

MOUNT WASHINGTON COMMISSION
November 2, 2018 MINUTES (Approved 06/21/19)

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

Call to Order. Chairman Walter Graff/AMC, having a quorum of members, called the meeting to order at 10:04 a.m. Members present were Jen Barnhart/WMNF designee, Ed Bergeron/for Public, Sen Jeb Bradley, Dir Phil Bryce/Div Parks and Rec (DPR), Paul Fitzgerald/for Public, Paul Ingersoll/for Public, Jack Middleton/MWObs, Wayne Presby/Cog Railway (Vice-Chair), Drew Scamman/Townsquare Media, Rep Karen Umberger/House, and Howie Wemyss/Auto Road.

Also present were Robert Blechl/Caledonian Record, Allen Brooks/AG Office, Grant Goulet/DPR, Maggie Hilton/MWSP, Patrick Hummel/MWSP, John Koziol/Union Leader, Tim Lewis/UVM, Tom Mansfield/DNCR Architect, Ryan Presby/Cog Railway, Sharon Schilling/MWObs President, Edith Tucker/Berlin Sun, and Torene Tango-Lowy/MWC clerk.

Minutes. Mr Middleton moved to accept the minutes of July 20, 2018; Mr Presby seconded. The minutes were approved.

Master Plan. Ownership history. MWC Attorney Brooks described his research at the Coos County Registry of Deeds that date back to the early 1800's. In response to Mr Wemyss and Mr Presby, Dir Bryce said that he and DNCR's attorney concur with Attorney Brooks' findings. The parties are free to do their own research of their rights. As recommended by Attorney Brooks, the parties need to meet to resolve the operational issues. Dir Bryce is hopeful that the parties could find reasonable solutions for a seamless visitor experience, such as with handicapped parking, and determine how to resolve the issues in which they don't agree. The parties will meet early next year in preparation of the 2019 season and report back to the MWC at the next meeting. A subcommittee of the MWC may be convened to assist, if needed.

Carrying Capacity. Dir Bryce did not have an update: his focus had been the parking issue along I-93. At the recent Northern Forest Regional Symposium, recreation providers have found that visitors, many who are from large populated areas, don't have a problem with the numbers of people and that they are uncomfortable with being alone. This finding puts emphasis on adequate and clean bathroom facilities. Ms Barnhart said the WMNF has visitor data conducted by UVM.

Fee Collection. Mt Washington Fund. Dir Bryce said the FY 2018 financial report is still in process, but that the Mt Washington Fund is headed in the right direction with its overall revenue up. The Flume contributed \$2 mil to the Parks system. The report will be posted on the Parks website upon release.

Park Retail. Mr Goulet reported that at \$250K last year, summit retail had its best year. Although retail was down 10% this year, it was even with two years ago. He is improving the product mix and reducing spending on COG Sold. He introduced Ms Hilton, the new Gift and Food Service Manager. Mr Goulet is considering ways to improve product delivery to the summit and address space and storage limitations.

Park Ops. New Mount Washington State Park Manager, Patrick Hummel introduced himself and presented his background and experience, see PowerPoint. As the former park manager for Monadnock State Park with Mount Monadnock being the second most climbed mountain following Mount Fuji, Mr Hummel is well versed in issues related to hiker safety and search and rescue. As the Volunteer Coordinator, he collaborated with the division's volunteer partners statewide. Completed projects include the new cafeteria tables that increased the seating capacity, reorganizing the storage areas in the Yankee Building, and code and electrical upgrades. Mr Hummel, Ms Schilling and Mr Wemyss reported on the success of the Trail of Thai Royalty event of last August. Dir Bryce thanked the partners for their involvement.

Planned projects include the need of a new snow cat, retail storage space and layout, credit card processing for food service, improve wall space displays, general repairs and maintenance, Tip Top

House improvements, restoration and interpretation of the Lizzie Bourne portrait, radio set up and protocols, and stabilize staffing shortages.

Capital Improvements. Mr Mansfield reported that the sewage treatment plant monitoring of effluent is complete. The consultant is completing the comparison and analysis of options for sewage treatment, including extending or replacing the treatment plant, or installing a sewer line along the Cog track to a treatment plant at the base. Project completion is expected by the end of the year. A preliminary report on the water system is in review. The estimated cost to move the water tanks to the uphill side of the Sherman Adams Building is \$800K. Hydrofracking and rechecking the Yankee Building well for contamination is also being considered.

The consultant assessing the Yankee Building is back on track with a completed report expected in mid-July. A survey to assess the needs of the communications tenants will be done. DNCR submitted its capital budget for \$1.8 mil for the sewage treatment project and a \$2.5 mil placeholder for the communications facility. Dir Bryce said he hopes to have enough information to support the budget request for the communications facility. Sen Bradley advised him to keep the legislators informed. Mr Presby suggested running a sewer line to Waumbek where installation of a leachfield may be feasible. He is considering converting a cog car into a portable restroom facility and bringing it to the summit.

Partner Reports. Auto Road. Mr Wemyss reported a good summer season until October. They are down ~2%, but up over a five year average. The Glen House hotel opened on September 12th. Road work is planned, contingent on weather. They anticipate a great winter season.

Cog Railway. Mr Presby said they plan to operate to Waumbek station up to Dec 2nd. They are up by 1-2% over last year with a longer operating season. They are completing the assembly of a crane work car at their new maintenance facility that will be used for the rail replacement project.

MWObs. Ms Schilling reported on the new token-operated turnstiles; having less than 1,000 tokens returned from the 55K tokens issued, they are reviewing the process. Admission is up from last year at 170K. They anticipate allocating ~\$25K each to the state fund and the museum fund. The winter schedule is set, and their snow cat/shift changes schedule is being finalized. They have a lot of flying squirrels and mice, and are working with Mr Hummel to resolve the problem.

Townsquare Media. Mr Scamman said they've had a good summer for maintenance projects. They are waiting for parts for the WHOM transmitter and will coordinate with Parks to go up the summit by snow cat. They are interested in the communications facility project, as it relates to housing their equipment.

WMNF. Ms Barnhart reported on their Centennial celebrations. With four snow rangers on board, the avalanche center is ready and general advisories to the public are being posted. They will be attending the 9th annual snow and avalanche workshop. They are also collaborating with the Obs on snow pack analysis and avalanche forecasting.

AMC. Mr Graff said they hosted the September outdoor economy summit on tourism-based economic development; attendees included the U.S. Forest Service and National Parks Service. The number of outdoor-related businesses is growing and is important to the state. AMC had a strong summer and continue to support their school programs in the North Country.

AOB. Dir Bryce will follow up on whether Verizon services will be added at the summit. Mr Hummel will follow up on a question about the fuel tanks. Dir Bryce will schedule a meeting of the partners. Mr Mansfield will keep the MWC updated on the capital projects.

Adjourn. The meeting adjourned at 11:55 p.m. The next meeting is at the call of the chairman, following the partners meeting.

Submitted by T. Tango-Lowy, MWC clerk.