

## **MOUNT WASHINGTON COMMISSION**

**June 4, 2021 MINUTES (DRAFT)**

A regular meeting of the Mount Washington Commission (MWC) was held at Cannon Mountain's Peabody Lodge.

**Call to Order.** Chairman Bradley called the meeting to order at 9:00 a.m. PRESENT were Sen Jeb Bradley/Senate, Dir Phil Bryce/Div Parks and Rec, Paul Cunha/AMC, Paul Fitzgerald/for Public, Derek Ibarguen/WMNF, Paul Ingersoll/for Public, Jack Middleton/MWObs, Wayne Presby/Cog Railway, and Howie Wemyss/Auto Road. Ed Bergeron/for Public and Rep Karen Umberger/House were ABSENT. Several members of the public and state employees were in attendance, including DNCR Commr Stewart.

**Minutes.** Mr Ingersoll MOVED to accept the minutes of April 23, 2021; SECONDED by Mr Middleton. The minutes were APPROVED as written by unanimous voice vote.

**Capital Improvements.** DNCR Project Manager Seth Prescott was not able to attend, but DNCR will provide the MWC with a copy of the septic system site plans. Sen Bradley said the capital budget passed the senate yesterday. The summit water and sewer projects were removed from the capital budget, but added to the federal American Rescue Plan projects that will be presented to the Fiscal Committee on June 8, 2021.

**State Park Report & Operating Plan Review.** Dir Bryce said the park system is operating at 100% capacity, using the advance reservation system to manage crowds. Camping is doing well, but the Tram is still operating at a loss. Staffing is a challenge statewide. For example, the seacoast needs 48 hires, but has only 14 on staff.

Mr Hummel said that the Sherman Adams Building (SAB) opened on May 21<sup>st</sup> with full service and no capacity limits. The advance reservations system will not be used and masks are optional. Revenues are strong with a FY20 close of net \$200K, after tightening expenses. The Tip Top House remains closed for interior work, roof and ceiling repairs.

As was reported at the last meeting, the Fire Marshal's Office approved a capacity of 475 people for the main floor of the SAB and 278 people on the ground floor. The rolling doors must be left open and exit signs are updated. The capacity is in-line with the current number of park visitors in the building. Ms Dunn said the museum opened on May 28<sup>th</sup> and the air filters are working well.

Commr Stewart said that DNCR is still in discussions with the Cog Railway regarding the Cog track extension project.

**Master Plan.** There was no update to report on the communications facilities.

Commr Stewart said that the Harvard Negotiation and Mediation Clinical Program (Harvard NMCP) is an opportunity to help facilitate agreement among the summit partners for a master plan that will put the mountain in good hands for the future. Attorney Haley spoke about the Harvard NMCP and the application drafted on behalf of the MWC. Although the application process is competitive, he said his initial discussions with Harvard were promising: that the Mt Washington project is a good fit for the program. The Harvard NMCP can provide expertise to help diverse stakeholders to work together on structural issues that can be applied toward developing the vision and future for the summit.

Mr Wemyss agreed that the program is a great opportunity and asked about the funding source for project expenses. Dir Bryce said the revenues from the MWObs lease and summit park operations pay

for the park's overhead and expenses; and that the he would need to be careful about the Fund's balance. The application is due by July 14<sup>th</sup> for a fall session project start, and by Nov for a spring 2022 project start or a Phase 2 project. Members reviewed and discussed the project deliverables and identified the project point-of-contact as either through Parks or the DOJ. Ms Tango-Lowy will email the link to the [MWC webpage](#) for access to the historical master planning documents posted there.

Mr Wemyss MOTIONED to accept the Harvard NMCP proposal and to submit the application to Harvard. Mr Ingersoll SECONDED. The motion PASSED by unanimous voice vote.

**Partner Reports.** AMC. Mr Cunha reported that the huts opened for full service yesterday with high demand. They are planning to operate at full capacity by July, following a review of their operating procedures and mask requirements. Hiring for hospitality and food service work is competitive and a challenge. AMC has seen record numbers of volunteers and trail stewards.

Auto Road. Mr Rechert said the Auto Road began 7-day operations over Memorial Day weekend. They are fully staffed with many employees returning to work. Currently, the vans are limited to 8 people and masks are required. The Auto Road completed its road paving work in the spring. They will be replacing the summit Stage Office, circa 1976, this summer with the same design and iconic chain work.

Cog Railway. Mr Presby reported that they are not yet at 100% capacity, but may loosen their face mask requirement as they evaluate the public's response to public safety best practices. They are continuing their track cleanup from the fall work and with their maintenance projects. The season continues with a strong recovery.

MWObs. Ms Dunn said the summit museum opened last Friday; fully staffed as planned. They are working out of a temporary location in North Conway, while the Discovery Museum is being renovated. Currently, the MWObs is not providing tours of the summit weather station or Edutrips and are not assigning volunteers to work on the summit. Use of face masks are required by staff when working with the public and they recommend the use of masks by visitors.

Townsquare Media. Mr Scamman said they had to remove a communications dish last winter and are currently doing maintenance projects. WHOM is planning a live broadcast at the summit next Friday.

WMNF. Mr Ibarguen reported staffing challenges, but that they are fully operational. They plan to open their visitor center soon, but continue to provide curbside services to the public. Trail volunteer programs and campground operations are going strong. The Dolly Copp campground will open late, following construction work there. The snow rangers were busy with rescues over the spring season.

**AOB.** Commr Stewart announced that Craig Rennie was hired as the Bureau of Trails Chief. Mr Rennie comes to DNCR after serving many years at DES.

The next meeting is scheduled for Friday, August 27, 2021, at 10 a.m. at the Tip Top House. If the Tip Top House is not available, the meeting will be held at Cannon Mountain.

Adjourn. Mr Ingersoll MOVED to adjourn; SECONDED by Mr Middleton. The meeting adjourned at 10:10 a.m. by unanimous voice vote.

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