

Mount Sunapee Master Development Plan Public Hearing
Mount Sunapee Advisory Committee Meeting (*Minutes approved, as amended*)
July 14, 2009 at Mount Sunapee Resort, Mount Sunapee State Park

Committee members present:

DRED Commissioner George Bald, Committee Chairman
Christine Walker, UVLSRPC and Co-host of public hearing
Melanie Bell, Town of Goshen
Nancy Marashio, Society for the Protection of NH Forests
Dan Wolf, Town of Newbury
Ted Austin, Division of Parks and Recreation
Tim Drew, Dept of Environmental Services
Don Kent, Division of Forests and Lands designee

Members absent:

Vacant, c/o Rob Bryant, Lake Sunapee Region Chamber of Commerce
Gordon Marshall, Lake Sunapee Protective Association

Others present: Tim Mueller, Diane Mueller, and Jay Gamble of Mount Sunapee Resort; Torene Tango-Lowy, Committee clerk; and members of the public.

Welcome and Introductions Ms. Walker called the meeting to order at 6:09 p.m. Committee members and Mount Sunapee Resort representatives introduced themselves. Commissioner Bald recognized several legislative members.

Purpose and Process Commissioner Bald provided an overview of the review process for Mount Sunapee Resort Master Development Plan (MDP) and Environmental Management Plan (EMP), 2009-2014. The plan is required by the lease agreement. This joint public hearing is to solicit public comment on the plan. Comr. Bald will accept comments through September 14, 2009. The advisory committee will meet separately to make their recommendation to Comr. Bald, who will then consider all public input and make his decision.

Mount Sunapee Resort Presentation Mr. Gamble provided an overview of the MDP and EMP. Although the lease requires a five-year plan, the Resort presents its long-term vision for the property. All projects listed in the plan span a 10 to 20 year timeframe. Factors driving project implementation and investment include the usable life-cycle of assets, economic and financial considerations, weather, and competition.

Mr. Mueller provided a brief history of Mount Sunapee ski area, and the Resort's objective to stay competitive within the ski industry. The ski area is in close proximity to the large population centers of New England. Mount Sunapee ski area ranks 6th in acreage, 3rd in visitation and ranks high for grooming and snowmaking in Ski Magazine. Mr. Gamble gave an overview of the projects, categorized by those previously approved; proposed, but not approved; and new projects. The West Bowl expansion represents the final build-out for skiing at Mount Sunapee, and is a \$7.5-8 million project. The zip-line proposal is a new project. The Resort looks to remain a viable operation, supporting the region's economy.

Public Comment Commissioner Bald provided the procedures for public comment.

Will Abbott, SPNHF – Long before there was a ski area at Sunapee, the Forest Society bought much of the land and deeded it to the State for a state park; the current lessees are doing a great job managing the ski area lease; Parks holds the property in public trust and is the steward of that trust; it is a breach of public trust to allow public lands to be used as a bridge for private development.

John W. Jones, Sutton – The presentation made at the gym was little more than a promotion for the expansion; he laments the State’s dismal performance at the ski area that has led to the management by a private party; he wonders what will come next for State park lands.

Alan Spottedwolf Champney, United Tribal Nations – It is not noted in the MDP that the land is sacred to the sovereign, native people of the United Tribal Nations (UTN); the United Nations has acknowledged the UTN and federal public law (P.L. 108-374) gives Native Americans the right to plan on gaining its lands back; the UTN will work towards taking back Mount Sunapee, including the sacred West Bowl area; he suggests that the State begin talks with the UTN.

Ed Roberts, Sunapee – He is a member of the Mtn. View Lake Association, as well as many other organizations that are affected by the Resort; Jay has been great to work with on many events, such as the Car Show; the Resort assisted the local community during the ice storm, and provides many donations; the State promotes and assists private industry; the Resort provides employment and contributes to the local economy; the Sunapee region was built on recreation and more year round activity is needed.

Andy Neilson, Sunapee – He has been coming to Sunapee for 20 years; he was skeptical of the expansion, but commends the Muellers and supports it; the Resort provides a great amount to the State and region in exchange.

Tom Kersey, Newport – He is the Executive Director of the New England Handicapped Sports Association (NEHSA); NEHSA has worked with the State since 1972, with Mount Sunapee being a jewel in its ski programs; we are all stewards of the property; he met with the Resort 12 years ago; they have proven to be stewards and have made many improvements to the facilities.

James Freeman, Newport – He is an employee of the Resort, having worked first for the State in 1974; the Resort has been an excellent steward, putting the mountain first.

Norris Learnard, Newport – The West Bowl expansion would provide positive benefits to the economy, especially with the current State budget situation and the recent acquisition of Mittersill at Cannon; the Resort’s lease payments go towards Cannon’s improvements; the Resort pays local taxes and provides needed jobs; the Muellers have earned his respect.

Tom Elliott, Friends of Mount Sunapee – He is opposed to aspects of the MDP; it is inappropriate to include the West Bowl project, as the State is still in litigation; he recommends that the Commissioner reject the MDP and have the Resort resubmit the plan, specific to the current leasehold area; the current MDP is a distraction and a dead proposal; the plan should be rejected and should focus on the issues.

Linda Janicke, Goshen – Asks whether the West Bowl expansion will combine with private land; if so, it will increase property values and taxes, impact aesthetics and the pristine wilderness; the

hiking trails to Pillsbury shouldn't cross with ski trails; the sun will melt the snow on the West Bowl slopes and impact the watershed.

John Trethaway, Grantham – former commissioner of VT economic development; the expansion provides taxes and employment; he worked in the ski industry for 15 years and works part-time at the Learning Center; the Muellers do a fantastic job; employees have a positive attitude; more trails, like what is proposed in the West Bowl, are needed for senior skiers.

Rob Martin, Newport – Based upon real estate development at Okemo, he expects the same to happen at Sunapee; Tim Mueller had said that the Resort cannot development real estate on state property, but would do so in Goshen; this is something Tim has previously said he would not do; the Resort and the State are still in litigation.

Hal Gruger, ? – He used to work at Mount Sunapee; the West Bowl expansion is rightfully requested, as those types of trails are needed; the Resort must compete with the other ski areas; the current terrain is crowded and numbers will decrease; there are positive financial impacts to the region; growth is needed and the public good is for all, in-state and out-of-state visitors.

Helen Charpentier, Sunapee – Just because something has been good, doesn't mean you keep doing it; an example is what has happened with the economy and housing boom; both are at historic declines.

Steve Edes, Lebanon – He has a cottage in Sunapee; his daughter took a UNH class that heard from ski area representatives; the Attitash rep said their proposal would have been different if they knew of the real estate opportunity; the buffer zone was set up for a reason; a new lease should be put out for bid; the court case is costing taxpayers; if housing were developed in Goshen, would the State take the properties back after the lease expires?; the proposed expansion is currently on private property.

Closing Commissioner Bald expressed appreciation for everyone's attendance. He will continue to accept comments through September 14, 2009. The advisory committee will review the MDP and EMP and will meet to provide its recommendation. The Commissioner will then make his decision. He thanked Ms. Walker for her assistance, and the Resort for the venue.

Adjourn Meeting adjourned at 7:25 p.m. The next Mount Sunapee Advisory Committee meeting will be at the call of the Chairman.

Minutes submitted by T. Tango-Lowy.