

Cannon Mountain Advisory Commission Meeting Minutes

Date: February 28, 2025

Time: 10:00 AM

Location: Franconia Notch State Park Headquarters

Attendance

Members present included Monica Mezzapelle, Frank MacConnell, Susan Ford, Thad Presby, Gil Talbot, Representative Michael Ouellet, Representative Suzanne Vail (with Samantha Shepard), and Brennan Ward. Others present were Jace Wirth, David Webster (Scribe), and Commissioner Sarah Stewart.

Call to Order and Approval of Previous Minutes

Frank MacConnell called the meeting to order at 10:01 AM. A quorum was confirmed. Introductions were made by all members and attendees.

Frank MacConnell motioned to approved previous meeting minutes. Susan Vail abstained from voting as she was not in attendance at the last meeting. Gil Talbot motioned to approve the previous meeting minutes, seconded by Frank MacConnell. The motion passed with all in favor.

Operations Update

Jace Wirth provided an update on operations. Early season efforts focused on stabilizing the team, morale and training. Hiring improved significantly, with 90% of workforce positions filled by mid-January, leading to on-time trail openings. Visitor numbers and revenue were trending approximately 15% ahead of prior year. Labor costs were well-controlled; other costs generally were down, supported by a renegotiated electricity contract.

A successful rope evacuation drill on Peabody was completed effectively due to training and protocol adherence. Susan Ford noted this was well received locally. Late January saw a significant staff departure, impacting lift operations. Commissioner Stewart inquired whether staffing challenges were unique to Cannon or industry-wide. Jace confirmed that staffing issues are widespread, noting that Cannon does not currently participate in J1 visa programs, though Cannon is actively pursuing this option. Overall, pre-season preparation has contributed to a successful season thus far.

Capital Projects Update

Jace Wirth provided updates on ongoing capital projects. The Notchview roof replacement is scheduled to begin in late April. The bullwheel bearing service on the Peabody Chairlift was completed. The snowmaking mainline project is currently the most delayed; Request for Bids (RFB) will be submitted to DNCR next week after a project scope review. No changes to project specifications were made. The LWCF Funds, which were previously frozen, have now been released, allowing the project to proceed.

CMCIF Update

Jace reviewed the Cannon Mountain Capital Improvement Fund (CMCIF). Monica Mezzapelle confirmed that \$1.1 million is available for borrowing, bringing the total to \$1.46 million when

including previously approved and newly requested funds. Jace questioned why the full amount historically had not been taken. He provided a detailed walkthrough of ongoing and newly proposed projects for approval. Representative Ouellet raised the question of increasing the credit line, asking for an analysis on raising the debt ceiling. Thad Presby emphasized the importance of pursuing a credit line increase. Commissioner Stewart encouraged creative funding approaches, including partnerships. Commissioner Stewart suggested a town hall meeting to introduce fundraising initiatives as well as highlighted the importance of framing messaging around how Franconia Notch State Park benefits local businesses.

New Business

Jace submitted maintenance-related items for approval, including lift maintenance, facilities improvements, and vehicle maintenance improvements totaling \$754,000 (not-to-exceed). Frank MacConnell opened the floor for discussion. Gil Talbot motioned to approve all items (line items 14 through 22 and 29), seconded by Susan Ford. No further discussion was needed. The motion passed unanimously. Those items as follows:

- \$100,000 General facilities major repairs, including doors, windows, carpet and siding
- \$25,000 Tuckerbrook lift bullwheel bearing replacement
- \$135,000 Zoomer lift haul rope replacement
- \$125,000 Programmable Logic Controller (PLC) upgrades for snowmaking system
- \$115,000 Pipe replacement for Rock Garden trail, including pipe, tie-ins, valving, etc
- \$115,000 Pipe replacement for Gremlin trail, including pipe, tie-ins, valving, etc
- \$15,000 Maintenance building overhead doors replacement
- \$105,000 Snowcat shop lift
- \$11,000 Tire beading and installation machine
- \$8,000 Tire balancer machine

Legislative Items

Jace provided an update on the tram project. The previously approved \$18 million will lapse, and the new allocation as presented by the new administration is \$20 million. He has worked with various resources to identify a viable path forward. Initial responses from the lift vendor, Doppelmayr, indicate that additional infrastructure analysis is required before moving to the bidding phase. A Request for Qualification (RFQ) has been issued by the Division of Public Works (DPW) to this end. Jace will continue to provide updates as developments unfold. Frank MacConnell requested guidance and direction from Commissioner Stewart on the next steps.

Next Meeting and Adjournment

The next meeting was scheduled for April 25, 2025. Frank MacConnell motioned to set the next meeting date, seconded by Representative Vail. All voted in favor. Frank MacConnell motioned to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Gil Talbot. The meeting was adjourned at 11:43 AM.