

MOUNT WASHINGTON COMMISSION
MAY 19, 2023, MINUTES *(Approved 06/23/23)*

A regular meeting of the Mount Washington Commission (MWC) took place at Franconia Notch State Park headquarters. Chair Bergeron called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m., with a quorum present. Attendees introduced themselves.

PRESENT were Chair Ed Bergeron/Public, Phil Bryce/Public, Chris Ellms/Public, Carrie Gendreau/Senate, Derek Ibarguen/WMNF, Vice-Chair Rob Kirsch/MWObs, David Paige/House, Wayne Presby/Cog Railway, Chris Thayer/AMC, and Howie Wemyss/Auto Road. Also in attendance were Allen Brooks/DOJ for the MWC, Dir Brian Wilson/DPR, summit partners and state park staff, and members of the public.

Minutes. Mr Kirsch requested an amendment to the minutes of March 24, 2023, regarding his comment on the Commission's position on the possibility of renaming of the summit. Mr Kirsch made a MOTION to accept the minutes as amended; seconded by Mr Ellms. The motion CARRIES, unanimously.

Master Plan. The members discussed the draft Statement Of Work (SOW) submitted by DNCR and by Mr Kirsch. DNCR architect Tom Mansfield explained the consultant selection process: the SOW would provide enough flexibility for consultants to build a team, the State would interview and rank the teams, then negotiate the fees with the top-ranked team and; if agreement is not reached, DNCR will negotiate with the next highest ranked team of consultants. Mr Kirsch offered his SOW as a supplement to the DNCR SOW. The members agreed that the environmental portion of the assessment should have more emphasis; and that the history component could largely be done by the summit partners. Members discussed at length the methodology and need to determine the number of hikers using the summit facilities. Mr Hummel will provide the MWC with visitor counts taken at the Sherman Adams Building (SAB). The Cog and Auto Road can also provide their raw data to the consultants. Mr Wemyss said that UNH is a good resource for conducting a visitor survey and how visitor reach the summit.

All agreed that the SOW should have clear project goals. The tasks from Mr Kirsch's SOW can serve as the scope of activities for completing the environmental and building assessments. Mr Ibarguen said that they use assessments to establish baseline conditions, provide sideboards for development, and make recommendations for restoration. Mr Bergeron asked that the SOW be reprioritized to emphasize the environmental component. Mr Bryce said that the building assessments are also important for providing the basis for future capital budget requests. Dir Wilson reported that Commr Stewart was unable to attend today's meeting because she is meeting with Senate Finance about DNCR's budget requests. He said that the summit assessment request of \$1M is still in the capital budget.

Mr Bergeron asked that DNCR provide a large map of the summit to display at the next MWC meeting.

Fees paid to the State. Dir Wilson said that the list of leases held by the State was provided to the Commission at the last meeting. The State also issues Special Use Permits for events that occur on the summit: 12 permits have been requested to date that include events held by the Cog Railway and Auto Road. Mr Bryce asked that the link to the [DNCR's administrative rules for Special Use Permits](#) be provided. Mr Bergeron asked to have permits added to the agenda.

Capital Improvements / Park Ops. Mr Hummel reported that he met with the contractor working on the wastewater treatment and water system project; and that work will start the week of June 5th or 12th. DNCR will keep summit partners and visitors informed of potential project impacts. The job opening for a wastewater treatment operator closes today. Mr Hummel is working on his FY2024 budget. He plans

to open for the season on May 26th. Weather has been a challenge with heavy rains washing out a portion of the Auto Road. He thanked the Cog Railway for transporting staff during a shift change. The Tip Top House needs major electrical work and will not be open this season. DNCR is rehabilitating the Gorham facility that be used by the Great North Woods supervisor and Mt Washington staff.

Negotiations. Dir Wilson said that the new agreement for the Auto Road's use of the summit parking lots is being drafted and a meeting with the Auto Road is scheduled. In the interim, the parties will sign a one-year agreement. Dir Wilson is meeting with the Dept of Revenue Administration about having the summit lots appraised to help inform the State.

Promotions. Mr Hummel provided an update on summit signage and the entryway display. Cannon's long-time marketing manager, Greg Keeler, has transitioned to the Division as its Marketing and Public Information Officer. Drive Brand, the Division's marketing firm, will visit the summit to help DNCR with signage and a viewing guide that will be installed on the observation deck. Mr Thayer suggested that Drive Brand be given a copy of the Master Plan.

Protection of natural resources. Mr Thayer reported on the Alpine Stewards Program, AMC-WMNF joint research projects, and the cross-training efforts with Mt Washington staff.

Partner Reports. AMC. Mr Thayer said that the AMC is busy preparing for the June 1st opening of their summer season. AMC and WMNF are holding Trails Skills training this week. He appreciates the collaboration between summit partners in a variety of areas, such as research, training and operations. Mr Thayer spoke at the State Park Managers meeting held last week at Cannon.

Auto Road. Mr Wemyss gave an update on the severe wash out that occurred on the upper road. They were able to open last weekend and will be open 7 days/week starting Memorial Day weekend. The Auto Road will continue their road paving projects and are installing solar panels on the maintenance garage.

Cog Railway. Mr Presby said that track replacement work is ongoing. They are working on a master plan for the base and will install an entryway arch. They will offer coach rides to Waumbek Station and tours of their maintenance shop. The Cog has contracted with the UNH IT Dept to develop an app for "All Things Mount Washington" that will include the summit partners. A beta release of the app is scheduled for the fall. Bretton Woods Telephone is working on broadband services and has contacted DNCR.

MWObs. Mr Bush said that they will open the summit museum on May 26th. They are partnering with the Cog to provide six school field trips to the summit. They are hiring staff and interns, including an intern for their diversity program. The MWObs is collaborating with the Forest Service and the Mount Washington Avalanche Center on a Northern Borders grant that will fund improved winter weather forecasting research in support of the WMNF Avalanche Program and SkiNH. He thanked many local businesses, including summit partners, who were key supporters of that grant application. Mr. Bush expressed thanks for the Auto Road's support through a new sponsorship agreement. Seek the Peak is scheduled for July 15th, and it is the MWObs biggest fundraising event. The summit partners were invited to the after-party celebration.

WMNF. Mr Ibarguen said that they are shifting to permanent seasonal employment to attract and retain employees. They are working on trails and infrastructure projects and will be conducting proscribed burns. Campgrounds are opening today. UNH hosted a meeting about Search and Rescue efforts and educating the public so as to prevent SAR incidents. DNCR and Fish and Game were also in attendance.

AOB. Mr Brooks serves as legal counsel to CORD (Council on Resources & Development). A proposal to rename Mount Washington was filed with the U.S. Board on Geographic Names Committee (BGN). Ken Gallagher, from the Office of Planning and Development, brought the proposal to CORD for interagency comment. Mr Brooks asked Mr Gallagher to bring the proposal to the MWC, who has jurisdiction over matters related to the summit.

Mr Gallagher said that the proposal seeks to rename Mount Washington to its Native American name, Agiocochook. The proposal states that naming the mountain after George Washington is inappropriate because of his tie to slavery. Mr Gallagher said that BGN's consideration of the proposal is early in the review process. Coos County and the Forest Service were contacted to provide comment. Although there are no federally recognized tribes in NH, the NH Commission on Native American Affairs was also contacted to provide comment. The Dept of Safety, Fish and Game, Dept of Business & Economic Affairs and DNCR will be providing comments on the proposal.

Members expressed concern that a name change would cause confusion as it relates to economic activity, public safety and Search and Rescue operations. There is an area of the mountain that already holds the Agiocochook name, Agiocochook Crag.

Mr Bergeron asked that this item be placed on the next MWC agenda for comment and action by the Commission. He would like to have someone provide the background on the proposal, the BGN process and deadline for providing comments. Sen Gendreau wished to disclose that she is Abenaki.

Don Harty introduced himself as a volunteer trail steward at the Hope Cemetery of Kennebunk, ME where the Lizzie Bourne monument is located. It had been the intention of the Bourne family to have the monument placed on Mount Washington. Mr Harty would like the MWC to consider supporting this proposal to move the monument to the summit, which would fulfill the wish of the Bourne family and could be used as an educational tool.

The 2023 MWC meeting schedule is:

- Friday, June 23 at 10 a.m. at AMC's Highland Center
- Friday, July 21 at 10 a.m.
- Friday, Sept 15 at 10 a.m.
- Friday, Oct 13 at 10 a.m.
- Friday, Nov 17 at 10 a.m.

Adjourn. The meeting adjourned at 12:20 p.m.

Submitted by T. Tango-Lowy, MWC clerk.