

State Park System Advisory Council (RSA 216-A:3-kk)
September 28, 2018 Meeting Minutes (*approved 06/10/19*)

A regular meeting of the State Park System Advisory Council (SPAC) was called to order by Chairman Gilbert at Bear Hill Camp, Bear Brook State Park, a quorum of members being present.

Council members present were Chair Jeffrey Gilbert for business, Rick Blanchette/Friends of the Wapack, Commissioner Stewart/DNCR, Tiffany Eddy/Tiffany Eddy & Associates, Matt Lehey/SPNHF, Senator Harold French/Commerce Vice-Chair, Representative John Mullen/RR&D, Representative Suzanne Smith/RR&D, Jen Kennedy/Blue Ocean Society, Ruth Griffin/Public and John Nyhan/Hampton Chamber of Commerce.

Staff present: Director Phil Bryce, Michael Housman, Johanna Lyons, Tara Blaney, Jake Lamontagne and Grant Goulet.

Call to Order: Chair Gilbert called the meeting to order at 10:15am. Attendees introduced themselves.

Approve Minutes: Ruth Griffin motioned to approve the June 14, 2018 minutes and seconded by Suzanne Smith. Kathy Thatcher (Defenders of Pisgah) asked to correct her statement, she didn't say "no logging", its "limited logging". The minutes were approved as amended.

Advise Director:

Director's Report. The Report was sent to the Council in advance for their review. Discussion included the Franconia Notch Parking Shuttle, revenue, Bear Hill, and the vacant Volunteer Coordinator position.

Roundtable.

- John Nyhan – Reporting 10-15% loss of business revenue at Hampton Beach this summer. Town parking lots has less revenue. Just an ok summer at the beach.
- Senator French – Received a call from a constituent about accessible beach access at Jenness Beach; Johanna replied that is being taken care of as part of the redevelopment.
- Ruth Griffin – She inquired how much does the State of NH put into the Seafood Festival? She also remarked that she has heard from local businesses that are disappointed by the number of out of state/region business that were vendors. The local businesses pay taxes/rent year round. Phil replied that the festival pays a SUP fee of \$9,100 to DPR plus it is estimated that an additional \$15,000 in parking revenue is collected that weekend. John N. added that every hotel is full and visitors are dining out which is additional Rooms & Meals tax to the state. He tries to bring in local vendors, however, there are not enough and he has had to reach out to others.
- Matt Lehey – He has made a number of trips to FNSP, employees are very helpful and knowledgeable. Still a lot of people parking along the highway.
- Commissioner Stewart – The Sunapee lease transfer is complete. The response from the public has been positive on the transparency of the process. Tiffany Eddy agreed. Jeff Gilbert remarked the industry is changing rapidly and consolidation is common.

FY2018 Financial Forecast & Operating Budget

Did a preliminary review of the budget so we know what we have until the end of the fiscal year. Also mapping out the rest of the year; purchasing two new buses for the Flume, a new beach rake for the Seacoast and a boat for Umbagog Lake SP. Sheds have been ordered as tollbooths.

- Jeff Gilbert asked if DPR knew how people used the Flume in the winter. No, will share once we know.

Budget – the FY2020-2021 budget is being finalized, increased it a bit. Included \$2,000,000 for maintenance from the park fund.

Special Use Permits

Phil began the discussion about how organizations are using state lands to raise funds for their organization at the expense of the park visitor. As an example; Swim with a Mission raised \$213,000 gross/\$161,000 net which was donated to other non-profits. As a comparison, Wellington SP, where the event was held, grosses \$155,000/year. The event made a significant impact on the parking lot and experience of the park visitor, not everyone wants to participate. Commissioner Stewart is recommending a policy/guideline so each event gets treated equally. There may need to be limitations at parks that are busy during the summer season. It was agreed that the limitations should be as administrative rule rather than legislation.

Mount Prospect Glade Skiing

Received a proposal to reopen historic ski trails. Concerned about liability associated with public use, what is the duty of care by DPR once the friends group completes the project?

Disposal of Marine Mammals

DPR has paid for the disposal of marine mammals twice this year in Rye. The animals were located below the high tide line. The area is held in public trust by the State of NH, no agency has been tasked with removal of dead animals.

Ruggles Mine

Visited the site, there are issues. Need to be sure the site is safe.

Capital & Parks Improvement Projects

Cost of Projects

The cost of projects is high, need discussion about DPW and how projects are contracted. Pricing is high but the process is costly.

Act as an Advocate for State Park System

Bonding State Park Fund

Phil handed out a memo proposing to bond the state park fund for campground expansion. To finance a \$5,000,000 bond approximately \$600,000 in bond payments for 20 years will need to be made. He would use it to upgrade campsites with electricity and water (not sewer). The intent is to keep development low and not compete with private campgrounds that offer higher development. Chair Gilbert motioned to support the initiative of the director to create a bond plan as outlined in the memo dated 9/28/18. Seconded by Senator French. Discussion centered on the difference of a council versus commission. Phil will ask Torene to check. All are in favor.

Collective Bargaining Agreement/Other discounts

Phil would like to set limits on these benefits to not include weekends or holidays.

School Start Date

DPR loses staff and lifeguards due to pre-Labor Day school start. It is a public safety and guest service issue.

Other Issues

- Meeting with AMC on Lonesome Lake Hut lease
- Franconia Notch Ski Club, new lodge at base of Mittersill
- Irene's Way, Tamworth, White Lake State Park – concerned the town is going to request legislation to gain rights to the road. We've asked for them to prove their property interest in the land, but they have not so far.
- Nansen Ski Club – looking to expand their oversight to include the ski jump, want to host events there.
- Annual Report will be submitted with the consolidated Division report in January.

Public Comment

Kathy Thatcher, Defenders of Pisgah, introduced herself and spoke about the resource management concerns at Pisgah State Park. John Mullen asked how many acres (13,000) and how many people in the organization (8). Rich Blanchette asked if the trails are buffered (depends where) and observed that the forest grows back quickly. Phil said that the Division of Forests and Lands will make a presentation at the next meeting and had sent information for this meeting for review.

Adjourn. The meeting adjourned at 12:15pm. Invited guests, Division staff and council members were treated to lunch and celebrated the opening of Bear Hill Camp Oaks pod with cake and a tour.