

MOUNT WASHINGTON COMMISSION
March 14, 2025, MINUTES *(Approved 05/09/25)*

A regular meeting of the Mount Washington Commission (MWC) took place at MWObs Administrative Office, North Conway. Chair Bergeron called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m., with a quorum present. Everyone introduced themselves. Senator David Rochefort was recognized as a new member of the Commission.

PRESENT were Chair Ed Bergeron/Public, Vice-chair Rob Kirsch/MWObs, Phil Bryce/Public; Chris Ellms/Public; David Rochefort/NH Senate Dist 1, Derek Ibarguen/WMNF; David Paige/NH House Carroll Dist 1, Ryan Presby/Cog Railway; Dir Brian Wilson, designee/DNCR, Chris Thayer/AMC and Howie Wemyss/Auto Road.

Also in attendance were Executive Councilor Joseph Kenney; Allen Brooks/MWC counsel; Drew Bush and staff/MWObs, Dick Bouley and Earl Duval/Cog Railway; Tobey Reichert/MWAuto Road; Patrick Hummel and staff/Mt Washington State Park; Colin Capelle and Albi Fioravante/DNCR Concord; Staff/US Sen Shaheen's Office; Joe Persechino and Vesna Maneva/Tighe&Bond; Kim Barnett/LDa Architect; Bob Bermudes and Tim Lewis/public.

Minutes. Vice-chair Kirsch made a MOTION to approve the minutes of Jan 25, 2025, with amendment; seconded by Mr Ellms. Mr Kirsch recommends having any written partner reports included as attachments to the minutes. The minutes were approved as amended, with one abstention.

Promotion of summit. U.S. Senator Shaheen's staff gave a presentation on the process for applying to UNESCO as a World Heritage Site and the potential for the elements of Mount Washington and possibly even the historic Mount Washington Hotel in the application. World Heritage Fund dues are paid by the U.S. government. There's no application cost nor does it provide funding for the site. It is a multi-year approval process and promotes site protection, but does not impose legal restrictions. A copy of the presentation will be posted on the MWC website. Chair Bergeron thanked Sen Shaheen's staff and called for continued discussion by the MWC at its next meeting.

Dir Wilson was interviewed by NH Business Magazine. He highlighted the work of the MWC, its cooperative stewardship efforts, climate change and weather impacts to state parks, and the research work being done and supported by the summit partners.

Master Plan. Tighe&Bond and LDa gave a presentation on the Draft Assessment, including a review of their initial top-line findings. The draft assessment covers buildings and building infrastructure, site facilities, environmental assessment and natural resources. A copy of the presentation will be posted on the MWC website.

The next steps include workshops, final recommendations, follow-up fieldwork if approved, the public opinion survey and the visitor survey. Mr Kirsch read from the second and third paragraphs of section IV. A. on page 4 of the Master Plan that specified elements of an environmental assessment that have yet to be performed based on the report by Tighe & Bond today. He noted that the environmental assessment work called for in the Master Plan must go beyond a Phase I assessment and said more field investigation is necessary. Mr Bryce hopes that the visitor survey will help determine visitors' expectations and environmental tradeoffs. Mr Wemyss and Mr Thayer reiterated the importance of performing the environmental assessment as called for in the Master Plan.

Fees paid to the State. Parks is working with the Auto Road on their Special Use Permits to address operational, weather and safety challenges. The goal is to optimize, not maximize, summit use.

Capital Improvements/Park Ops. Mr Hummel said that the wastewater treatment plant is working well and they are preparing for the operating season. Work includes the gift shop, storage cabinets, painting and the Tip Top House. Mount Washington State Park and summit partners will be hosting and participating in the Northeast State Park Directors conference in April.

Negotiation of agreements. Dir Wilson said the Division is ready to discuss the summit parking lot lease agreement with the Auto Road. Mr Wemyss requested that the next agreement cover a longer term since the Non-Disturbance Agreement (NDA) prohibits significant changes to the lease. The MWC should review the NDA and, in accordance with the Master Plan, would like to be presented with the draft lease. Mr Presby expressed concern over the differences in fees and charges that the State applies to profit versus non-profit entities. Mr. Kirsch read from section IV. G on page 9 of the Master Plan, reminding all that the Commission is to be presented with draft leases “including terms, compensation, rights granted, and rights received.”

Partner Reports. AMC. In the interest of time, Mr Thayer will append his report to the minutes.

Auto Road. Mr Reichert is preparing for the operating season.

Cog Railway. Mr Presby said they are also preparing for the busy season. The Cog’s Board of Directors recently appointed him as President of the company.

MWObs. Mr Bush will provide his report as part of the minutes.

AOB. Dir Wilson thanked the MWC for the important work that they do. While Commissioner Stewart seeks to fill the Director’s position, Chief of Staff Colin Capelle can field any questions or concerns.

The next MWC meeting is scheduled for April 11, 2025, at 10 a.m. at the AMC Highland Center at Crawford Notch.

The proposed 2025 MWC meeting schedule is:

January 24, Franconia Notch State Park, Park HQ	May 9, Omni Mount Washington Hotel (tentative)	October 17, TBD
March 14, MWObs, No. Conway	June 13, Tip Top House, Mount Washington State Park	November 14, DNCR Gorham Office
April 11, AMC Highland Center	September 12, TBD	

Adjourn. The meeting adjourned at 12:30 p.m.

Submitted by T. Tango-Lowy, MWC clerk.