

MOUNT SUNAPEE ADVISORY COMMISSION (RSA 21-G:11)
JUNE 8, 2021 MINUTES (DRAFT)

A meeting of the Mount Sunapee Advisory Commission (MSAC) was held at the Newbury Town Offices.

In attendance. Members present were John Duclos/DES, June Fichter/LSPA, Dir Patrick Hackley/Div Forests and Lands (DFL), Doug King/DOT, Nancy Marashio/Society for the Protection of NH Forests (SPNHF), Sabrina Stanwood/DFL, and Dan Wolf/Town of Newbury. Absent. Commr Sarah Stewart/DNCR, Dir Phil Bryce/Div Parks and Recreation (DPR), Meghan Butts/Upper Valley Lake Sunapee Regional Planning Commission (UVLSRPC), and Ashlee Rowley/Sunapee Region Chamber of Commerce.

Peter Disch/Mount Sunapee Resort and staff; Tim Eliassen/SRKGC; Jesse Creedy-Powers/DPR and several members of the public were also present. Torene Tango-Lowy served as MSAC clerk.

Call to Order. Dir Patrick Hackley, serving as chair on behalf of Commr Stewart, called the meeting to order at 10 a.m.

Minutes. Rep Wolf requested that the minutes reflect his request that the Resort's winter operating data be included in the AOP. Ms Stanwood corrected the word "produce." Mr Duclos asked whether DES Tim Drew was in attendance at the June 9, 2020, meeting. Ms Marashio moved to approve the June 9, 2020 minutes, as amended; Ms Stanwood seconded. The minutes were adopted as amended.

Mount Sunapee Resort (MSR) Annual Operating Plan 2020-2021 (AOP). Mr Disch gave an overview of the AOP. MSR welcomes the return of the League of New Hampshire Craftsmen fair this year. MSR safely reopened for winter operations on Dec 12, 2020, using a reservation system to help manage social distancing and comply with the Governor's Re-opening Task Force guidance, and closed on April 11, 2021. They do not plan on using the reservation system for the 2021 winter season, unless necessary.

MSR will open for the summer operations on June 19th. Summer day camp programs are on hold until the 2022 season. The B2NH Bike Ride event scheduled for June 19 is a new event.

Although rain followed the December snowstorms, they saw consistent snowfall in January and February, allowing for a one week extension for spring skiing. The Duckling lift was removed in Oct 2020, as planned with lift chairs donated to NEHSA and the MSR Employee Foundation that generated \$40K for employee and community support programs. Their winter 2021-2022 season has a scheduled opening date of Nov 26, 2021, and closing on April 3, 2022, depending on weather. Last winter, they recorded 806 hours of snowmaking operations, with water use consistent with past usage.

Their Emergency Action Plan is up-to-date and the three Special Use Permits with the DNCR have been renewed. MSR did not use the beach parking lot this past winter season. They are pleased to continue their partnership with NHB to protect rare plant resources, including an appropriate mowing schedule. MSR is working with the LSPA on a DES Watershed Assistance Grant for the Beck Brook project that will be completed in late summer. They continue to add signage to reflect its partnership with state parks, including at the Adventure Park.

Improvements planned during this AOP are maintenance projects. Dir Hackley asked for comments on the AOP from the MSAC members. Rep Wolf asked about the ski lift upgrades. Mr Disch said they plan to install new communications lines, refurbish the gearbox and replace the drive bull wheel on the Sunapee Express and install a new drive and control system for the North Peak Triple. (See AOP, pg. 34.)

Ms Stanwood thanks the Resort for collaborating with NHB on the mowing schedule to help protect the rare plant communities. She will send Mr Disch minor change requests to the AOP to correct plant names and

update the mowing schedule. A September mowing date for the area where the Loesel's wide-lipped orchid is found is acceptable. NHB appreciates being able to conduct plant surveys to understand the natural history of the plant's growing cycles. She notes that MSR will enroll in the DES Green SnowPro program.

Rep Wolf said that he would like to see skier visits reported to help inform the investments made at Cannon Mountain. Mr Disch responded that Vail, as a public company, does not disclose skier visits data but that they work with the State as part of the annual financial audit. Dir Hackley said he would follow up with the Commissioner.

Ms Marashio thanked MSR for making its partnership with state parks more visible. She suggested that MSR add to the AOP the trail work they do in support of the various hiking trail groups. Ms Creedy-Powers said that the Annual Work Plan for trail work that is required under the Cooperative Management Agreement (CMA) between MSR-SRKGC-DNCR, is currently in the process of being approved. Mr Disch answered additional questions, including that MSR's offer of resources to the LSPA partnership is dependent upon their staffing, schedules and time of year, but will not slow the project work; that the ~\$500K capital projects, if pursued, would be for lift upgrades and lodge maintenance work within its current footprint.

Ms Stanwood responded that the NHB is working on the Natural Areas Program that would help inform the designation of Exemplary Natural Communities (ENC). Ms Fichter said there are also ENC areas located outside the lease area, but within the state park. Ms Stanwood said that the NHB conducts the scientific reviews and makes its recommendations regarding ENCs. She will provide the MSAC with information on the Natural Areas Program, as it is developed. Ms Fichter thanked MSR for its support with the DES project and for helping the LSPA with the Watershed Discovery Day.

Mr Duclos said that DES can help with the coordination of MSR's hazardous waste management. Mr Disch reported that his staff works with Vail's regional environmental compliance manager to ensure compliance. They use Heritage-Chrysal Clean for disposal of hazardous waste materials and activate their EPA Small Quantity Generator status when needed.

Mount Sunapee Resort Update. Mr Disch had provided operational updates during his overview of the AOP. He thanked his employees for running a safe operation under COVID conditions and providing a great visitor experience. He is excited to move forward to more normal operations. Rep Wolf said Mr Disch had a tough start as General Manager under COVID conditions, but that he is doing a great job.

Hiking Trails. Ms Creedy-Powers reported earlier that the Annual Work Plan for trail maintenance work on the Summit and Provence trails by the MSR and SRKGC is in the process of being approved by DNCR. Mr Eliassen of SRKGC said they have a good working relationship with MSR and thanks MSR for their responsiveness. The trails were heavily used during the pandemic. Mr Sanborn of Cardigan Highlanders reported on their erosion controls and maintenance trail work on several trails located on Mount Sunapee.

Any Other Business. Ms Marashio was disappointed that Commr Stewart issued a letter on the MDP on June 1, 2021. She would have liked to have had a MSAC meeting to discuss DNCR's response. Dir Hackley opened the floor for public comment on the AOP.

Sue Russell asked if MSR plans an expansion of the mountain bike trails or the archery range. Mr Disch said not this year.

Steve Russell, Newbury Conservation Commission & FOMS thanked MSR for its updated signage efforts. He said the ENCs are the only one of its type. He thanked the Commr and staff for the comprehensive response to include the NHB reports in the MDP and asked about an update to the narrative. Mr Disch is working with DNCR on incorporating the NHB reports and narrative. Mr Russell said the ENC is unique

and asked about the process for designating the entire 484 acre system as a Natural Area. He said the Commr could negotiate with Vail and the other landowners to protect the ENC system, which has been a concern for 20 years. The NHB report on the Polygon 23 ENC is clear and all parties need to start work on an agreement. Ms Stanwood responded to a question from Ms Fichter that NHB designates ENCs and records their findings in the NHB database. They work cooperatively to balance protection measures and recreational uses, however the decisions are up to the private landowner.

Ben Martel said the ENCs should be protected and the State should work with Vail on its future expansion plans while protecting the ENCs. All the NHB reports should be included in the MDP and the narrative should be corrected. He thinks meetings should be recorded. The materials on the MSAC website are helpful, but suggested that all public comments be posted.

Lydia Hawkes was disappointed at the November public hearing, as she was unable to call in. She asked about the public comment period. She will send her comments on parking at trailheads to Dir Bryce. The interpretive signage would be a great public service.

Jan Lambert is an environmental journalist with a 500 member mail list. She offered help with positive messaging to educate the public and is interested in being involved with the interpretive signage project and environmental education efforts. She said the description for the hiking trails (AOP, p. 7) was vague. Does Vail have the ability to shut down trails? Mr Disch responded that they restrict trail use when conducting trail work to protect public safety. He continued in response to further questions that a hiker crossing an active ski trail should take appropriate safety precautions just as a skier does when stopping on a ski trail.

John ? asked why dogs are prohibited in the ski area during the winter. Mr Disch said there have been too many issues with dogs while the ski area is open and crowded with skiers.

?, Bradford Conservation Commission was concerned about overuse of the mountain. Would Vail consider donating their lands to the State to protect the ENCs and to protect the land against overuse? Dir Hackley said that the adjacent lands are under a conservation easement and the State works with local conservation groups to conserve lands and provide recreational opportunities.

John ? suggested that the public comment period be reopened and that MSAC support legislative action to make the public involvement on the MDP a statutory requirement. Ms Marashio said she has never had a problem with the MDP process and that the November hearing was an anomaly, due to the COVID restrictions. The videoconference platform may have been difficult, but it was not meant to exclude public involvement.

Ms Fichter asked if the MSAC should meet more often, as activities increase. Rep Wolf said they meet annually for the AOP and more often when reviewing the MDP/EMP. He thinks the Commissioner has been responsive. Mr Russell thought the MSAC used to meet more often. Ms Marashio said that was early on when MSR was developing its first MDP and the MSAC was needing to understand the lease agreement.

Adjourn. Mr Wolf motioned to adjourn the meeting; seconded by Ms Marashio. The meeting was adjourned at 11:35 a.m.

Submitted by Torene Tango-Lowy, MSAC clerk.