

MOUNT SUNAPEE ADVISORY COMMISSION (RSA 21-G:11)
JUNE 11, 2024 MINUTES (DRAFT)

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, Elizabeth Harper/LSPA, Tim Josephson/UVLSRPC, Nancy Marashio/SPNHF, Sabrina Stanwood/NHB, Philip Trowbridge/DES, Dan Wolf/Town of Newbury, and Ross Wood/DOT.

Peter Disch/Mount Sunapee Resort and staff, DNCR 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 9:35 a.m. The members introduced themselves.

Minutes. Ms Marashio MOTIONED to approve the June 8, 2023, minutes; Mr Wolf SECONDED. The minutes were APPROVED as written, with one abstention.

Mount Sunapee Resort (MSR) Update. Mr Disch thanked Commr Stewart, Dir Wilson and the MSAC; and recognized the dedication of his staff. MSR operated their 2023 summer season from June 17 to Oct 8, as planned. They hosted the 90th League of NH Craftsmen's Fair and raised over \$150K for the NH Boys & Girls Club at their Duck Drop Event.

This past winter was Mount Sunapee ski area's 75th anniversary, which was celebrated with a variety of events and activities, including Themed Weekends, a New Year Family Bash, South Peak Bonanza, Cowboy Meet and the Slush Cup. MSR promotes teaching newcomers to ski. In honor of Lake Sunapee, they installed a Lighthouse feature that skiers could ski through and had over 8,000 participants. They also ran a S'mores mobile and served over 2,500 s'mores. Their winter operating season was Nov 30 to April 7, with decreased snowfall and rain in December and two major snowstorms late in the season. MSR was able to decrease their snowmaking water withdrawals by 5%, as the result of operating efficiencies and snowmaking improvements.

Mr Disch gave an overview of MSR's traffic mitigation strategies used for the winter season, including lot management, pulse parking, traffic lanes, signage, a new mobile app, bus and shuttle services, and opening lift access at 8 a.m. on weekends and holidays. MSR uses the State Beach lot for employee parking and used the lot for overflow parking nine times during the 2023-2024 ski season. Snow storage from the March storms did impact the full use of the parking lots.

Annual Operating Plan 2020-2021 (AOP). Mr Disch provided an overview of the AOP, including their proposed dates of summer and winter operations. MSR's Groundwater Discharge Permit for the lagoons and spray irrigation system was renewed on Feb 1, 2024. As required, they provide DES with monitoring and measurements information; and they review maintenance work with DES.

MSR looks to implement additional traffic mitigation strategies to improve the guest arrival experience and to reduce traffic crossing on Rte. 103. Improvements include the redesign of the Adventure Center drop zone, parking lot #2 expansion and parking lot #4 construction. Wetlands and Alteration of Terrain (AOT) permit applications have been filed for the parking lot projects. The Wetlands Permit was approved by DES and the AOT permit is in review. During the review process, MSR refined its location of parking lot #4 by moving it further away from the wastewater lagoon and sprayfield area, refined the expansion of lot #2, and will extend the line of pavement at lot #1 for improved traffic flow and drop zone.

The road work done on Campground Road held up over the rain storms and MSR will continue with basic road maintenance.

MSR and its employees were involved in many community-based programs and raised over \$500K, including providing 181 hours towards community trail projects, NH Boys and Girls Club, Boston Ski Party that promotes

urban youth access to skiing, the New England Healing Sports Association's adaptive programs, and the New London Hospital's annual Hospital Days fundraiser event.

As part of its environmental management program, MSR is working toward zero emissions, zero waste and zero net impact. Projects include installing heating upgrades and controls, contracting a hauler who uses a digester to convert wastes into renewable energy, and expanding their solid waste sorting stations that has resulted in an additional 20% waste reduction. Adirondack chairs are being made from recycled candy wrappers.

MSR continues to collaborate with the Natural Heritage Bureau (NHB) in the protection of the rare plants. The greater fringed-gentian, the Loesel's wide-lipped orchid, and the northern tubercled bog-orchid are conserved through MSR's targeted mowing operations recommended by the NHB.

As part of the approved Master Development Plan, the implementation of new capital projects and maintenance projects under this AOP have an estimated cost of approximately \$900,000, if pursued. These projects include the construction of parking lot #4, the expansion of parking lot #2, and the redesign of Adventure Center pick-up and drop-off zone, contingent upon obtaining all approvals and contractor availability. Other planned projects under this AOP include repaving lot #1, replacing the communications line on the Clippership Quad, replacing and upgrading the Sunbowl Express Quad service brake, replacing flooring in portions of the Sunapee Lodge, Goosefeathers bathrooms and Summit Lodge bathrooms, and repairing the vehicle maintenance shop. See AOP 2024-2025, pg. 39 for a list of projects. MSR looks to improving the guest experience and continuing to build community partnerships.

Chair Stewart thanked Mr Disch and asked the MSAC members for comment. Ms Harper thanked MSR for their environmental management processes, including collaborating with the LSPA on the Beck Brook project, snow removal operations and waste management. She asked about the zero net impact target as it relates to the impact of parking lot #4 to the abutting forest and wetland. Mr Disch said that MSR would replace the trees lost and they are also working with DES and the ACOE on wetland mitigation efforts located above lot #4, and are looking into rehabilitation opportunities at Beck Brook and will pay into the DES mitigation fund. DES determines the use and application of the mitigation fund.

Mr Wolf asked how the revenue payments to the State are calculated. Mr Disch responded that MSR pays the State a base fee adjusted for inflation and 3% of gross revenue collected at Mount Sunapee ski area. For season passes, MSR and Vail tracks how the passes are used across the various Vail properties, then distributes the revenue based on the average use of the pass over the specific locations. Chair Stewart said that DNCR's conducts an audit of MSR's financials annually. She will ask the auditor to attend next year's meeting.

Ms Marashio asked how the accountability for the parking lot #4 project could be documented, such as the stormwater management requirements. Mr Disch said that they are still working with DES on the AOT permit and stormwater management features, but any new or improved BMPs would be included in the AOP. MSR provides its sampling and monitoring reporting to DES. Ms Marashio will share her list of concerns with MSR. Mr Trowbridge explained that the DES AOT permit application is in review and that issues would be resolved through the conditions and compliance requirements. DES has been conducting site visits. Ms Marashio would like to see the reporting. Mr Disch said that parking lot #4 was redefined based on recommendations made through the review process.

Ms Harper is concerned that lot #4 would change the dynamics of the wetlands system and impact the 50-year-old wastewater lagoon system. She asked what the plans were for replacing the lagoon system and said that the wastewater system should take priority over parking lot expansion. She questioned if the lagoons were leaking. Mr Trowbridge agreed that the lagoon system is an old design that was used for seasonal operations. The wastewater treatment system was reviewed by DES and an independent firm. The Groundwater Discharge Permit contains conditions of its renewal, including sampling and monitoring. Mr Disch said that MSR tests for saturation before spraying and the engineering firm mapped the groundwater flow and determined that the flow goes back toward the lagoons and not towards the parking lots. DES inspected the wastewater lagoon system in 2021. MSR conducts water sampling and DNCR does beach sampling. The Lake had a clean result from the

recent beach sampling. Ms Marashio asked that DNCR add to the conditional approval of the AOP the requirement that MSR provide its testing and sampling reports. In response to Ms Harper's questions, Mr Disch said that MSR is not currently utilizing the wastewater lagoon system at full capacity and that, according to the lease, MSR would be responsible for the cost of replacing the system. Mr Disch reiterated that the parking lot projects are to improve the traffic mitigation strategies and that projects are following the review and permitting processes. Chair Stewart said that public comments on the AOP are due to DNCR by June 17, 2024.

Any Other Business. Jessica Bouchard presented Natural Heritage Bureau's findings: "Upland Ecological Integrity Assessment of the Northern Hardwood - Conifer Forest Ecological System at Mt. Sunapee." (A copy of the presentation is posted on the MSAC website.) There are two such systems in NH: at Mount Sunapee and at Kearsarge Mountain.

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

Charlie Hirshberg of Sunapee has professional experience with designing large wastewater systems. The Sunapee lagoon, with the spray system built in 1970, is at the end of its lifecycle. The Hoyle Tanner report provides details of the system's operation. The amount of wastewater sprayed per day impacts the water table and drives the sub-water shed. The swale was constructed between 1998 to early 2000s and the wastewater system relies on natural systems for filtration. The Town of Sunapee is working with DES due to cyanobacteria found in their drinking water taken from Lake Sunapee. Mr Hirshberg is concerned about contaminants that feed into the Lake. He suggests that MSR develop a sampling program for baseline conditions. He said the Hoyle Tanner report provides a comprehensive assessment of the wastewater system and makes recommendations.

Katheryn Holmes, Newbury Conservation Commission (NCC) introduced John Magee. The NCC is concerned about pollutants to the Lake, which is an economic driver for the region and contributes to quality of life. The parking lot project, reviewed piecemeal, will impact the wastewater and stormwater systems. This is an opportunity to take a holistic approach. We don't have enough information on groundwater flow and seepage. What is the structural integrity of the dams? The wastewater system is antiquated. The NCC asks MSR to develop a comprehensive stormwater management plan and to work collectively on the wastewater system. They ask that the parking lot project be put on hold, that public hearings be held and that stakeholders have the opportunity to provide input. The NCC would like to collaborate with MSR and other stakeholders. A short video was shown of the NCC's field visit of the wastewater system and surrounding area.

David Rhodes/NCC asked about the original design life of the plant. No plans could be found of the plant's design. The Hoyle Tanner 2023 report said the wastewater system has operated for approximately 50 years, with the spray system installed in the 1970s. The report said wastewater treatment facilities are typically designed for a 20-year service life and recommended that MSR plan for refurbishment. Mr Rhodes asked to hold action on the parking lots until a cross functional meeting is held to review the larger, systemic concerns.

Ms Holmes said that if the dam lets go, then we can say goodbye to the Lake. She asked that action be taken on what has been presented today.

Chair Stewart thanked the public, MSAC, MSR, and DNCR staff. She will continue to accept comments on the AOP, due by June 17, 2024. Comments may be sent to MountSunapeeComments@dncr.nh.gov

Ms Marashio asked that permanent protection of the exemplary natural communities be added to the next agenda. Chair Stewart said that polygons 20 and 23 are protected under the lease that expires in 2028 and that DNCR is in discussions about continued protection.

Adjourn. Mr Wolf MOTIONED to adjourn; SECONDED by Ms Stanwood. The meeting adjourned at 11:45 a.m.

Submitted by Torene Tango-Lowy, MSAC clerk.