

D&H Transportation Heritage Council

October 23, 2024 Quarterly Meeting Minutes

Held at Sullivan County's D&H Canal Interpretive Center in Summitville

Participants:

President Bill Merchant, D&H Canal Historical Society and Museum, High Falls
Vice-President Cliff Robinson, Jr., Neversink Feeder & Canal Conservancy
Secretary Laurie Ramie, Upper Delaware Council
Treasurer Donna Durland, Mamakating Historical Society
Brian Scardefield, Sullivan County Commissioner of Parks, Recreation & Beautification
Sean Moore, Sullivan County Delaware & Hudson Canal Interpretive Center, Summitville
Kerron Barnes, Town of Mamakating
Virdanna Lawrence, Town of Mamakating and Village of Wurtsboro Historian
Sally Talaga, Wayne County Historical Society, D&H Canal Park at Lock 31
Jasmine Leung, National Park Service Upper Delaware Scenic & Recreational River
Norma Schadt, Town of Deerpark Historian
Bill Dudko, Town of Deerpark 1863 Schoolhouse Museum
Kenny Christianson, Lackawaxen River Conservancy and Rowland Cooperative
Bill Bollinger, Bollinger & Rutter Video Services
Jon Rubin, individual member
Christopher Pryslopski, Hudson River Valley Institute at Marist College

Call to Order: President Merchant called the business meeting held at the D&H Canal Interpretive Center on Bova Road in Summitville to order at 1:27 p.m. following an optional morning trail walk led by Site Manager Sean Moore and a lunch gathering at Danny's Restaurant in Wurtsboro.

Acceptance of July 24, 2024 DHTHC Minutes: On a **motion** by Talaga, seconded by Durland, the 7/24/24 minutes were approved, with all in favor.

Treasurer's Report: Durland provided a written financial report with an end balance of \$1,665.18 as of Oct. 23, and a list of the 21 organizational and individual paid members.

Screening of Chapter 5: The Delaware & Hudson Canal and Gravity Railroad: Its History and Legacy: The premiere viewing of Bill Bollinger's latest video focusing on the Spring Glen to High Falls canal section took place. All were asked to watch and provide any notes for final editing. Positive feedback ensued over the quality of the storytelling, images, and audio. It was suggested to delete the word "Its" ahead of Gravity Railroad in the main title, add a credit to Canadian Pacific Railroad for the historic maps shown, add a copyright at the end, and to check on whether a speaker at the end of the Ellenville section said the year 1801 vs. 1901. The video previews that there is one final Chapter 6 pending in the historic DVD series. Bollinger has been filming for that segment simultaneously. Talaga reported on the inventory of DVDs that remain in the possession of the Wayne County Historical Society on this group's behalf: Chapter 1 – 0 copies; Chapter 2 – 4; Chapter 3 – 3; and Chapter 4 – 13. Merchant said he feels it's still worthwhile to make DVDs because they are selling. We have typically ordered 50 copies at a time. Bollinger noted that his prior supplier for the DVD copies does not have functioning equipment and recommends that we find a new source. Bollinger can provide the master file and artwork for the DVD cover to reproduce. They previously cost about \$4.50 per unit. Merchant asked everyone to advise whether they know of any such vendors who could provide a quote. On a **motion** by Merchant, seconded by Durland, the Council voted in favor of ordering 50 copies of the new Chapter 5 and 25 copies of Chapters 1-4 once a supplier is identified, with all in favor.

2025 DHTHC Bus Tour: After finding that all three of the bus charter companies he contacted were already booked for the 1st weekend of November, Merchant said he's looking at late March or early April 2025 to arrange a DHTHC bus tour that will follow the Spring Glen to High Falls route of the Chapter 5 DVD. He's targeting three potential weekends for flexibility. Recommendations were made to check also with Rolling V Bus Company and West Point Tours. Robinson suggested from his experience building into the itinerary a lunch stop with a limited menu and advance ordering, as well as a restroom break.

Call for D&H Trustees: There was no quorum present for the Sept. 25th D&H Canal Board of Trustees meeting, so no business could be conducted. Merchant said if anyone is interested in stepping forward to serve on this board, the terms are for two years. There are 10 members now. Meetings are currently held four times per year on the 4th Wednesdays in March, June, September, and January, recently moved from the original 2 p.m. to noon. Robinson said he would prefer a 7 p.m. start time for a Zoom meeting on any evening except Wednesday. Merchant said he will conduct a survey to check whether there is a better day and time for trustees to meet.

Open Space Institute's O&W/D&H Trail Initiative Update: The Open Space Institute conducted one round of open houses and a public engagement survey which yielded over 1,100 responses, 95% of which were positive. OSI's O&W Rail Trail Corridor Study seeks to transform the fragmented former O&W Rail Trail and Delaware & Hudson Canal Towpath corridor into a contiguous, 57-mile-long shared use greenway trail stretching from Kingston to Port Jervis. Merchant said in this 2nd round of public comments, they're drilling down on particular sites for trails. Fall open houses took place on Oct. 8 in Ellenville, Oct. 16 in Wurtsboro, and Oct. 23 in Port Jervis. Merchant and Robinson plan to attend the 4-7 p.m. session today at the Port Jervis City Hall and will report back. Barnes said, after this final meeting, they expect to release eight different map sections to review. The plans are quite creative. Merchant said this exciting project is coming at the right time and they have welcomed the D&H Canal advocates to the table. Maybe the DHTHC can offer to fill in any gaps within the trail system if needed. To learn more, visit www.openspaceinstitute.org/O&W.

National Register Revision: Merchant reported that he is waiting for the National Park Service to complete its review of the D&H Canal's National Register of Historic Places listing update documentation that he submitted pre-Thanksgiving 2023. Leung said she will ask NPS Upper Delaware Scenic and Recreational River Cultural Resources Program Manager Alex Garcia-Maldonado if he can assist with tracking this down.

National Historic Trail Designation Update: The ability of U.S. Representative Pat Ryan to pursue this legislative bill will depend on the outcome of his Nov. 5 re-election bid.

D&H 200th Anniversary Events: Robinson said he'd like to work with Orange County Tourism to arrange an event with the Orange County Bank in Goshen to commemorate the Jan. 7, 1825 sale of D&H Canal Company stock at the Tontine Coffee House in New York City. Christianson said he brought the "generic" D&H Canal 200th Anniversary banner today to turn over to Barnes for use at the July 13, 2025 Wurtsboro event. Another banner is hanging on the Lock 31 Canal Park Daniels house in Hawley. Merchant said he has a banner with the new DHTHC logo on it. It would be best to have consistent branding.

Old Business – Merchant said we need to find funding for a new brochure and website. We should start creating the content in the meantime. Barnes suggested that Orange County Tourism may be able to provide brochure funding.

New Business – 1) Talaga is having a problem with the use of metal detectors at the D&H Canal Park at Lock 31. They do have a set of rules posted at the orientation kiosk and on their website. However, signage doesn't specifically say "No Metal Detectors" and more and more people are doing it. She tells people individually not to do it but can't be there patrolling 24/7. What they are mostly picking up on are the natural gas lines running underneath the towpath from White Mills to Hawley. She asked if this is an issue at other sites. Merchant said the use of metal detectors is prohibited on National Historic Landmark sites. Recommendations were made to cite penalties or consequences on signage, and to explain the presence of gas lines. Talaga said other frustrating issues they have are with people bagging chestnuts from their trees and dog walkers not removing their dogs' waste from the property which is owned by the Wayne County Historical Society.

2) Robinson said Orange County Commissioner of Parks, Recreation and Conservation Travis Ewald has invested funding and the services of two employees to clear the trail and maintain the property at the D&H Canal Park in Cuddebackville. It's great they're doing that work, but he remains hopeful that Orange County will agree to fix the Neversink feeder canal and rewater it. The response he gets cites NYS Department of Environmental Conservation regulations, but he doesn't feel that this feeder dam would qualify because it's only 2 feet tall. He would like to see the county apply, even if they're not prepared to act on it yet. He has conveyed that there are organizations here available to help with this. He feels that expressing support through a letter-writing campaign would make a difference to show that people are interested and care. He will compose a draft letter, combined with needs for the OSI trail, to be circulated to the membership for consideration.

3) Members discussed the location for the next Council meeting on April 23, with an offer to host coming from the Mamakating Historical Society. Durland said they can arrange a morning walk across the road from their site.

4) Moore would like to create a repository of D&H Canal information for use by libraries and schools that he'd be happy to facilitate. For the historic DVD series, we would advise not to reproduce or distribute those files. Barnes asked if the videos could be encrypted. Merchant said, as an educational organization, this fits into our mission. It's perfectly acceptable to play the videos at our sites. We just ask that they aren't pirated or profited from by charging a fee, and that DHTHC is credited. His organization has a YouTube channel where they regularly post videos and recorded presentations that are encouraged for public viewing. He expects we will eventually offer the DVDs on our revamped website and could request a donation to watch them online. A watermark could be put on them so that they aren't downloaded and disseminated.

Announcements of Member Accomplishments, Concerns, and Upcoming Events:

Jasmine Leung – The National Park Service will be repairing the sidewalks on both the NY and PA sides of the Roebling Bridge in the summer of 2025. Access will be restricted to one parking lot then the other as the work progresses. The 2025 Zane Grey Festival has been scheduled for July 12.

Norma Schadt – The Town of Deerpark received a \$3,000 grant from the Upper Delaware Council to update its 2011 brochure, "A Map of the Town of Deerpark: Gateway to the Upper Delaware National Scenic and Recreational River" which will include its historic and natural points of interest.

Sean Moore – Sullivan County will be doing a feasibility study on the restoration of the historic house next door to the D&H Canal Interpretive Center building. They are looking into having history discussion groups and rotating displays around Sullivan County. He is setting up a lecture schedule with speakers including Sullivan County Historian John Conway, Merchant, and

Robinson for next summer. Moore also offered to show anyone interested the location of a 70-foot-tall waterfall located 3.8 miles from this site after the meeting.

Kenny Christianson – The Lackawaxen River Conservancy continues to work on a National Wild and Scenic Rivers designation bid for the Lackawaxen River. The Rowland Cooperative Market will be closed on Tuesdays and Wednesdays.

Kerron Barnes – They have a robust Canal Bicentennial Planning Committee working on the Wurtsboro festivities for July 13, 2025. Circulated in advance was a list summarizing the proposed activities that include a procession of dignitaries and celebrants, a groundbreaking reenactment at the site of the original property in coordination with owners Emily Lapisardi and Cody Knotts as the host couple, living history presentations and displays, a musical ensemble, and a period costume ball. Barnes also prepared a handout on “Trail-Related Activities and Projects of Area Organizations” dated Oct. 16 which provides a list of entities working in multiple counties and trail projects that are in the pipeline for Ulster, Orange, and Sullivan Counties. He further noted that the county is working on a number of improvements including a rail-trail expansion with a ramp which is not open to the public yet, but he hopes will be by the 200th anniversary event. He said at this Summitville site, there is a foundation of a building for which they were able to track down its ancestry through research. Lastly, the county has a list of all 44 trailheads in the Town of Mamakating now to which 911 addresses and GPS locations will be assigned to assist with any emergency rescues and provide useful information for visitors.

Laurie Ramie – Ramie distributed copies of an illustrated article by Sullivan County Historian John Conway headlined “Expanding on the story of the D&H Canal” which appeared in the River Reporter’s Fall 2024 Upper Delaware magazine. It discusses the three-phase project conceived by The Delaware Company Executive Director Debra Conway known as The Kate Project which includes construction of a half-mile extension of towpath along the Delaware River south of Roebling’s Delaware Aqueduct; the creation of seating areas to include stone benches and interpretive signs, a canal snubbing post; and the procurement and placing of a bronze sculpture of a hoggee and mule. The walking path is now visible along NYS Route 97. She also offered copies of the Upper Delaware Council’s Summer 2024 newsletter, “The Upper Delaware”.

Bill Merchant –The D&H Canal Society Museum and Mid-Hudson Regional Visitor Center remains open.

Cliff Robinson, Jr. – He and others were interviewed by The Epoch Times newspaper for an article about improvements at the Orange County D&H Canal Park in Cuddebackville. He’s not sure when that article will be published. Ramie offered to contact the reporter to inquire.

Next Trustees Meeting: The next DHTHC Board of Trustees meeting will be on the 4th Wednesday, **January 22, 2025** at noon (or an alternative date/time to be determined by the survey) at 211 Bridge St., Narrowsburg, NY.

Next Council Meeting: The DHTHC full membership will meet on the 4th Wednesday, **April 23, 2025** at the Mamakating Historical Society located at the Old Summitville Schoolhouse, 136 Summitville Road, Summitville, NY 12781. Itinerary details will be sent out in advance.

Adjourn: The October 23, 2024 DHTHC meeting adjourned at 3:21 p.m. on a **motion** by Merchant, seconded by Barnes.

Minutes submitted by Secretary Laurie Ramie, 11/1/24