

STATE PARK SYSTEM ADVISORY COUNCIL (RSA 216-A:3-k)
February 9, 2009, 9 a.m., NH Charitable Foundation, Concord

Members present:

Richard Ober, NHCF, Chairman
Sen. Bob Odell, Senate, Vice Chairman
Susan Arnold, AMC
Jeffrey Gilbert, Business community
Rep. Susan Kepner, RR&D Committee
Dir. Ted Austin, designee for Comm. Bald
Kathleen Reardon, Citizens Bank
Maggie Stier, NH Preservation Alliance
Rep. Leigh Webb, House

Members absent:

Sen. Margaret Hassan, Senate
Craig Mayo, NH Snowmobile Association
Dick Huot, Tri-County CAP and NH ATV Club
Paul Doscher, SPNHF
Ruth Griffin, General public

Bill Roberts, Friends of Pisgah

Others present:

Benjamin Wilson, Historic Bureau Program Specialist
Grant Goulet, Parks Retail
Amy Bassett, Public Information Officer
Michael Housman, Supervisor of Parks Operations
Liz Durfee Hengen, NH Preservation Alliance
Norma Jo Sorgman, Tom Kokx Associates
Johanna Lyons, Planning and Dev. Specialist
Tom Kokx, Kokx & Associates
Russ Thibeault, Applied Economic Research
Ted Kupper, Provan & Lorber
Jane Carey, Division Administrative Assistant
Paula Tracey, Union Leader

Call to order: The meeting began at 9:05 AM. Chairman Dick Ober asked all attendees to introduce themselves.

The minutes from the meeting held on January 12, 2009 were approved with a motion by Representative Webb and seconded by Susan Arnold with all in agreement.

The minutes from the meeting held on December 8, 2008 were approved with a motion to approve by Representative Webb and seconded by Kathleen Reardon with all in agreement

Director's remarks: Ted Austin had asked the Parks Bureau heads to attend the State Parks System Advisory Council meetings if possible and noted quite a few were in attendance. He advised them that attending would be time well spent. With the SPSAC in conjunction with the audit and strategic plan this is the time to set a definite direction for the state parks. Establish a better baseline and once in place focus more on the business. Parks cannot be all things to all people and we need to zero in on what are best, assets where we are and where we want to be. Looking at the market and the strategic plan we can move ahead with real purpose.

Rep. Susan Kepner asked about general turnover in field staff, keeping staff and if it is related to training or low pay. Mike Housman, Supervisor of Parks Operations spoke of the training being spotty but the return of seasonal field staff in the field is about 75%. Ben Wilson, Bureau of Historic Sites noted that this should be a pivotal year for training field staff with the implementation of the work the Guest Services team has been doing to prepare for the parks season opening this year.

Legislative Update:

Audit – The Commissioner and the Director of Parks, with a few parks representatives went to the RR&D Committee hearing and responded to the 15 observations made by the Audit Team in September 2008. The audit response document was passed out and can be viewed or printed from the State Parks website;

<http://nhstateparks.org/about-us/reports.aspx>

Bills of Interest -

SB 101 – An act relative to the Cannon Mountain ski area. The Chairman will submit to the Senate a request for the Bill to be ITL'd so the SPSAC can complete their recommendations per RSA 216-A: 3-k.

HB 558 – An act establishing procedures for leasing state parks for use by private entities. There will be a hearing on Thursday, February 12, 2009 at 2:30 PM, LOB 305. This might be putting a process in place for more provisions. The Division staff will be there to testify. This might help Division see how to approach public/private partnerships.

SB 107 – An act relative to the leasing of state-owned real estate on public waters – most likely bureau of transit issue.

HB 222 – An act relative to fill and dredge permits in wetlands

HB 246 – An act relative to encouraging discretionary preservation easements for historic structures. RSA 79-E was established to assist communities in their revitalization programs and would be a more appropriate vehicle than the “barn bill.” - Recommended to ITL.

The Council Clerk will relay to the council weekly legislation the State Park System is following.

Division’s Capital Budget Request –

Capitol funding will be requested for construction of a Mittersill Double Chair at Cannon and at Hampton Beach for two bath houses.

For any National stimulus money available for “shovel ready” projects, the requests have been submitted to the Commissioner.

Strategic Plan:

Timeline update process – the Strategic Plan is on track according to the revised timeline approved in January.

Vision (review of final draft) – The elements of the vision are service, management and stewardship. JANE – INSERT FULL TEXT OF VISION HERE

Russ Thibeault, Applied Economic Research working with Tom Kokx associates did a Presentation of Selected Demand Factors of NH Parks. With the demographics of demand usage and optimizing revenues and expenses through the strategic plan will bring all factors to the same spot. He showed the primary market being from NH and MA residents and we are in an area of the country where the population does not have far to go to use the State Parks, Parks as a convenience location rather than a destination. Most growth is shown in the south and seacoast area of the state. Recreation spending in NH is 10 – 15 % above the national average. It is very difficult to figure out the total number of people visiting the parks and that information is important to funding. With changing cultures Parks should be looking at optimizing utility of parks for an aging population and ethnic populations.

Mission and Goals – The draft mission statement was read, the council discussed possible improvement. It has the right concepts, substance and tone but could more precisely capture the stewardship and promotion and wording that will have context to making decisions that will come in the future for the mission of Parks. Susan Arnold agreed to provide specific text suggestions to Director Austin and the planning team.

Stakeholder Sessions :

A Planning team will meet the first week of March, Susan Arnold, Paul Doscher, Jeff Gilbert, Ted Austin, Dick Ober, Tom Kokx and Johanna Lyons to discuss topics, who would be best to invite and design the proposed sessions.

Other Business:

New member: Rep. Chris Ahlgren has been appointed to the Council to replace Rep. Elisabeth Sanders.

Next meetings:

Monday, March 16, 2009, 11 AM at the NH Charitable Foundation, 37 Pleasant St, Concord.

Friday, April 24, 2009, 9 AM

Friday, May 22, 2009, 9 AM

Submitted by Jane Carey.