenberg, Sullivan County alternate
Bill Dudko, Town of Deerpark alt.
Debra Conway, Town of Highland co-alt.

Non-voting members:

Kris Gilbert, NYS DOT Region 9
Ingrid Peterec, National Park Service Upper Delaware Scenic and Recreational River
Amanda Subjin, Delaware Highlands Conservancy
Carmela Hugel, Sullivan Renaissance
Nicole Vallance, Callicoon Business Association
Laurie Ramie, Upper Delaware Council

Guests:

Valerie Senese, Hancock Partners, Inc.
Christine Colley, NYS DOT Scenic Byways Program Coordinator
John Erik Karkula, Callicoon Depot Inc.

Call to Order: Chairperson Pizzolato called the virtual meeting held by Zoom to order at 7:02 p.m.

Business Items:

a.) **Approval of October 26, 2020 Meeting Minutes:**

On a **motion** by Felderstein, seconded by G. Dudko, last month's minutes were approved.

b.) **Secretary's Correspondence Report:**

Ramie handed out a written 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. Ramie displayed the framed certificate that she prepared for Gray Ghost Guides & Flies as the newest Bronze Business Member of UDSB. It awaits presentation to owner Jim Serio, potentially by the Village of Hancock UDSB representative. Other action items or handouts included the UDSB response to Matt Steele on his Hawk's Nest complaints and suggestions, notice of the Sullivan Catskills Visitors Association's annual meeting on 12/16 at 6 p.m. which will be a video presentation on SCVA's YouTube page, and a copy of the Letter to the Editor that appeared in the 12/4 Sullivan County Democrat from Francis O'Shea of The Trust for Public Land acknowledging the UDSB's Butterfly Grant contribution to the River Harvest event at Callicoon Riverside Park. There were three brochure requests and one Hawk's Nest book order from a Woodhaven, NY resident through the UDSB website. Ramie noted that she contacted Cochection Town Supervisor Gary Maas on 11/13 to ask for the town board's consideration of naming an alternate representative to this Committee due to Jerry Yavarkovsky's 10/29 death, which she said may await the board's reorganizational meeting in January.

c.) Treasurer's Financial Report:

Richardson reviewed his written report. The current balance is \$50,397.12. Deductions were for clerk services, website photography, brochure distribution contract renewal, and post office box rental. There was one PayPal deposit of \$12.50 for the Hawk's Nest book purchase. He noted an outstanding reimbursement to Ramie of \$3.42 for the purchase of frames. On a **motion** by DeCristofaro, seconded by Dudko, the Treasurer's Report was approved. On a **motion** by Pizzolato, seconded by Spradling, the committee agreed to pay Ramie the regular monthly clerk's fee for November and December to recognize the ongoing workload despite opting to combine the two meetings to this 12/7 date, with all in favor.

d.) Grant Applications:

Ramie reported that one new application was received for the Vista Enhancement program on 12/7 from DeCristofaro. It stated, "Town of Delaware would like to refresh the work done in 2012 at Route 97 and Starcks Lane between mileposts 1396 and 1398, south of the Callicoon Viaduct. We would appreciate UDSB vista clearing funds to pay for this project in the amount of \$2,000 plus \$100 for insurance certificates." Attached was a quote from Mootz Tree Trimming LLC of Callicoon dated 12/3 for \$2,000 and a copy of a Certificate of Liability Insurance, a Certificate of Workers' Compensation Insurance, and four site photos. DeCristofaro said there are only two spots in the Town of Delaware eligible to improve the vistas. Since this work was initiated eight years ago, there is less to do now. It's a matter of keeping the trees trimmed and maintained. This is the view as you drive into Callicoon, where you see the river and hamlet on your left, she explained. Pizzolato said that is a beautiful and important vista. Dudko said she is thrilled to see this application. Her only concern is that the quote doesn't really outline what will be done. She would like to see more of a descriptive work plan. B. Dudko agreed that while he is totally in favor of approving this, the estimate should have more details for documentation, particularly if there was ever any audit. DeCristofaro said this work will remove branches and small vegetative growth to open up the viewshed. This is just trimming, not taking down any trees. She noted that the property owner is no longer alive. Gilbert suggested referencing the mile markers and/or distance for the scope of work in the quote. Pizzolato asked whether anyone feels we need a second estimate? DeCristofaro said that Mootz does excellent work and has a good eye. She noted that the committee had approved another vista clearing project of the view from the Callicoon Viaduct with Mootz several years ago but she has held off on pursuing that while the Central New York Railroad lease with the Callicoon Depot is pending. She agreed that it's no problem to make the quote more descriptive. Pizzolato suggested that the committee could take a vote pending the update of the quote. Richardson pointed out that the board had budgeted \$11,000 for Vista Enhancements and has committed \$10,000 to The Delaware Company's Highland project. He said if this moves forward, \$1,000 should be moved from another budget category. Pizzolato suggested taking it out of the marketing/public relations line since that has a surplus due to the coronavirus shutdown this season. Richardson said that it's true that the largest amount of available funding is in the advertising budget line. He proposed transferring \$1,500 to cover any contingencies. On a **motion** by Richardson, seconded by Dudko, the board agreed to transfer \$1,500 from Advertising to Vista Clearing in the UDSB 2020 Budget, with all in favor. That category will now have a \$12,500 balance. On a **motion** by Richardson, seconded by Velez, the board approved the \$2,100 Vista Enhancement Grant proposal for the Town of Delaware NYS Route 97 work, with DeCristofaro abstaining. Asked by Richardson when Mootz anticipated this work occurring, DeCristofaro replied that Nick Mootz felt he could fit it in this season if the weather holds up; otherwise, it will occur in the spring. DeCristofaro said she will secure the needed permissions. Pizzolato asked her to convey to Mootz the committee's request to define the work more specifically in his final invoice.

e.) Other:

B. Dudko said the website purewow.com recently listed Narrowsburg as #7 on its list of the 16 Most Charming Small Towns in New York State.

Discussion Item: UDSB Enhancement Concept Plan Update Introduction presented by Freda

Eisenberg and Heather Jacksy: Eisenberg said during the National Scenic Byways Foundation leadership training in which she, Pizzolato and Dudko participated, they were told that scenic byway corridor management plans don't need to be overly long, drawn out, and expensive. To approach this topic, she and Jacksy decided to start at this meeting with an overview of the existing Enhancement Concept Plan, which is not that readily available and is nearly 20 years old. The large file is primarily available through links to PDFs on Sullivan County and NYS DOT websites. Eisenberg said that planners like to build on what's there. It was prepared as the nominating document for presentation to the New York State Scenic Byways Program. That was its purpose in 2002; now we are updating this for us. She offered highlights of a Power Point presentation (slides available upon request). Eisenberg said we will need to discuss organizational objectives to tailor the plans to meet those needs. She consulted the NYS Scenic Byways Program website to see examples of corridor management plans. The bulk of tonight's presentation will be reviewing the current plan, which was completed in January 2002 at a cost of \$150,000 with extensive community engagement. It runs for 121 pages plus appendices. The authors were HRG Consultants of Maryland with assistance from planner Tom Shepstone. She noted many people in this meeting participated. DeCristofaro recalled that monthly meetings took place over a couple of years facilitated by the consultants with a larger number of representatives for each of the byway communities. Richardson agreed there were probably 20-30 people at most of the meetings. Eisenberg noted that the plan lists the steering committee members and agencies involved. She said a substantial portion of the cost for the consultants tends to go toward managing meetings.

She reviewed the features of the current plan: Vision, Goals & Objectives; Inventories & Assessments (Assets, Sign Regulations, Tourism Resources & Services); Action Items/Strategies (Transportation, Signs & Roadway Enhancement, Interpretation & Stewardship, Tourism Development/Marketing, Support & Partnerships; Design; and Capital Projects). Eisenberg said many of the recommendations have been absorbed into the DNA of the group, though we don't bring up the plan's contents often. A lot of the intrinsic resources haven't changed, including the assets we have to promote. Pizzolato said he feels that we should salvage the portions of the plan that are applicable and reference what we continue to value as a byway. That can be our working guide. In the training, they learned that this can be a living document. Having a stable plan to reference back to doesn't negate the work that went into developing the content of this plan. Regarding the inventories and assessments that had been conducted, Eisenberg asked whether we are using those in our work, which of those lists are most useful, and which need updating? G. Dudko said UDSB hasn't done a lot of outreach to other groups and probably should. Pizzolato said we are off to a good start by engaging our local business groups and organizations such as the Delaware Highlands Conservancy. Showing a slide of the three-paragraph-long Enhancement Plan Vision, Eisenberg said it focuses on economic development and physical enhancements to the Rt. 97 corridor. It does not address this organization's mission. There is a difference between a vision and a mission. The mission is how we see the organization as a whole and what is needed to get us to that vision. Some of our issues have evolved. G. Dudko said she is struck by how this vision speaks about access to the Upper Delaware River, not just focused on the highway. We have found that need growing. Pizzolato said that we should write that into our plan since he expects we may see more funding sources next year to focus on that river connection.

Eisenberg proceeded to the categories of Transportation Safety; Visual Experience: Signage; Visual Experience: Roadway; Interpretation & Resource Stewardship; Tourism Services & Facilities; Marketing & Promotion; and Management, Outreach and Funding, with a listing of the Enhancement Plan Recommendations and some UDSB Activities & Achievements they researched which aim to meet those recommendations. She said some of the recommendations have been satisfied, while we may question whether to revise some of them or renew focus on different issues. Are there capital projects we want to pursue for physical improvements? The plan encourages improvements to local sign regulations and design reviews. UDSB now offers a Signage Grants program and is ready to install anti-litter signage.

Route marker signs with a UDSB logo were installed in 2004. The Roadway Visual Experience speaks about vegetation management, beautification, guide rails, and installing a milepost marker system. UDSB has ongoing landscape enhancement and vista clearing efforts, butterfly habitat grants, and has done litter cleanup campaigns. The plan recommends developing Byway Themes and Interpretation Plans, along with educational materials and programs to promote resource protection and value, creating alliances amongst historic and cultural organizations, determining carrying capacity of sites to prevent overuse, promoting scenic easements and historic property/district designations, enhancing access and site design around the Erie Railroad turntable, and supporting retention of bluestone resources and industry. Eisenberg said the question here is, what stories do we want to tell? Examples accomplished include the Flyway on the Byway theme, interpretive signage projects, the Callicoon historic district, planner Ed McMahon's community design public programs, and canal interpretation through The Kate Project. Tourism Services recommends establishing a network of visitor information sources and facilities. This has been met by the UDSB travelogue brochure done in 2006, the website and toll-free hotline launched in 2007, the visitor center project underway in Callicoon, a GIS map and placemats created in 2009, participation in the National Geographic geotourism project since 2015, the pollinator garden at the Barbara Yeaman Eagle Observatory, support of the Hancock Town Square programming and Barryville Butterfly Bike Ride, and the Highland canal-side trail. The Marketing recommendations suggested setting parameters for businesses to be considered on the byway, surveying businesses regarding their promotion needs, conducting a marketing study, reinforcing the byway identity through signage and materials, and considering memberships and sponsorships. Activities done include a 2003 tourism business conference, the 1010 WINS radio advertising program launched in 2007, promotions through the county tourism agencies, the USA Today scenic drive poll, the 2014 Tourism Visitation Study by consultant Peter Fairweather, and the establishment of a marketing committee to overhaul the website and engage businesses. Eisenberg said an outstanding issue under Management, Outreach and Funding is to seek inclusion of the Towns of Fremont and Hancock as a Phase II designation. Engaging the support of legislative officials, and seeking support through federal, state, and local grant opportunities were also recommended. UDSB, Inc. has raised nearly \$750,000 in grants and member contributions to date.

In terms of why to update the plan, Eisenberg said the byway document would guide organizational goals and actions, unify partners and inform about the plans and work of the byway, support fundraising efforts, help ensure limited resources are allocated effectively, and sustain and enhance organizational momentum by demonstrating progress against established objectives. She outlined as sample plan components:

- I. Introduction - A. Designation Summary; B. Byway Route Map
- II. Byway Strategic Plan - A. Vision, Mission and Beliefs, B. Accomplishments since last CMP; C. Goals, Objectives and Action Plans
- III. Byway Organization – A. Structure and Organization; B. Committees, Representatives, Partners, Stakeholders; C. Contact information
- IV. Byway Corridor Conditions – A. Road Conditions and Signage; B. Primary and Secondary Intrinsic Quality/Resources; C. Changes in Intrinsic Quality/Resources since last CMP; D. Accessibility to Intrinsic Quality/Resources
- V. Visitor Experience – A. Interpretation since Designation; B. Byway Story; C. Future Interpretation; D. Plans for Improving Visitor Experience; E. Preservation
- VI. Marketing and Promotion – A. Current and Future Planned Marketing Activities; B. Recommended Products or Attachments for Media and Public Relations
- VII. Public Participation – A. Ongoing Communication & Cooperation with Community Partners; B. Public Meetings and Public Participation Opportunities; C. Steps Taken to Update Byway Mission and Vision; D. Narrative on Critical Issues and How They Will be Addressed

Eisenberg said it won't be easy to update the 2002 plan since we are working from PDF scans, without having the original files on hand. One approach could be to switch to an action plan format. As a next step, Eisenberg and Jacksy suggest drafting a survey for UDSB members to consider an organizational

mission statement and action plan. Then we can regroup to follow up on the results, identify our 2021 priorities, and assign lead responsibilities. Pizzolato said we will dedicate a portion of the next meeting on Jan. 25 to this. He asked everyone to speak about what is most important about the byway to them and what they would like to see actioned upon? Eisenberg said that is also the type of feedback that could be solicited through the survey. Pizzolato called on participants in order of how their Zoom boxes appeared.

Conway said she was impressed by all that Eisenberg covered. She believes we need to create more knowledge and enthusiasm for UDSB among our communities. How do we sell this better? The vision says it's about economic development but that isn't coming through for its value. Jacksy said she was impressed to discover how much has been accomplished since the recommendations of the original plan. Hugel likes the action plan approach and agrees 100% about the need for further education about UDSB. Spradling said it was a great overview. She pointed out that Port Jervis is not on the river, while Pizzolato said the city does offer an important business hub for the byway. She feels that targeting improvement of roadside pull-offs is important. They need a lot of work and also more trash receptacles. DeCristofaro praised the great presentation and action plan idea. One entity that was missing from this discussion was capitalizing on the National Park Service as a partner. The ridge-to-ridge concept for the Upper Delaware has played in our favor. Callicoon is developing a great visitor center and we need other types of projects like that along the byway. From time to time, we have referred to the original plan but we need a shorter, finer-tuned document. That could be critical for future funding. Subjin said she is excited to participate on the committee. Economic development and education go hand-in-hand with supporting natural resources and conservation. It's about why we are here, not just what we do. Felderstein said we need to work better on overlapping events to encourage visitors to partake of multiple activities in our towns. We need more education around the byway and awareness of grants. Richardson said all the prior comments are good suggestions. The original plan still has a lot of valid information. He would like to see it kept as a foundation and built upon that. We focus a lot on promoting to visitors but we exist because of local support. Don't lose sight of that. Cochection doesn't have many businesses along the byway and there hasn't been enthusiastic support exhibited by town leaders. Richardson worked hard to develop a DOT lease to improve a pull-off on Rt. 97 but that never happened. The UDSB interpretive sign at that location was vandalized, repaired, stolen, then they lost the will to replace it again. The real challenge here is conveying the worth and value in being part of the byway. Eisenberg said it's easy to sell the byway on an economic development argument but if a town doesn't have a lot of businesses, they have to base it on something else. Pizzolato agreed we need to strategize further over how to enhance our relationships in our communities. He said everyone must be empowered to approach their communities, gather their needs, and ask how we can help. Something as simple as funding an anti-littering sign can help show this organization's investment and commitment.

Senese said she was participating as a guest who started in August as the economic development director for Hancock Partners, Inc. She sees UDSB as a major asset but in terms of marketing, she couldn't find any short videos that promote it. That leaves the image of the byway up to interpretation. She immediately noticed the emphasis on safety for different forms of transportation, including bicycles and motorcycles. In the Town of Hancock, she is aware there is a misunderstanding about the byway designation's impact on the bluestone business. She has read through the Enhancement Concept and sees that it actually supports bluestone industry. Gilbert said that NYS DOT consults the Enhancement Concept regularly when doing work on Rt. 97. It captures the byway communities' values and concerns, and what matters to the touring public. They review the maps of important features and scenic views identified in the plan. She asked whether the mapping needs to be updated? Pizzolato said UDSB and its partners would like to streamline its working relationships with the DOT. Velez thanked Eisenberg for a great overview. She wondered also how to make the mission of the UDSB tangible to residents and tourists. It's about unification of experience and how the byway is rooted in the community. She feels the new website will be helpful to increase awareness and inclusivity. Pizzolato agreed that we have to focus on what's unique to this region and not available in the rest of the world. That's our scenery and

resources, and this area's status as an environmental refuge. Velez agreed that it's important to tap into the history of the byway and its towns, along with the emotion and sentiment that evokes. G. Dudko thanked Eisenberg for the wonderful presentation. This past summer showed a huge increase in the use of the Upper Delaware's resources. We can't ignore that was by local residents too. We should develop tours to capitalize on the historic attractions along the byway like Minisink Battleground and Fort Delaware. The byway can extend off Rt. 97. We need to do a better job engaging partners. She foresees holding a series of town meetings in which we can talk to our boards and residents. As so many said, she doesn't want to lose the original plan as a foundation document but the goal is to make it easier to use and more action-oriented.

Colley said the discussion had been very interesting. She is excited that UDSB is moving forward with an update. Byways are required to have corridor management plans (CMPs). She is perplexed by the name, "An Enhancement Concept". CMPs are required to have certain elements. There is a guidebook on the NYS DOT website for creating CMPs that is relevant for updating them too: "Building Your Byway from the Ground Up". She will send the link. Three other byways in NYS are in the process of updating their plans. They're all making adjustments to their existing CMPs for the most part. Talking about the original contents and what has or hasn't been accomplished is relevant. In fact, if UDSB went for national scenic byway designation, that would be a requirement. Including a signage plan is one requirement. DOT consults that inventory to make determinations, such as whether off-premises advertising signs are grandfathered in since no new ones are allowed. Colley said the action plan format is a good idea. She asked whether there is already one built in or is this an addendum? Pizzolato replied that they understood from the training that this could be a living action plan. He agrees there is a lack of consistent signage enforcement along the byway; we want to go through the proper channels to enforce signage ordinances. The goal here is to hold true to the original document but make it more accessible in telling what we're about by communicating better and raising interest in participating. Peterec said that the National Park Service faces the same issues of branding and raising awareness of how we are cohesive and connected. She realizes that it's difficult as a committee to come up with a great plan when there is one person representing each municipality. She encouraged UDSB to think about finding grants to support hiring a staff person to handle projects. Pizzolato said all these ideas and concepts have been ruminating for a long time. He thanked Eisenberg for such a dynamic presentation.

Follow-up Actions and Committee Reports:

- a) **NYS DOT Region 9 Report; Spotted Lanternfly 12/4 Webinar** – A written report from Gilbert on DOT projects along Rt. 97 was included in the meeting handouts. Pizzolato asked Colley for a summary of the 12/4 Spotted Lanternfly webinar that she had organized for NYS Scenic Byway Organizations. Colley said she was disappointed in the turnout but the excellent presentation by staff from the NYS Agriculture & Markets agency was recorded and has been circulated. It focused on the harms that this invasive insect causes to agriculture and tourism, especially vineyards. There are state grants offered to seek partners for detection, control and eradication of this species. Byways could become involved in that effort. NYS offers "scraper" cards with Spotted Lanternfly information on them. They are also a way to remove egg masses if spotted. Pizzolato said that UDSB can post a link to the webinar on the website after it launches. Invasive species are definitely a concern of ours. Colley said there was a recent SLF siting in Port Jervis which indicates they are moving north.

- b) **Callicoon Depot and Visitor Center Update** – Vallance reported that the Callicoon Business Association received a letter from Sullivan County approving a \$50,000 bridge loan with 0% interest based on the request for \$100,000, which will be a great help for paying contractors. A new Memorandum of Understanding has been drafted between the CBA and the Callicoon Depot, Inc. (CDI), which is currently pursuing 501(c)3 status through an application submitted by Kate Hawk to transition from being a committee under the CBA. CDI's sole purpose will be to manage

the project, and develop and operate the facility as a community asset. The CBA will retain responsibility for certain grants awarded under its umbrella. A copy of the first CDI Board of Director meeting minutes from 11/30 to adopt Articles of Incorporation and Bylaws, and the submission of those foundation documents to the Department of State, was included in the packet.

- c) **The Kate Project Vista Enhancement** – Conway referenced a copy of a news release included in the handouts, “The Delaware Company Launches Phase I of The Kate Project”. This same information is posted on numerous Facebook pages, including UDSB’s. Thiele Landscaping has been actively cutting trees and brush over the last few days along the half-mile path in the Town of Highland between the end of the NPS Towpath Trail and the parking lot of the Barbara Yeaman Eagle Observation Blind river access. They expect to finish by Christmas. The publicity cites the Vista Enhancement grant from the UDSB as well as the generosity of the Tianaderrah Foundation as responsible this first phase selective viewshed clearing work along the Delaware & Hudson Canal. Conway asked what documentation will be necessary to request payment from UDSB. Richardson said to submit a report with a reasonable amount of detail, then he can send a check after the board reviews and approves it. Conway said she believes they will be able in the spring to kick off the 2nd phase of the project to install benches, interpretive signage, and snubbing posts, for which they are seeking a blanket DOT application rather than individual permits.
- d) **Solar-Powered, Self-Compacting Garbage Bins Research** – Pizzolato thanked Subjin and the Delaware Highlands Conservancy for offering to help research the incinerators that are available through Waste Management Inc. but he hasn’t been able to get past the national sales office to investigate it further. DHC will pursue it through the Beach Lake, PA facility.
- e) **New Website Launch** – Pizzolato asked the Marketing Committee to meet within the next two weeks to review the draft website for which he said Steve Franzken is doing a great job developing and the photos from Moriah Wolfe are gorgeous.
- f) **Catskill Mountainkeeper Social Media Engagement** – Pizzolato asked Ramie to circulate a social media post from Catskill Mountainkeeper, “No Fracked Gas on the Delaware”, which asks people to sign a petition and/or post Instagram messages to express opposition to the Delaware River Basin Commission over the Fortress Energy Port Terminal Liquified Natural Gas (LNG) exportation proposal in Chester, PA, for their individual consideration.
- g) **Publicity: 2020 Grants; Benefit Books; Next Topics** – Ramie referenced copies of two news releases in the packets that she issued on 12/5: “Upper Delaware Scenic Byway Bestows 2020 Grants” and “Local History Books Benefit Upper Delaware Scenic Byway”. She noted that the 2020 grants list did not anticipate the new Vistas Enhancement grant that was approved tonight but she would publicize that when the project is completed. The history books were presented as holiday gift ideas. They may be ordered through the UDSB website store. She maintains the inventory of books at the UDC office. The next publicity topic will likely tout the new website.
- h) **Other** – Richardson suggested that UDSB, Inc. seek a quantity of the Spotted Lanternfly scraper cards that Colley mentioned, particularly to give to highway departments to raise their awareness of looking for egg masses that often are laid on flat, rusted surfaces. Colley said they come in boxes of 400 and she would be happy to send them to Ramie via the UDC office. Eisenberg offered to distribute them as well to various county offices and Cooperative Extension.

Next Meeting Date: 4th Monday, January 25, 2021

Adjourn: On a **motion** by Pizzolato, seconded by G. Dudko, the December 7, 2020 UDSB meeting adjourned at 9:20 p.m.

Minutes prepared by Laurie Ramie, 12/14/20