

MOUNT WASHINGTON COMMISSION

August 6, 2019 MINUTES (Approved on June 19, 2020)

A regular meeting of the Mount Washington Commission (MWC) was held at Tip Top House, Mount Washington State Park.

Call to Order. Chairman Walter Graff/AMC, having a quorum of members, called the meeting to order at 10:15 a.m. Members present were 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, John Sinclair/WMNF designee, and Howie Wemyss/Auto Road.

Also present were DNCR Commissioner Sarah Stewart, Earl Duvall/Counsel for Cog Railway, Allen Brooks/AG Office, Jill Perlow/AG Office, Patrick Hummel/MWSP, Seth Prescott/DNCR Project Mgr, Rob Kirsch/MWObs Vice-Chair Trustees, Sharon Schilling/MWObs President, Edith Tucker/Berlin Sun, members of the public and Torene Tango-Lowy/MWC clerk.

Minutes. Mr Ingersoll moved to accept the minutes of June 21, 2019, seconded by Sen Bradley. The minutes were approved as written.

Capital Improvements. Sewage Treatment Plant. Mr Prescott gave an update on the sewage treatment plant upgrades recommended by Underwood Engineers, including replacement of the diffusers to address the nitrification issue and to increase operational efficiency.

Master Plan. Communications facility. DNCR received Mr Bergeron's concerns regarding the potential impact to the Observatory's weather instruments caused by the proposed height increase of the Yankee Building. Dir Bryce said the department is reviewing HL Turner's final report on the Yankee Building assessment.

Cog Railway summit rail. Messrs Presby and Duvall presented Mt Washington Cog Railway's "[Restoration of Track](#)" proposal, see Presentation posted on the MWC webpage. The concept is to restore the length of the summit track by 120-ft. to what existed prior to the track being shortened when the summit switch track was completed (Presentation, p. 17). The purpose of the restoration is to eliminate congestion, allow for easier entrance/exit for passengers, ability to fasten the train to the trestle/platform in case of emergency or weather event, ADA compliant ramp, and improved safety of loading/unloading passengers (p. 8). The restoration includes a platform and ramp that enables riders to more easily load/unload from the cars. See slides p. 5-7 for schematic, scale and rendering.

Members discussed the proposal. Mr Wemyss is concerned about the structure's mass, impact on parking, foot access to the summit and width of the pathway. Mr Ingersoll asked if there could be storage and vehicles parked under the structure. Sen Bradley asked about the approval process and Cog's easement. Mr Brooks, MWC's counsel, said the statute authorizes the MWC to advise the DNCR Commissioner on state-owned property, including the bundle of rights held by the State such as the overlay of the easement. Ms Perlow, DNCR's counsel, said she would advise DNCR to consider whether the proposal is an unreasonable use of the Cog easement. Dir Bryce said the Coos County Planning Board is reviewing the Cog's application for Sit Plan Review and is asking for a response from DNCR as the summit landowner. Dir Bryce does not want Parks to be the arbitrator of the summit rights; he looks to a decision of the State. Mr Fitzgerald asked if the Cog plans to install a restaurant/bar car. Mr Presby said there are no plans for a restaurant/bar car, but his answer is not definitive for the future.

Attendees discussed the details of the structure. Comm Stewart asked about the s.f. of the original platform. Dir Bryce asked the Cog to confirm the scale of the proposed platform, including its height and bulk. Mr Kirsch asked about the steel base that will be high enough for people to walk under.

Construction would occur May 15-June 1, 2020. Ms Schilling asked if there would be enough room for the snowcats to reach the Sherman Adams Building. Mr Presby said some of the rock outcropping could be removed. Members and attendees went outside for a field review.

Members and attendees returned to the meeting room. Mr Graff said the MWC needs to complete its master planning process. Mr Presby said the track restoration was envisioned in the master plan. Sen Bradley asked about the length between the existing track to the end of the proposed track. Mr Presby answered 120-ft. Mr Kirsch asked if the platform could be lowered. Mr Presby said he is willing to consider it, but that the trains work on gravity to start moving. Mr Presby was asked to provide a rendering that shows the track straight on, a perpendicular shot rather than wide angle. The State needs to consider the “reasonableness” of the Cog proposal as it relates to the Cog’s rights. Ms Tango-Lowy will send the members a copy of the Coos County Planning Board minutes (*done*).

Mr Graff thanked Mr Presby and Mr Duvall for the presentation. Any additional comments should be sent to the attention of Commission Stewart and sent to Ms Tango-Lowy. Mr Brooks cautioned against members conducting “electronic” meetings/discussions via email. The comments should stay with Parks and be provided to members at the next MWC meeting. Comm Stewart thanked everyone and looks forward to receiving the commission’s feedback. She asked that members think holistically of the visitor experience 25 years out: the infrastructure needs and how to accommodate the summit needs.

Sen Bradley said the capital budget has a \$125M threshold and is highly competitive. The MWC needs to be on the same page to get capital money for the Yankee Building, the septic system, and other improvements in the pipeline.

Adjourn. The meeting adjourned at 11:55 a.m. The Chair will call for a meeting in September.

Submitted by T. Tango-Lowy, MWC clerk.