

Mount Washington Commission (RSA 227-B)  
**Fee Subcommittee**  
January 8, 2021 Meeting Minutes (*Approved 01/29/2021*)

A regular meeting of the Mount Washington Commission Fee Subcommittee was held by Zoom videoconference. Subcommittee chairman Jeb Bradley called the meeting to order at 10:05 a.m. in accordance with the *Checklist compliant with the Right-to-Know Law during the State of Emergency*.

Attendance was taken by roll call with all attendees alone, except as indicated: Ed Bergeron/for Public, Sen Jeb Bradley; Dir Phil Bryce/Div Parks & Rec and Torene Tango-Lowy/MWC clerk; Paul Fitzgerald/for Public; Paul Cunha/AMC; Derek Ibarguen/WMNF; Jack Middleton/MWObs; Wayne Presby/MW Railway; Drew Scamman/Townsquare Media; Howie Wemyss/MW Auto Road; Allen Brooks/MWC counsel; Donna Dunn/MW Obs; Michael Haley/DNCR counsel; Patrick Hummel/DPR; Rob Kirsch/MWObs; Tim Lewis/VTU; Gary MacDonald/MWObs; Jonathan Melanson/Gov's Office; Ryan Presby/MW Railway; Tobey Rechert/MW Auto Road; Commissioner Sarah Stewart/DNCR; and Edith Tucker/Coos County Democrat.

A memo from Commr Stewart and Dir Bryce was provided to the MWC on Dec 10, 2020, for consideration of an admission fee proposal. Dir Bryce sent additional information to the Fee Subcommittee, dated Jan 8, 2021. Topics covered were: 1) Reasons for proposal; 2) Goals & elements of fees; 3) Parks lease revenue; 4) State Park financial performance; 5) Projected attendance and fee revenue; and 6) Justification for fees. Although the current lease with the MWObs prohibits Parks from charging fees, the parties are willing to amend the lease that would provide adequate resources for both parties. Mt Washington State Park has operated at a loss and its dedicated funding account does not contribute toward the overhead administrative costs for the park system. \$3.5-\$4M capital investment is needed at the summit and a \$4 fee could bring an estimated \$800K/yr. in additional revenue to support park services and improvements. Dir Bryce reviewed the division's FY20 financials, including the impact of COVID, the unexpected summit treatment plant repairs, and the \$24K (*correction*) Statewide Central Services Program (SWCAP) transfer from the State Park Fund to the General Fund by Administrative Services for agency indirect cost recovery.

Attendees discussed the topics at length. Could the 300 person capacity of the Sherman Adams Building (SAB) be increased, such as standing v. seated capacity, installing a sprinkler system or an additional exit? If capacity is decreased, could the design and cost of the new treatment plant also be reduced? Mr Bergeron said that the current treatment plant is being used over its design capacity. The capacity of the new treatment plant is based on the need to provide services for the 300-350K visitors of the SAB each year.

The reservation system and options were discussed, such as timed entry v. for-the-day, no-shows, and varied pricing based on demand. Mr Hummel said the reservation system and timed entry worked well, but managing the crowds will be challenging when both floors open. The building capacity excludes the deck. The Tip Top House could be staffed and added to the reservation system. Dir Bryce said that the \$4 fee is the base fee for entry into state parks. Although the fee has not changed since 2009, Dir Bryce does not want it to be a deterrent for families to enter a state park. A PR effort can explain to the public the necessity and benefit of fees.

Several MWC attendees expressed support for a fee and want to collaborate on how it would work for Auto Road, Cog Railway and MWObs guests. Summit operators need to be treated fairly, with no one entity being subsidized. How will a new fee impact existing partner agreements? Partner relationships and agreements need review and a critical analysis. Current agreements with DNCR are found at the bottom of the [MWC webpage](#).

Chair Bradley said this was a great discussion. The following open items and questions are listed below, and will need to be answered in preparation for the Fee Package submittal to Fiscal Committee.

1. Amend the lease w/ MWObS to enable Parks to charge fees
  - a. Parks & MWObS will work out the logistics of providing Observatory tours to MWObS members
2. Ask the State Fire Marshall about the
  - a. Capacity of the SAB and how it might be increased
  - b. Factors that determine the SAB capacity, such a seated vs. standing capacity, sprinkler system, or egress
3. Ask Tom Mansfield about the capacity of the sewer treatment plant, based on the SAB capacity
4. Consider consulting with professionals that have crowd management and facility entrance and processing expertise, such as Disney
5. Consider a fee structure based on weekday vs. weekend or distinct timeslot/demand (Note that this was responded to at the meeting and no further action will be taken)
6. Conduct an analysis on the
  - a. valuation of all summit contracts and contributions vs. the benefits received
  - b. fee charged vs. demand; fee charged vs. services provided
7. Consider a reservation system that allows timed entry, addresses length of stay and compare with admission fee for the day
  - a. How will Parks manage the capacity when both floors of the SAB are open?
  - b. What about the need for shelter during bad weather?
  - c. Tip Top House fees? Staffing?
8. Ask AG Office about whether a portion of the Mount Washington Fund can contribute towards the State Park System overhead administrative costs

**The next MWC meeting is scheduled for Jan 29, 2021, at 10 a.m. by Zoom.** The agenda will include updates on projects, COVID operations, and continued discussion on the fee structure. No votes or motions were made during this videoconference meeting.

Mr Bergeron motioned to adjourn; seconded by Mr Presby. The meeting adjourned at 11:10 a.m. by roll call vote.

*Submitted by T. Tango-Lowy*