

MOUNT SUNAPEE ADVISORY COMMISSION (RSA 21-G:11)
JUNE 8, 2023 MINUTES *(Approved 06.11.24)*

A meeting of the Mount Sunapee Advisory Commission (MSAC) was held at the Newbury Town Offices.

In attendance. Members present were Chair Sarah Stewart/DNCR Commr, Dir Brian Wilson/Div Parks and Recreation (DPR), Tim Josephson for Meghan Butts/UVLSRPC, Elizabeth Harper/LSPA, Doug King/DOT, Nancy Marashio/SPNHF, and Sabrina Stanwood/NHB.

Peter Disch/Mount Sunapee Resort and staff and members of the public were also present. Torene Tango-Lowy served as clerk.

Call to Order. Chair Stewart called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m. MSAC members were introduced.

Minutes. Ms Marashio moved to accept the minutes of June 14, 2022; Ms Stanwood seconded. Mr King made a correction, and the minutes were adopted as amended.

Mount Sunapee Resort (MSR) Update. Mr Disch recognized the hard work of his staff, especially regarding traffic mitigation operations. Summer 2022 operations included the 89th Craftsmen's Fair, dinner events and the 6th annual duck drop that benefits the Boys & Girls Clubs. The 2022-2023 winter season ran from November 23 through April 9th. Water usage averaged 163M gallons over the past 5 years. MSR reopened all four of their restaurants and held a dinner and movie fundraiser to benefit the Mt Sunapee Ski Club. The March snowstorms caused a loss of power to the area on Mar 14th, but it also enabled MSR to extend the ski season to April 9th.

MSR was able to fully staff its operation through pay increases, benefits for seasonal staff and offering leadership development opportunities. The fully staffed parking team enabled MSR to mitigate traffic congestion through the use of active lot management and traffic flow strategies. They worked with the Newbury Police Department to help manage traffic during peak days and hired an engineering firm to collect data and assess the existing parking infrastructure. MSR opened lifts earlier on peak days and developed a communications plan to enhance the guest experience. As a result, there were no traffic delays greater than five minutes. Their use of the State beach lot for overflow parking was reduced to three days from the eight days of use during the last season. A guest survey showed that 68% of guests arrive with 1-2 people in the car.

Mr King asked MSR to share the vehicle data collected from Routes 103A and 103B with DOT. Mr Josephson said that the traffic mitigation strategies looked good and appreciated that MSR has addressed the traffic issues.

Annual Operating Plan 2020-2021 (AOP). Mr Disch provided an overview of the AOP. MSR was pleased to host the Newbury Town Meeting and Sunapee High School graduation. Parking Lot #4 was proposed in MSR's Master Development Plan, which was approved by DNCR. MSR is reducing the size of Lot #4 to reduce the wetland impact and expanding Lot #2 that is located on drier land. Maximum lot capacities are reached on powder days and on race days with the increase of spectator traffic. Based on current data, MSR will utilize Lot #4 to further improve traffic flow off Rte. 103 and, using "pulse parking" techniques, improve parking effectiveness.

Mr Disch reports that MSR, in collaboration with LSPA, completed the Beck Brook stabilization project. The LSPA obtained DES grant funding and developed the plan and MSR provided the labor and equipment. MSR and the LSPA are considering other projects to improve management of the Lake Sunapee watershed.

MSR has completed the repair of Campground Road and will continue to coordinate with State Parks to help provide maintenance of the road.

In its 2nd year of waste sorting in Sunapee Lodge, MSR saw an additional 11% reduction of waste to the landfill. Certain wastes, such as food waste composting, are reusable resources or are sent out to produce renewable energy.

The NHB found a 3rd rare plant at MSR, the northern tubercled bog-orchid. MSR will continue to collaborate with the NHB on an effective mowing schedule to benefit the rare plants and to aid in preventing the spread of invasive plants.

MSR opened for summer operations on Father's Day weekend and will close its summer operations in early October. They will decommission the Zip Line attraction and update the Challenge Course. They continue to update its signage, including emphasizing NH State Parks in its signage and on trail maps.

Planned improvements during the 2022-2023 AOP with an estimated cost of \$1M are listed on p. 38, including: drive system replacement and upgrade for Sunapee Express, Summit Lodge roof and flooring replacement, the expansion of Parking Lot #2 and continued work on the construction of Parking Lot #4, and expanding the use of waste sorting stations.

Mr Disch answered questions from the MSAC. MSR will be responding to DES's Request for More Information and provide design changes for the Alteration of Terrain permit application. Ms. Stanwood gave an overview of the NHB memo, dated Dec 28, 2022, regarding rare plant observations in 2022. Mr King said that Parking Lots #2 and #4 will require access permits from DOT. MSR's consultant, Horizon Engineering, is familiar with the process.

Ms Harper asked about the Groundwater Discharge Permit for the lagoons and spray irrigation. Mr Disch said that they are working on the DES permit renewal. In review of past data and using a 5-year projection, the existing wastewater system is functioning as needed. MSR and its consultant are reviewing the permit with DES. Mr Disch answered questions about the parking lots: Lot #3 cannot be expanded beyond its current boundaries, their stormwater management system includes long-term maintenance procedures, the design of Lot #4 will include a filtration system, MSR contracts with Clean Harbors for maintenance, and water quality testing is being done by the LSPA and the town.

Ms Marashio asked DNCR about the long-term protection of old growth areas and assessment tools that could be used to evaluate the integrity of natural communities. This effort was outlined in Commissioner Rose's statement on the 2016-2020 Master Plan, dated March 17, 2016. Ms Stanwood replied that the Ecological Integrity Assessment (EIA) tool for upland areas has been in development over the past year with the analysis of approximately 500 individual communities, including Mount Sunapee. The NHB will complete its field surveys, then ID and rank the communities. The EIA will become a mechanism used by land managers to identify natural communities of high ecological value. Commissioner Stewart said that the AG's Office has determined that Polygons 20 & 23 are protected for as long as the Lease is in place. The Lease expires in 2028 with two renewal options. DNCR will continue to consider other mechanisms for protection beyond the Lease. Ms Marashio said that the natural communities in the West Bowl area should also be protected.

Hiking Trails. Tim Eliasson of SRKGC thanked MSR's Chris Corliss for assisting with trail work. Dir Wilson introduced Andy Crowley, DNCR's new Volunteer Program Manager.

Any Other Business. Dir Wilson formally introduced himself. He started as the Director of NH State Parks in Nov 2022, after serving as the Assist Director of CT State Parks for 4 years. He is a graduate of UNH and served as the Seacoast Region Supervisor for the Division. His focus is completing the federal ARPA-

funded projects to meet the project deadline dates. In addition, the parking lot expansion project to provide for boating opportunities at Sunapee beach is also on the docket.

Chair Stewart opened the floor to public comment on the AOP.

A public attendee asked if MSR is plowing at Sunapee beach and if they are plowing snow into the brook. Mr Disch replied that they do plow at Sunapee beach for ski operations, but to also benefit the winter recreationist there. They plow in accordance with their snow removal plan and use sand at the beach lot.

Kathy Holmes, Newbury Conservation Commission (ConCom) said that parking lot expansion should be viewed in its relation to the mountain and the Lake Sunapee watershed that is fed by Beck Brook. She is concerned about nutrient runoff from the lots. She added that the long-term impacts of development on the watershed, including the West Bowl expansion, should be considered.

Chair Stewart asked for ideas that would encourage carpooling and ridesharing. Ms Stanwood mentioned alternative transportation options, such as using a bus service from Boston. Mr Disch said that he has talked to the Sunapee School District about using school parking lots and providing a shuttle service for race days.

Dave Rhodes, Newbury ConCom asked about the DES permit process. It was stated that comments should be sent to DES. He asked if MSR could post and/or “push” out its DES permitting documents.

A public attendee asked about the LWCF signage. Dir Wilson said that he has seen LWCF signage posted in Spruce Lodge and on lifts. The attendee asked about dredging the state beach. Chair Stewart said that dredging is done through DES and Fish and Game review.

Chair Stewart thanked the MSAC and the public for their comments. She will continue to accept comments on the AOP, due by June 22, 2023. Comments may be sent to MountSunapeeComments@dncr.nh.gov

Adjourn. Mr King motioned to adjourn; seconded by Ms Harper. The meeting adjourned at 11:25 a.m.

Submitted by Torene Tango-Lowy, MSAC clerk.