

MOUNT WASHINGTON COMMISSION
October 13, 2017 MINUTES *(Approved 12.15.17, as amended)*

A regular meeting of the Mount Washington Commission (MWC) was held at Franconia Notch State Park, Park Headquarters.

Call to Order. Chairman Walter Graff/AMC, having a quorum of members, called the meeting to order at 10 a.m. Members present were Sen. Jeb Bradley/Senate (by phone), Dir. Phil Bryce/Div. Parks and Rec (DPR), Mark Ericson/Townsquare Media, Paul Fitzgerald/for Public, Martha McLeod/Public, Clare Mendelsohn/WMNF, Jack Middleton/MWObs, Wayne Presby/Cog Railway (Vice-Chair), Rep. Karen Umberger/House (by phone), and Howie Wemyss/Auto Road.

Also present were Allen Brooks/AG Office, Kevin Devine/MWSP, Grant Goulet/DPR, Gary MacDonald/MWObs, Tom Mansfield/DNCR Architect, Sharon Schilling/MWObs President, Edith Tucker/Berlin Sun, and Torene Tango-Lowy/MWC clerk.

Minutes. Mr. Erickson moved to accept the minutes of July 21, 2017; Mr. Presby seconded. Mr. Middleton requested an amendment to the minutes. The minutes were approved as amended.

Master Plan. Dir. Bryce said the current focus is on the assessment of the Yankee Building, as recommended by the Master Plan subcommittee. (See report on capital improvements, below.)

Fee Collection. Dir. Bryce provided a draft copy of the FY2017 financial report for Mt Washington State Park. The good news is that the Park broke even: \$1,296K in net revenue and \$1,289K in total expenditures. The operational costs of retail, communications, and power are not completely separated out from the general operations (OPER-03) category. The net gain may be attributed to the unfilled Park Manager position, the increase in retail revenue, and the communications lease rates updated to the recent appraised value report. The DPR will continue to look at reducing its costs. A new enterprise system will provide the DPR with weekly financial reporting to enable better forecasting and YTD data.

Capital Improvements. Chair Graff and Dir. Bryce thanked Rep. Umberger, Sen. Bradley, and MWC members for their efforts to secure capital budget funds for the Yankee Building assessment. Mr. Graff also applauded the MWC for their working together to establish sustainable electricity rates. Mr. Mansfield reported on the four projects currently in progress. The sewage treatment plant is being monitored over the course of a year to determine current and future capacity. The feasibility of a sewage line along the Cog railway for treatment at the base station is also being studied. Options for upgrading the water system, including relocating the water tanks closer to the Sherman Adams Building, starts work this week. The contract for the assessment of the Yankee Building and communications needs was just approved by the Governor and Executive Council and work has started. The assessment will include architectural plans, fire & safety recommendations, a survey of communications tenants, factors affecting communications, and future communication needs. The draft and final reports will be presented to the MWC. Although work will not be complete until Sept. 5, 2018, there will be enough information for the DPR to file a placeholder line item in April, 2018, in preparation for the next capital budget bill.

Park Operations. Members reviewed the written report from Assist. Park Manager Nate Camille. Dir. Bryce introduced Kevin Devine, the new park manager. Mr. Devine gave a brief overview of his 20-year career in outdoor recreation, including his communications, marketing, and retail experience with EMS and Orvis, and his operation of Deer Mountain Campground. Dir. Bryce introduced Grant Goulet, DPR Retail Supervisor. Mr. Goulet gave a brief overview of the retail operation, currently at \$2.3M, excluding Mt. Washington, with 37 locations. The boat rental program and firewood sales have been growth areas. Improving the visitor experience and public safety are high priorities for Mr. Goulet.

Partner Reports. Auto Road. Mr. Wemyss reported a successful summer, with retail revenue up from 2016. He gave a summary of the road maintenance work being done, including line painting, with completion within a year. The Auto Road's hotel project is back on schedule with a planned opening in June, 2018. The Auto Road will close for the season on Oct. 22nd.

Cog Railway. Mr. Presby reported the Cog's 6th record year in a row with Columbus Day weekend an all-time high of 1,975 passengers in one day. The Cog is considering installation of a fiber optic line to the summit. They are prepared to work with the State on the option to construct a sewer line to connect into a

treatment plant located at the Cog base station, and can provide design, maintenance, and cost ideas. They are also reviewing their deeds to determine their ROW and other rights reserved at the summit. Mr. Presby briefly discussed their re-railing project and the maintenance access trail that can provide an additional access route to the summit.

MWObs. Ms. Schilling reported a good summer in which cloudy days encourage visitors to explore the state park areas and the summit museum. They are considering changes to the admission fees and ways to improve the flow of foot traffic. She thanked the MWC for its approval of the Artist-in-Residence project, which is in place. Interviews for phase I of the oral history project were completed and additional interviews will be conducted annually. They work cooperatively with Parks regarding the CATs and enabled Parks to use their garage for its CAT and are working with the state's consultants on the Yankee Building and communications assessment. MWObs is celebrating its 85th anniversary this Sunday.

Townsquare Media. Mr. Erickson reported on the repairs to the WHOM concrete building and thanked Nate Camille for his assistance with getting the contractor and equipment to the summit. He also thanked the MWObs for providing a tour to Townsquare's VIPs. All equipment is up and running: they are winter ready.

WMNF. Ms. Mendelsohn has been appointed Forest Supervisor. As part of the 100th anniversary celebration of the forest system, the Museum of the White Mountains at PSU is hosting an exhibit about the White Mountains. In coordination with NHDOT, DPR, and other partners, they are conducting a transportation survey that spotlights the traffic and parking issues along I-93 at Franconia Notch State Park. Solutions may include a shuttle bus system and alternative trail access points. Dir. Bryce agreed that alternative solutions are needed, but expressed concern about inadvertently displacing other users, such as parking for visitors to the Flume and Tram. Mr. Presby also spoke about the impact to the Cog's business and the limited parking they have been providing hikers. An update on the dandelion project will be provided.

AMC. Mr. Graff reported a good summer. They have moved their main office to Charlestown, MA. Camp Dodge is being reworked to serve as a volunteer center for trail work that is coordinated through the Forest Service. AMC opened its new lodge located in the 100-Mile Wilderness area.

Other Business. Members discussed the need to address the increased use on the summit through the carrying capacity and master plan effort. Dir. Bryce said a Carrying Capacity RFP will include both Mt. Washington and Mount Monadnock to create efficiencies in the preparation and reporting. The RFP will consider the constraints of infrastructure, visitor experience, and the environment. Members discussed the issue of vehicle and pedestrian traffic congestion and agreed to discuss the next steps in obtaining a facilitator to help develop the summit's master plan.

There are no statutory requirements on how often the MWC must meet, however quarterly meetings are helpful for reporting on current capital projects and keeping open communications between summit partners. The next meeting is scheduled for Dec. 15th.

Adjourn. The meeting was adjourned at noon, with lunch provided. Interested attendees were able to take a Tram ride.

Submitted by T. Tango-Lowy, MWC clerk.

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| Background information and documents related to the summit Master Plan effort are posted at the bottom of the MWC webpage , accessible from NHStateParks.org |
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