

MOUNT WASHINGTON COMMISSION
APRIL 17, 2026 MINUTES *(Approved May 15, 2026)*

A regular meeting of the Mount Washington Commission (MWC) took place at the Cog Railway Service Shop, 3168 Base Station Road, Mount Washington. Chair Kirsch called the meeting to order at 10:11a.m., with a quorum present. A privileged discussion involving the Commission members and Mr. Aslin/WMC counsel was held immediately prior to the meeting.

PRESENT were MWC Commission Chair Rob Kirsch/MWObs; Vice Chair Chris Ellms/Public; Ryan Presby/Cog Railway; Tobey Reichert/Mt. Washington Auto Road; Phil Bryce/Public; Drew Scamman/Townsquare Media; Howie Wemyss/Public; Rep. David Paige/NH House; and Chris Thayer/AMC

Also in attendance were Chris Aslin/MWC counsel; Drew Bush /MWObs, Patrick Hummel/MW State Park Mgr.; Camryn Casey/DNCR MW State Park; Albi Fioravante, Seth Prescott, Eric Goulet, and Colin Capelle/DNCR Concord; Earl Duval/Cog Railway Counsel; Andy Blaine and Dick Bouley/Cog Railway; and Tim Lewis, Rob Bermudes, John and Rebecca Richard/members of the public. Robert Bishop/NHDES Oil Remediation Compliance Bureau Administrator and Rene Pelletier/NHDES Water Division Director attended remotely.

MINUTES

Vice Chair Ellms made a MOTION to approve the minutes of March 27, 2026 as written; SECONDED by Mr. Reichert; Mr. Thayer and Mr. Wemyss ABSTAINED. The minutes were APPROVED unanimously.

MASTER PLAN

Steps on Commission Review of Mt. Washington State Park Assessment: Report and Public input form are on the MWC webpage and also on NH State Parks Current Projects page. The deadline for comments on the partial Assessment is June 15, 2026. The email to send form to is: DNCR.MtWashingtonAssessment@dn-cr.nh.gov

Mr. Bryce said that he was impressed with the report and that one of his main concerns is the structural integrity of the Sherman Adams Building. Mr. Prescott noted that extensive concrete repairs were done approximately thirteen years ago. The Commission will dedicate a future meeting to evaluate assessment comments. The MWC also will focus on identifying priorities for the Summit. If Commission members find anything major missing from the report, they will let Mr. Fioravante know before the June 15th deadline. The Commission has previously noted the omission of sub-surface sampling called for in the Master Plan.

Mr. Fioravante informed the commission that the soil and groundwater sampling Request for Bid is going out next week. The sampling is planned on being conducted this summer in a manner that won't interfere with public visitation.

Summit Fuel Tank Status:

Mr. Prescott gave an update on the fuel tank status. The commission gave approval for fuel tank testing. The funding for the sampling and inspection has been allocated and request for bid will going out next week. DNCR is preparing a capital budget request for the tank replacements. Discussion followed on maximizing funding by closing the unused tanks and testing only the tanks that are in use. Mr. Prescott will reach out to DES on this strategy.

Chair Kirsch stressed the need to use funds prudently, especially since the tanks soon will be removed and he asked about the possibility of repurposing the tanks. In response to the Chair's question, Mr. Fioravante stated there were sufficient funds available in the original appropriation to fund the tank testing and the soil and groundwater sampling called for by the Master Plan. Mr. Kirsch recognized that understanding risk based on testing could provide justification for funding.

Mr. Bryce commented that expressing the Commission's appreciation to the funding sources on these investments is important. He suggested the commission evaluate options for keeping funders aware of Summit needs.

STATE PARK REPORT & OPERATIONS

Mr. Hummel reported that the road is clear to the summit for now and that the park is currently preparing for the upcoming season. The Tip Top House upgrades are coming along, with the electrical being upgraded soon. A re-opening date has not yet been determined. The park is sharing a new interpreter position with the Observatory and they are currently in the interview process. The new retail assistant has started who is a long time part time employee. Mr. Hummel's report is attached and incorporated into these minutes.

Mr. Thayer requested that at the May MWC meeting, Mr. Hummel and Mr. Bush give a brief presentation of the interpreter's job aspects.

LEASES, AGREEMENTS AND FRANCHISES IN THE OPERATION OF SUMMIT FACILITIES

Lease Agreements. Mr. Capelle reported that DNCR is close to finishing the draft of the Auto Road lease revision.

Observatory Extreme Mount Washington Museum Funding Request. Mr. Bush spoke on the request from the Mount Washington Commission Restricted fund for the attached Extreme Mount Washington Museum funding request. The request is mainly for the shared interpreter position and the related MWOBS work with docent support. The request also covers funding for weather instruments and other materials and supplies needed to engage the visiting public. The Observatory also obtains part of their funding from fundraising.

Mr. Wemyss made a MOTION to move \$6,187.01 from the Mount Washington Commission Restricted fund for the purpose of fulfilling the Extreme Mount Washington Museum Funding Request; SECONDED by Mr. Presby; The motion was APPROVED unanimously.

PROMOTION OF SUMMIT

UNESCO World Heritage Site Designation: Chair Kirsch updated the Commission on the World Heritage UNESCO designation status. The commission is in process of going forward with the process of getting on the Tentative List for UNESCO designation through the federal government with support from Sen. Shaheens office. The designation is a long multi-year process and this would be the first step. If this world class designation succeeds it would benefit the summit and the north country's regional economy.

Rep. Paige made a MOTION to pursue being placed on the World Heritage UNESCO designation Tentative List. SECONDED by Mr. Reichert.

Extensive discussion followed. Mr. Bryce would like all correspondence on this to be shared with the Commission. Mr. Wemyss explained why he would be voting no. His explanation included that he did not think the mountain could not handle the volume of visitors the designation may bring. He also thought the chance of success would be slim and would like to have the National park service person

who is familiar with this to come to the Summit and give their opinion. Mr. Thayer noted that we can start the process and pursue national recognitions first, especially during this 250th anniversary of the country. Mr. Bush said that a site could be on the Tentative List for a long time and that the timing is good now to get on it while Sen. Shaheen is still in office. Mr. Bryce views his vote as taking the first step to learning about what it takes to make a place world class. We already have had visitors from approximately 90 countries, so this may not increase the visitation in a negative way. Mr. Presby suggested that the carrying capacity of the park should be reflected in the Mount Washington Assessment. He also asked about existing UNESCO sites and how they handle increased visitation such as permits.

Vice Chair Ellms made a MOTION to call the vote. Nine votes yes, one vote no, MOTION PASSED

PARTNER REPORTS

Appalachian Mountain Club (AMC). Mr. Thayer thanked Mr. Bush and Observatory on their leadership on the Summit virtual tour. Capital investments are going into north country huts, electrical, upgrades to Highland Center computer, etc. The first annual Youth Climate Summit was held at the Highland enter focusing on climate ready jobs and was a great success. The AMC 150th Anniversary Relay is in PA now and will arrive in NH on June 29 with a departure date of on or about August 8th. There will be July 31st anniversary event on the summit. Permits are in process. Alpine Gardens Project field visit will be happening in June. Mr. Thayer's report is attached and incorporated into these minutes.

Auto Road. Mr. Reichert reported the Auto Road is open to the public to the summit. Projects will be beginning soon including replacing the roof of the Red Barn Museum and the roof of the gas station area at the bottom of the road.

Cog Railway. Mr. Presby reported also on getting projects started for season. The roof of the shop will be replaced and the old shop will be torn down and a new building built in the future.

Mount Washington Observatory (MWObs). Mr. Bush reported that the virtual tour has been launched and thanked all of its supporters. He is working with the Commission and DNCR exploring federal funding sources for fuel tank replacement and other recommendations from the Mount Washington Assessment. Also working with Mr. Crepeau, Acting DNCR Commissioner on a new agreement for the Observatory's summit weather station that will give the Observatory more autonomy and responsibility and enable them to more effectively tap outside funding sources. The 2nd edition of the White Mountain Almanac has been started. The Seek the Peak event is going great and are ahead of the number of hikers at this stage last year. The event will be on July 18th at Wildcat Mountain Resort. Mr. Bush's report is attached and incorporated into these minutes.

Townsquare Media. Mr. Scamman reported that Townsquare Media is assessing the scope of work that needs to be done for consolidating the transmitters. He is getting information needed for financial decision making and hopes to assemble information needed for approvals soon.

White Mountain National Forest (WMNF). Mr. Ibarguen was not able to be present.

PUBLIC COMMENTS

Tim Lewis asked if the oil tanks were red tagged by the EPA. Mr. Prescott answered that DNCR has responded to the EPA notification letter. NHDES also has tank program and they are also involved. Mr. Prescott will continue reaching out to DES and EPA. We have missed the EPA inspection deadline so this needs to be rectified as soon as possible.

Tim Lewis asked about the Commission's non-meeting held prior to this meeting. Mr. Aslin confirmed that the nonmeeting complies with the Right to Know law as well as voting on the nonmeeting. Chair Kirsch noted that a vote relating to the privileged non-public discussion would take place under the other business portion of the meeting.

Rob Bermudes asked a question about the US Forest Service and Department of Agriculture. With Mr. Ibarguen not present, he could not be answered though we will be meeting at White Mountain National Forest Headquarters next month.

Mrs. Richard spoke to Maine Cabin Masters TV show which fixes old buildings and relayed that they are interested in being involved in historical renovation on the summit, such as the Tip Top House. She recommends that the Commission or DNCR contact them.

OTHER BUSINESS

Non-meeting vote: Mr. Bryce made a MOTION to proceed with the matter discussed immediately before this meeting in privileged session with counsel. Mr. Wemyss **SECONDED** the MOTION. Rep. Paige **ABSTAINED**. All in favor, MOTION APPROVED.

2026 MEETINGS

January 9, Bretton Woods Ski Area, Bretton Woods, NH	April 17, Cog Railway Service Shop, Mt. Washington, NH	September 18, TBD
February 13, AMC Highland Center, Bretton Woods, NH	May 15, WMNF HQ, Campton	October 16, TBD
March 27, The Glen House, Gorham	June 12, MWObs Offices, North Conway	November 20, Tentative-Mt. Washington SP, Gorham Office

ADJOURN

There being no more business, Mr. Presby made a MOTION to adjourn the meeting. The MOTION was **SECONDED** by Mr. Wemyss. All in favor, MOTION APPROVED. The meeting adjourned at 12:00p.m.

Submitted by Wendy Smith, MWC Clerk with assistance from AI