

MOUNT SUNAPEE ADVISORY COMMISSION (RSA 21-G:11)
JUNE 9, 2020 MINUTES (DRAFT)

A meeting of the Mount Sunapee Advisory Commission (MSAC) was held by teleconference on June 9, 2020, a quorum being present.

In attendance. Members on the call were Sarah Stewart/Dept Natural and Cultural Resources (DNCR) Commissioner & MSAC Chair, Director Philip Bryce/Div Parks and Recreation (DPR), Meghan Butts/Upper Valley Lake Sunapee Regional Planning Commission (UVLSRPC), June Fichter/Lake Sunapee Protective Association (LSPA), Doug King/Dept of Transportation (DOT), Nancy Marashio/Society for the Protection of NH Forests (SPNHF), Sabrina Stanwood/Div Forests and Lands (DFL), and Dan Wolf/Town of Newbury.

Also on the call were members of the public; Bruce Schmidt, Peter Disch, Chris Corliss and Adam Robinson/Mount Sunapee Resort (MSR); Tim Eliassen/SRKGC; Fallon Reed/Dept of Safety; Jesse Creedy-Powers/DPR and Torene Tango-Lowy/MSAC clerk.

Call to Order. Commissioner Stewart called the meeting to order at 9:35 a.m. in accordance with the *Checklist compliant with the Right-to-Know Law during the State of Emergency*. Attendance was taken by roll call: Commissioner Stewart PRESENT, Bell ABSENT, Dir Bryce PRESENT, Drew PRESENT, Fichter PRESENT, King PRESENT, Marashio PRESENT, Rowley PRESENT, Butts PRESENT, Stanwood PRESENT, Wolf PRESENT.

Minutes. Ms Stanwood moved to approve the May 29, 2019 minutes; Ms Fichter seconded. The minutes were adopted as written by roll call vote: Stewart YES, Bryce YES, Drew ABSTAIN, Fichter YES, King YES, Marashio YES, Rowley YES, Butts ABSTAIN, Stanwood YES, Wolf YES.

Mount Sunapee Resort Annual Operating Plan 2020-2021 (AOP). Mr Schmidt introduced the staff who were on the call, including the new General Manager, Peter Disch. Mr Schmidt presented the Annual Operating Plan for 2020-2021. No decisions have been made on the operation of summer activities (p. 4), as the MSR is reviewing the Governor's COVID-19 guidance. Ski operations were closed early on March 14, 2020, due to the COVID outbreak and in talks with Commissioner Stewart. The Duckling Lift will be removed this summer, but no other changes to the ski lift operations are proposed (p. 12). Other aspects of the AOP were highlighted, including updates to security procedures and the emergency operating plan, and COVID-related adaptations. The state beach parking lot was used twice last winter and the League of NH Craftsmen fair is cancelled this summer (p. 20). MSR worked with the Natural Heritage Bureau (NHB) and will curtail mowing to the fall in areas where the greater fringed gentian is located (p. 24). Best Management Practices (BMPs) are utilized (p. 26) and updated signage was installed to recognize the partnership with the State and Mount Sunapee State Park (p. 29). MSR anticipates investing an estimated \$600K in capital maintenance projects this summer, including roof work and painting, snowmaking system maintenance, and mountain bike trail maintenance (p. 31-32). Mr Schmidt thanked the commission, and also thanked MSR staff and the community for persevering under the COVID pandemic.

Commissioner Stewart opened the line to MSAC comments. Mr Wolf asked that MSR include its historical winter opening and closing dates in future plans. Ms Stanwood thanked Mr Corliss and his staff for their responsive efforts on curtailed mowing to benefit the greater fringed gentian. During its July 11, 2019, survey, the NHB found a Loesel's wide-lipped orchid, a state-threatened herbaceous plant, located near the base of Elliot Slope. They will work with MSR staff to help ensure that the orchid has time to product mature seed prior to mowing operations in that area. See NHB's *Rare plant observation in 2019* report, dated June 9, 2020, and posted on the MSAC webpage.

Mr Drew will provide a DES report to the Commissioner following their review of infrastructure and

updated inspection dates. He is pleased that MSR continues to follow BMPs. Ms Fichter would like MSR to include its visitation data in the AOP. She appreciates MSR commitment to working with the LSPA on the Lake Sunapee watershed plans and would like to see the work referenced in the AOP.

Mount Sunapee Resort Update. Mr Schmidt reported that many events and weddings were cancelled, and staff furloughed due to COVID-19. MSR will follow State guidance for re-opening safely. They hope to be able to operate the Sunapee Express lift during the busy fall season. Ms Butts recognized the importance of tourism for the region and the UVLSRPC is providing information about recreating responsibly under COVID guidelines.

Hiking Trails. Ms Creedy-Powers is working with the SRKGC and MSR on the Cooperative Maintenance Agreement for the maintenance and stewardship of the Summit and Province hiking trails. An Annual Work Plan will be submitted to DNCR. Mr Eliassen thanked Mr Corliss for his efforts during this difficult time; there has been increased trail use.

MDP/EMP. The plans are under review and the Commissioner is receiving written comments. She will work with the UVLSRPC to set a date for a public hearing.

AOB. With no other business, Commissioner opened the line for public comment on the AOP.

Mr Steve Russell appreciates NHB's diligent work on the natural heritage features. Any impact to the exemplary forest system would affect the whole system and such work should be withdrawn from the MDP and AOP. The forest system needs to be delineated to serve the public and MSR staff should know the location of the exemplary systems. DNCR should begin permanent protection of these areas for preservation and the public should know of the importance of the 484 acres of natural communities. Ms Stanwood responded that the NHB is working on a state-wide, comprehensive program for permanent protection of exemplary natural communities.

Ms Katheryn Holmes, Chair of the Newbury Conservation Commission, said the Andrew Brook trailhead has hikers parking along the roadway. She asked that MSR or DES post "no parking" signs along the roadway. Dir Bryce said Parks is experiencing the same problems from increased use of trails. The Town may consider ticketing cars parked illegally, as is done in Rye; or asking DOT to install "no parking" signs on state roads. MSR said hikers could use the third parking lot at the ski area to disperse hikers to alternate trails provided that MSR is able to access its maintenance sheds. Mr Eliassen said the Andrew Brook trailhead is located on SPNHF property and that he would reach out to them to help address the issue.

Ms Sue Russell said that she had submitted written comments on the AOP and asked that the AOP be updated to reflect the additional information. Commissioner thanked Ms Russell and said she is reviewing the memo.

Mr John (?) of Acworth asked about the communications tower lease and plans for decommissioning the tower. Dir Bryce suggested he contact the Div of Forest and Lands that manages DNCR's communications leases.

Commissioner Stewart thanked the MSAC and public for attending. Any other comments on the AOP can be mailed to the Concord Office or emailed to MountSunapeeComments@dncr.nh.gov DNCR will schedule a public hearing to solicit comments on the MDP/EMP.

Adjourn. Mr Wolf motioned to adjourn the meeting; seconded by Mr Drew. The meeting was adjourned at 10:35 a.m. by roll call vote: Stewart YES, Bryce YES, Drew YES, Fichter YES, King YES, Marashio YES, Rowley YES, Butts YES, Stanwood YES, Wolf YES.

Submitted by Torene Tango-Lowy, MSAC clerk.