

MOUNT WASHINGTON COMMISSION
JANUARY 16, 2015 MINUTES *(Approved 07.07.15)*

A regular meeting of the Mount Washington Commission (MWC) was held at the AMC Pinkham Notch Center on January 16, 2015.

Call to Order. Chairman Walter Graff/AMC called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m. Members present were Director Bryce/Div Parks and Rec, Mark Ericson/Townsquare Media, Martha McLeod/for Public, Jack Middleton/MWObs, Wayne Presby/Mt Wash Railway, Rep. Karen Umberger/House, Tom Wagner/WMNF, and Howie Wemyss/Mt Wash Auto.

Also present were Director Cheney/DOS-Div Emergency Svcs, Bob Christensen/ DOS-Div Emergency Svcs, Mike Carmon/MWObs, Nate Camille and Mike Pelchat/MWSP, Edith Tucker/Coos County Democrat, and Torene Tango-Lowy/MWC clerk.

Director Bryce wished to recognize the contributions of Scot Henley, who recently left MWObs. The MWC had a moment of silence to honor Gail Scott of the Berlin Daily Sun.

Minutes. Rep. Umberger moved to accept the minutes of May 13, 2014; Mr. Ericson seconded. The minutes were approved as written.

Capital Improvements. DOS has critical communications and infrastructure housed in the Yankee Building. The building is in dire need of fire suppression and alarm protection. DOS will work with DRED to pursue grant funding. Director Bryce may seek support from the MWC to use a portion of the Mt. Washington Fund toward this initiative, if needed.

Master Plan. This effort was put on hold when the contracted facilitator left. *NEW: Notes taken from the Master Plan Session on 12/13/13 indicate that the MWC considered creating a Master Plan subcommittee, but the question was not resolved.*

Financial Report. Director Bryce provided his report on the Mt. Washington Fund account. Approx. \$100K was transferred to complete the entryway project; the fund's ending balance is \$65K. Trend analysis reports over FY 2011-2014 were also provided. The Director will review the power numbers and allocation of costs. The Mt. Washington Fund is the only park fund that does not contribute to the State Park Fund that supports the park system. DRED Land Agent Bill Carpenter has drafted the RFQ for an appraisal on the communications leases.

Capital Improvements. Mr. Pelchat provided a slide presentation and report of the 2014 improvements. Members recommended that the summit facilities remain closed to the public during the winter. Parks will work with summit partners on a public announcement to remind the public that the facilities are closed in the winter.

Parks is looking to extend the entryway to the Yankee Building to construct a self-contained storage space for the AMC, currently using space in the Sherman Adams Building (SAB). This would improve the look and public use of the SAB. Refer to Mr. Pelchat's report for other projects and operating stats.

State Park Operations. Director Bryce reported on the 50th anniversary celebration held at the Museum of the White Mountains on October 16, 2014. He thanked Mr. Graff and Mr. Middleton for speaking at the event. A video created for the event by Parks was shown at the close of the meeting.

Negotiations of agreements. Director Bryce informed the MWC that the lease with the Auto Road expires in June, 2015. Negotiations between Parks and the Auto Road have commenced.

Promotion of summit. Members discussed visitor surveying and resources for visitor feedback, including the use of Trip Advisor. Mr. Wagner will share WMNF visitor surveys done every five years.

Natural resource protection. Mr. Pelchat reported that the Natural Heritage Bureau will be investigating the summit test wells. Mr. Wagner reported on the White Nose Syndrome affecting the bat population: the affected species, with 90% mortality, are those that winter in caves.

Partner Reports.

Auto Road. Mr. Wemyss reported a successful 2014 season with good weather. Their 2015 projects include paving and replacing the summit stage office.

Cog Railway. Mr. Presby reported their third record year with 91K passengers. The summit switch track will be completed by mid-summer and an additional diesel locomotive will be added. Passengers will be able to return on any train, thereby extending their summit visit.

Observatory. Mr. Carmon reported on the staffing changes: President Ed Bergeron is serving as Interim Executive Director and Mr. Carmon is serving as Interim Director of Summit Operations. The Extreme Mount Washington museum has been well received.

Townsquare Media. Mr. Ericson reported on IT and Fairpoint issues. They plan to replace a summit transmitter that is more robust for the environment and would provide power savings.

WMNF. Mr. Wagner said it was a good summer. The Dry River trail has re-opened and Dolly Copp campground will be refurbished. National Guard will be better coordinate with the WMNF for its training exercises in the Great Gulf. There is a new district ranger stationed in Conway. The Gorham assistant ranger can assist with the Master Plan project.

AMC. Mr. Graff said they had a strong year, a three year record for the hut system. AMC membership is up. He gave an update on the Coos County-based educational programs funded by a Tillotson grant.

Other Business. No other business.

Adjourn. The meeting was adjourned at 12:30 p.m.

Submitted by T. Tango-Lowy, MWC clerk.