

**MOUNT WASHINGTON COMMISSION**  
**January 27, 2023 MINUTES** *(Approved on 03/24/23)*

A regular meeting of the Mount Washington Commission (MWC) was scheduled at Franconia Notch State Park Headquarters. Chair Bradley called the meeting to order at 10 a.m., with a quorum present and Mr Ellms calling in by telephone. Attendees introduced themselves.

PRESENT were Chair Jeb Bradley/Senate, Ed Bergeron/Public, Phil Bryce/Public, Chris Ellms/Public, Derek Ibarguen/WMNF, Rob Kirsch/MWObs, Wayne Presby/Cog Railway, Drew Scamman/TownSquare Media, Sarah Stewart/DNCR Commr, Chris Thayer/AMC, Rep Umberger/House, and Tobey Reichert designee for Howie Wemyss/Auto Road. Also in attendance were Allen Brooks/DOJ for the MWC, Drew Bush/MWObs, Earl Duvall/Cog Railway, Carrie Gendreau/Senate, Jack Middleton/MWObs, Ryan Presby/Cog, Dir Brian Wilson/DPR, summit and state park staff, and members of the public.

Governor Sununu, in response to a request from Chair Bradley and Commr Stewart on behalf of the MWC, accepted the Master Plan on January 26, 2023. Copies of the letters were shared.

Senate President Bradley has appointed Senator Carrie Gendreau, Dist. 1, to serve on the MWC in his place. Sen Bradley said that the master plan process went well and the final Master Plan is a credit to all.

**Elections** were held with Rep Umberger nominating Mr Bergeron as chair and Mr Kirsch as vice-chair. Mr Presby seconded and the MOTION CARRIES by unanimous roll call “yes” vote by Rep Umberger, Mr Bergeron, Mr Ibarguen, Mr Bryce, Mr Scamman, Mr Kirsch, Mr Thayer, Mr Presby, Mr Reichert, Commr Stewart, Sen Bradley, and Mr Ellms.

Commr Stewart on behalf of the MWC expressed appreciation to Sen Bradley for serving as chair of the MWC and bringing the summit Master Plan to completion.

**Minutes.** A MOTION to accept the minutes of Oct 28, 2022, was made by Rep Umberger and seconded by Mr Thayer. The motion CARRIES by unanimous roll call “yes” vote by Rep Umberger, Mr Bergeron, Mr Ibarguen, Mr Bryce, Mr Scamman, Mr Kirsch, Mr Thayer, Mr Presby, Mr Reichert, Commr Stewart, Sen Bradley, and Mr Ellms.

**Master Plan.** Commr Stewart said that any contracts will need Governor and Council approval. The next step is to request funding for the summit assessment from the Capital Budget Committee. Sen Bradley said it would be helpful to provide a cost estimate. The Master Plan provides a framework for the Statement of Work (SOW). Dept Environmental Services (DES) and Dept Administrative Services (DAS) could be consulted for their expertise on environmental assessments and capital assets, respectively. Mr Bergeron, Mr Kirsch and Commr Stewart will work on the SOW and estimate.

**Fees paid to the State.** The agenda follows the statutory duties of the MWC per RSA 227-B:6. Not all agenda items will have updates to report out. The MWC will consider a preferred format. Commr Stewart will provide a list of existing state contracts to the MWC. The NH Dept of Revenue Admin (DRA) was not able to provide Parks with an appraiser to determine the market value of its real property; however, there are MWC members who could provide some expertise. Mr Presby volunteered Mr Duvall to provide Commr Stewart with information about business-based appraisals.

**Capital Improvements.** Mr Hummel reports that the wastewater and water tanks contracts start work this spring. He will work with summit partners to ensure public access and minimize disruption. Mr Presby said that Mr Duvall is working with NH Electric Coop and Bretton Woods Telephone to bring fiber to the summit. The state park uses microwave for connectivity. Mr Scamman said AT&T and

Verizon has reached out to him. Commr Stewart said it is important for summit partners to coordinate their efforts to maximize the public benefit and minimize the footprint on the summit. She will bring communication proposals before the MWC.

**Park Operations.** Mr Hummel is focused on winter maintenance projects. He is in discussion with Pikes Peak Cog Railway to exchange operational expertise. DNCR acquired use of the DES building located in Gorham that will serve as a regional office and meeting space. Dir Wilson said that once renovations are complete, Parks will reach out to the local community to celebrate Parks' new hub of operations. Parks and MWObs staff are working on updating the entryway information wall. Hiking trail signage is also being worked on. MWC members talked about the Master Plan's survey of hiking trails, a potential loop trail around the summit, and the visitor survey. UNH's Recreation Management program students may be interested in some of this project work.

**Leases and Agreements.** As discussed earlier, Commr Stewart will put together a list of current state contracts and agreements related to the summit to share with the MWC.

**Acquisitions.** The new Gorham property was mentioned earlier.

**Promotions.** Mr Hummel reported that there have been no issues with winter hikers to date. Commr Stewart said that Parks and Cannon have a marketing contract with DriveBrand, and that we no longer work through BEA Div of Travel and Tourism's advertising firm. Mr. Thayer said the AMC is coordinating its outreach efforts with Tourism regarding "Leave No Trace" messaging.

**Protection of summit resources.** Rep Umberger, Mr Bergeron and Mr Kirsch would like to see financial reporting of the Mount Washington Fund. Commr Stewart will provide such reporting in the future. Mr Thayer said the AMC and MWObs can provide resource-based studies and results to the MWC on a periodic basis.

**Partner Reports.** AMC. Mr Thayer said that Nicole Zussman was appointed as their new President and CEO. AMC returned to its full slate of programming last year. Across the hospitality industry, staffing shortages and wage increases continues to be a challenge. AMC deployed nine trail work crews in coordination with WMNF and Parks. AMC has hosted over 16K overnight lodgers. Alpine stewards will continue its educational outreach.

Auto Road. Mr Reichert said that they had completed paving at the lower portion of the Auto Road. Projects planned for 2024 are the bridge replacement and repositioning the entrance to the Visitor Center to improve traffic flow on Rte. 16. The Auto Road is hosting the Backcountry Alliance event on Saturday with over 200 skiers registered.

Cog Railway. Mr Presby said that their 2023 projects include landscaping the base area, installing a new entrance arch, improved traffic patterns and replacing the tracks between their maintenance facility and Marshfield Base Station. They will add an 8<sup>th</sup> diesel locomotive. As an effort to reduce their carbon footprint, they are considering alternative fuels for their steam engines and track-side accumulator that would produce electricity. They plan to expand the maintenance facility in the future. Waumbek Station improvements are planned in support of their winter operations. The Cog Railway may add trips to Waumbek as part of its summer offerings to provide riders with a shorter time commitment option and to relieve summit usage.

MWObs. Mr Bush reports that the Obs is providing public safety text and website messaging that includes forecasts from the WMNF Avalanche Center. He thanked Parks for the joint operational improvements, such as transportation, the entryway exhibit, and radio communications between the snowcats. They are providing weather information to Cannon Mountain and are upgrading their website

and digital publications. The Obs is working with teachers on winter programming and hope to pilot summit field trips. They received international and national coverage about Mt Washington's history, its partners and scientific research. They are working on Work Wise employee safety training and a hiker safety video. Input from the summit partners is welcomed. Mr Bush offered to help the MWC with the implementation of the Master Plan.

Townsquare Media. Mr Scamman said that WHOM is currently off-line due to weather damage, but the microwave service is operating and is solid. Townsquare will be working on the WHOM building this spring.

WMNF. Mr Ibarguen said that there's been an increase in winter hiking and fatalities. They are working on more hiker and snowmobile safety messaging. The Avalanche Center has been busy. They are contracting for work at Glen Ellis Falls in Pinkham Notch. Summer staffing, housing and recruitment is a challenge. They have a fully electric vehicle that is part of their sustainability program goals.

**AOB.** On behalf of the Commission, Commissioner Stewart thanked Allen Brooks for helping to guide the process, incorporating MWC and public comments, and writing the Mt Washington Master Plan.

The 2023 MWC meeting schedule is:

- Friday, March 24 at 10 a.m., Rosebrook Lodge, Bretton Woods Ski Resort
- Friday, May 19 at 10 a.m.
- Friday, July 21 at 10 a.m., on the summit?
- Friday, Sept 15 at 10 a.m.
- Friday, Nov 17 at 10 a.m.

Adjourn. The meeting adjourned at 11:55 a.m.

*Submitted by T. Tango-Lowy, MWC clerk.*