

STATE PARK SYSTEM ADVISORY COUNCIL (RSA 216-A: 3-k)
APRIL 24, 2009 at the LEGISLATIVE OFFICE BLDG. Room 305 11:30 AM

Members present:

Richard Ober, NHCF, Chairman
Ruth Griffin, General public
Dir. Ted Austin, Director of Parks & Rec.
Rep. Christopher Ahlgren
Susan Arnold, AMC
Jeffrey Gilbert, Business community
Maggie Stier, NH Preservation Alliance
Rep. Susan Kepner
Kathleen Reardon, Citizens Bank
Rep. Leigh Webb, House

Members absent:

Sen. Margaret Hassan, Senate
Sen. Bob Odell, Senate, Vice Chairman
Dick Huot, Tri-Country CAP
Craig Mayo, NH Snowmobile Assn.
Paul Doscher, SPNHF
Bill Roberts, Friends of Pisgah

Others present:

Rep. David Russell
Tom Elliott, Friends of Mt. Sunapee
Johann Lyons, Planning & Dev. Specialist
Tom Kokx, Tom Kokx & Associates
Ted Kupper, Provan & Lorber
Liz Hengen, Strategic Plan Consulting Team
Jane Carey, SPSAC Clerk

Call to order: The meeting began at 11:40 A.M. Chairman, Dick Ober called the meeting to order. Previous to the meeting was a Stakeholder workshop for the State Parks Strategic Plan from 9 AM until 11 PM. Introductions of attendees went around the room. The Minutes of March 16, 2009 meeting were approved unanimously.

Director's Remarks: Ted Austin mentioned that when he thanked the attendees for participating in the workshop they said it was a good use of their time.

On March 31, 2009 there was a meeting of the State Parks Regional Supervisors and year round Managers this was a good informational beginning for the season. Additional meetings will be conducted prior to the parks opening. These meetings will be held in the different regions and include seasonal staff.

The new fee package for the State Parks and Cannon Mountain was approved. Ted felt it was done late in the year because the parks will be opening soon and next year this process will begin in September. This new fee package is structured better to reduce redundancy. It has more efficient price points and offers consistency. The schedule for parks operations, opening and closing dates and hours is in its final stages and is being completed. This information will go out to the State Parks System Advisory Council when completed. It was asked if the Council would be receiving Parks passes as they did last year. Director Austin will look into it.

Stakeholder Workshop Review: Dick asked the Facilitators of the Workshop to report to the Council What they thought was the most striking comment made in each group.

Susan Arnold facilitated Recreation and stated that all the attendees showed a positive interest in how to

Better help the parks. One point made was there was no mention, in the Strategic Plan Draft, of water access and thought that should be included.

Jeff Gilbert facilitated the Public Official group and their comments included that there should be a higher level of understanding with organizations, communities and parks located near them. In regard to funding issues there was discussion of better leveraging of the parks resources.

Paul Doscher facilitated the Stewardship group where their discussion included looking at the future of parks, resources of the parks, partnerships and alternative management approaches. Johanna Lyons reported there was a good discussion about how park lands are acquired.

Tom Kokx attended the Recreation group and reported that financing is large concern. What should be expanded and connectivity between parks could add to the parks experience. There are trails from Bear Brook to Pawtuckaway and to Northwood Meadows. Alternative management was more acceptable to the Recreation group than realized.

Ted Kupper joined the Public Official group and reported that the Strategic Plan needs to be “sold” to the government and the public. There should be communication between the state parks and their surrounding communities on an economic and operational level and both would benefit. An investment is needed to be made in the State Park System. There should be discussion for legislation to have fewer constraints and prioritize funding fairly.

Liz Hengen joined the Stewardship group where there was discussion of Self-Funding being a failed Experience and because of that the parks aren’t thought of as important. Too much alternative management could cause property to lose its identity as a State Park.

Council workshop review discussion:

There was discussion of general funding and self funding and that this is not sufficient. Can rooms and meals tax be tied to parks? Parks should have a benchmark for goals to maintain and sustain. What does it cost to run the parks and staff them properly? Once that is established then measures can be developed to fill in the current gap. What is missing in the plan? Recreation users clearly appreciate the parks. The Trails Bureau could be used as a model of what could be done. It should be looked into that why does a private business succeed and a state run business may not. To not lose a state park identity there should remain the core service a park provides.

The Chairman requested that the Council members submit by 04/30/2009 to the clerk their ideas of principles for approaching any alternative management of state park resources.

The public outreach for the Strategic Plan will take place during the first week in June. Locations will be in Portsmouth, Concord, Peterborough and Lancaster.

Representative David Russell brought to the council’s attention HB 558 that has to do with establishing procedures for the lease of state parks or ski areas to private entities and establishes an enterprise fund for the benefit of municipalities which abut the leased state park or ski area.

The meeting was adjourned at 1:00 P.M.

Next Meeting: Friday, May 29, 2009 9:30 AM

Submitted by Jane Carey