

MOUNT SUNAPEE ADVISORY COMMITTEE (RSA 21-G:11)
JUNE 19, 2018 MINUTES (DRAFT)

A meeting of the Mount Sunapee Advisory Committee (MSAC) was held at the Newbury Town Offices on June 19, 2018, a quorum being present.

In attendance. Members present were Sarah Stewart/Dept Natural and Cultural Resources (DNCR) Commissioner & MSAC Chairman, Melanie Bell/Town of Goshen, Director Philip Bryce/Div Parks and Recreation (DPR), Tim Drew/Dept Environmental Services (DES), June Fichter/Lake Sunapee Protective Association (LSPA), Doug King/Dept of Transportation (DOT), Nancy Marashio/Society for the Protection of NH Forests (SPNHF), Steve Schneider/Upper Valley Lake Sunapee Regional Planning Commission (UVLSRPC), Sabrina Stanwood/Div Forests and Lands (DFL), and Dan Wolf/Town of Newbury.

Also present were members of the public, Jay Gamble/Mount Sunapee Resort (MSR), Patrick Hummel/DPR, and Torene Tango-Lowy/MSAC clerk.

Call to Order. Commissioner Stewart called the meeting to order at 10:05 a.m. She and the members introduced themselves to the audience. Comm. Stewart reviewed the purpose of this meeting; she clarified that a public information session regarding the proposed transfer of the State's lease of the ski area from Triple Peaks, LLC to VR NE Holdings, LLC (Vail Resorts, Inc.) will be held at a later date. The letter to Governor Sununu and the Executive Council regarding the proposed transfer, dated June 15, 2018, was posted on the MSAC webpage and copies were available at the meeting.

Minutes. Ms Marashio moved to approve the May 31, 2017 minutes; Ms Stanwood seconded. Mr Gamble requested a correction: MSR went before the Town of Goshen for its archery course, not Newbury. The minutes were adopted as amended.

Mount Sunapee Resort Annual Operating Plan 2018-2019 (AOP). Mr Gamble gave a brief overview of the AOP, stating that their business is consistent with the lease with alpine skiing as the main focus and offering the Adventure Park and summer events and functions for year-round opportunities for the public. Last summer, 4,000 local kids took part in the Mountain Adventure Camp (AOP, p. 7). There were 186,000 skier visits over 142 days during the 2017-2018 ski season (p. 12). Across NH, skier visits were down due to poor weather conditions during holiday weekends. Snowmaking logged 667 hours; 10% less than during the previous season (p. 15). The three Special Use Permits with DNCR for the use of the Sun Bowl access road, the use of the beach parking lot, and the use of Bowl Road were renewed to 2021 (p. 21). Water withdrawals for snowmaking have remained consistent over the years, averaging 150 million gallons (p. 24). Mr Gamble will provide a revised Section J, to update the reference to the Fish and Game wildlife habitat mapping and to add last year's tip sheet on the greater fringed-gentian (p. 27). A copy of the revisions will be provided to Ms Tango-Lowy for distribution to the MSAC and posting on the MSAC webpage. MSR added 15 HKD Phazer ground guns for snowmaking on trails that were not candidates for tower mounted snow guns (p. 29).

MSR has invested over \$22 million in improvements over the last 20 years. This summer, they are planning an estimated \$550K in maintenance projects to ski trails, chairlifts, and infrastructure, Phase 2 of the Sunapee Lodge roof, replacing snowmaking pipes on the South Peak ski trails, and completing a mountain bike trail (p. 36). Projects listed on p. 37 are not planned for this AOP season. MSR may start the permitting process for the capital improvement projects listed on p. 38, which would enable an early spring start of construction in 2019.

Mr Gamble reported that the Muellers are retiring after 46 years in the ski industry, with 36 years at Okemo and 20 years at Mount Sunapee ski, and with Vail expressing interest in purchasing their ski assets. He offered July 18th as a potential date for the public information session on the sale [*NOTE: this date has since been scheduled for July 25, 2018 at 6 p.m. at Mount Sunapee Resort*]. Mr Gamble said he is willing to assist with the transition at Mount Sunapee Resort.

Hiking Trails. Mr Hummel, DPR Volunteer Coordinator, reported that there are no significant improvements to the Summit Trail planned this year, but that MSR completed the spring cleanup and SKRGC will continue with its routine maintenance of the trail.

Comm. Stewart asked for comments on the AOP from the committee. Ms Stanwood thanked Mr Gamble for working collaboratively with the NHB to delay its mowing of the areas where the greater fringed-gentian are located to after the plants have flowered and set seed in mid- to late October, see NHB Memo dated June 18, 2018. Mr Drew asked about the western cedar shakes being used on Sunapee Lodge; DES had provided MSR with a factsheet. Mr Gamble replied that, last fall, he had consulted with Mr Ed Mussey/DNCR regarding the roofing materials used for high elevation facilities.

Comm. Stewart said she would accept written comments on the AOP through June 24th. She opened the floor to the public for comments on the AOP.

Ms Bushueff asked a few questions from a list she provided the MSAC. Mr Gamble explained that a skier visit is one visit per one person per day, and 20 skier visits per season pass holder, although the ski industry standard calculation is 28 skier visits per pass holder. Using RSID technology, tracking skier visits will now be more accurate. Mr Gamble said that the ski resort that sells the Epic and Multi-mountain pass keeps 100% of the sale. These passes are considered value-add at partner ski areas. Vail's plans regarding such passes are unknown at this time.

Mr Gamble explained that MSR looked into the installation of solar panels, but found it not feasible because for a variety of reasons: size of facility, cost-benefit, required orientation and large footprint of installation, and lack of suitable areas for installation.

Mr Flanders asked about the septic systems and spray fields under the increased summer use. Mr Gamble said there are no plans to expand the lagoons at this time. MSR has submitted its permit renewal to DES, has hired Hoyle Tanner & Assoc. as the consultants for the wastewater facilities, and submits monthly and annual reports to DES. He reported on MSR's water conservation initiatives. Ms Fichter addressed the water quality at the state beach that has tested low for phosphorus, but is occasionally posted closed due to high levels of E. coli and very little water movement. MSR does not use additives in its snowmaking.

Mr Johnson (?) asked about Campground Road. Dir Bryce believes it to be a DOT road, but it is on the division's list of deferred maintenance. Dir Bryce said he would work with DOT to discuss solutions for repairing the road.

Mr Koopman (?) asked how the State has used the lease payments. Dir Bryce said that by statute the payments are allocated to the Cannon Mountain Capital Improvement Fund, which has been very successful in supporting improvements at Cannon. Cannon has put money back into the State Park Fund that supports improvements throughout the parks system. By law, not all state parks must be self-supporting: half do not charge fees, half that charge fees make net income. Increased revenues support park improvements and programs, such as the purchase of volunteer liability insurance for park volunteer organizations.

Ms Bushueff asked about the Special Use Permit for MSR's use of the Campground Road. MSR has contributed to the repair of the road, but Parks needs engineering assistance for its proper repair and drainage. Mr Gamble answered that MSR reimburses Parks for beach use as part of its Play All Day pass. Dir Bryce said Franconia Notch offers similar combo passes for the Tram and Flume Gorge.

Commissioner Stewart thanked the MSAC and public for attending. She welcomes written comments on the AOP by June 24, 2018.

Adjourn. Mr Wolf motioned to adjourn, seconded by Ms Bell. The meeting was adjourned at 10:55 a.m. The next meeting is at the call of the Chair.

Submitted by Torene Tango-Lowy, MSAC clerk.