

MOUNT SUNAPEE ADVISORY COMMITTEE (RSA 21-G:11)
JUNE 23, 2016 MINUTES *(Approved w/ amendments, 05/31/17)*

A meeting of the Mount Sunapee Advisory Committee (MSAC) was held at the Newbury Town Offices on June 23, 2016.

Call to Order. Director Bryce called the meeting to order at 10:15 a.m. Commissioner Jeff Rose, Chairman, arrived during introductions. Members present were Melanie Bell/Town of Goshen, Director Philip Bryce/Div. Parks and Recreation (DPR), Sara Colson/Lake Sunapee Region Chamber (LSRC), Tim Drew/DES, June Fichter/Lake Sunapee Protective Association (LSPA), Nancy Marashio/Society for the Protection of NH Forests (SPNHF), Nathan Miller/Upper Valley Lake Sunapee Regional Planning Commission (UVLSRPC), Sabrina Stanwood/Div. Forests and Lands (DFL), and Dan Wolf/Town of Newbury. Newly appointed member, Doug King/NHDOT, was not present as he is completing the necessary paperwork with the Secretary of State.

Also present were several members of the public, Jay Gamble/Mount Sunapee Resort, Patrick Hummel/DPR, and Torene Tango-Lowy/MSAC clerk.

Minutes. Ms. Stanwood requested an amendment to the March 17, 2016 minutes. The amended minutes were adopted with one abstention.

Mount Sunapee Resort Annual Operating Plan 2016-2017. Mr. Gamble gave a brief overview of the AOP. Topics included hiking restrictions in the South Peak Adventure Park area for public safety considerations (p. 7); the 2016 calendar of events (p. 9); skier visits and the winter weather challenges of the 2015-2016 season (pp. 12 & 15); a comprehensive list of Best Management Practices (BMPs), provided at the request of Commissioner Rose (p. 30); and planned improvements during the 2016-2017 AOP (pp. 35-36). Previously planned projects listed on pp. 37-38 will not be constructed during the summer, 2016.

Mr. Gamble responded to questions from the Committee. Capital improvements are prioritized by the total capital costs, guest needs and input, and optimized use of the area. The state beach parking lot is used periodically during winter peak days for staff and overflow parking, but other winter recreationists access the lake from the parking lot. Commissioner Rose acknowledged the challenging 2015-2016 winter ski season: Ski NH reported a decrease of 25-40% in skier visits industry wide due to poor winter weather across the state. As with many ski areas, including Franconia Notch, summer activities enable year round revenue.

Ms. Fichter asked if more details on erosion control, and stream and storm water protection of Beck Brook could be provided in future AOPs. The LSPA is concerned about storm water runoff from Beck Brook. Mr. Drew encouraged LSPA to collaborate with the regional planning commission to apply for a grant through DES to complete a watershed plan that could focus on Beck Brook. Mr. Drew also reported that DES had reviewed the AOP and, after following up with Mr. Gamble on some open issues, found Mount Sunapee Resort in full compliance with DES programs.

Ms. Stanwood requested that the NHB be consulted during the siting of the new mountain bike trail in the Adventure Park. The NHB will schedule a field visit in July. The NHB requests that Part J of the Environmental Management Program section (p. 27) include the greater fringed-gentian (*Gentianopsis crinite*), a plant species recently found at Mount Sunapee. The NHB lists the plant as "State Threatened" meaning that the plant is likely to become an endangered species within the foreseeable future throughout all or a significant portion of its range within the state. Mount Sunapee Resort will delay mowing until after mid-August to protect this population, just as it does for the Duckling (Jet Stream) ski slope.

Mr. Miller appreciated the expanded BMP listing and asked if summer visitation could be added to the AOP. Mr. Gamble expressed concern about providing what would normally be private business information.

Discussion continued: could macro-level visitation trends be reported? the State leased to a private operator; as long as there is no damage to state resources or health and safety issues, the operation is privately run and the operator retains its rights beyond what is required under the lease; the lease agreement does not require disclosure of visitation; the AOP reports out certain activities, as outlined in the lease, on a macro-level; unless contrary to the lease, it is up to Mount Sunapee Resort to share any proprietary information; capital investments are not a simple decision and the State is not responsible for these business decisions. Mr. Miller requested that the minutes reflect the discussion on the distinction between what information is publicly disclosed under the lease and what may be privately held by a private operator.

Ms. Marashio received clarification that the lease requires that the operator pay, as part of the rent, three percent (3%) of its gross annual revenues from the operation of the ski area, not just the ski activities; therefore, the payment includes revenue from the operation of the summer activities.

Mr. Miller acknowledged Mount Sunapee Resort's support of the New England Handicap Sports Association (NEHSA) and asked about the expansion of their building. Mr. Gamble reported that Mount Sunapee Resort is a corporate sponsor of NEHSA, such as providing ski tickets to NEHSA staff, parking, and utilities. Mount Sunapee Resort supports NEHSA's plans to expand the existing NEHSA building located within the leasehold. The building is owned by NEHSA, who has a separate lease with the State. As NEHSA moves forward with its expansion plans, they will continue to work with Mount Sunapee Resort and DPR, including compliance with the federal Land and Water Conservation Fund program.

Hiking Trails. Mr. Hummel was the park manager of Monadnock State Park prior to taking his current position as Volunteer Coordinator and has a good understanding of issues related to hiking trails. His office has stepped up the effort to have Volunteer Agreements with its volunteers to outline the scope of work, proper skillset and training, and liability protections. Commissioner Rose and Mr. Hummel met with the parties to review the Memorandum of Agreement (MOA) and the current condition of the Summit Hiking Trail. Mount Sunapee Resort is fine with the MOA and Sunapee Ragged Kearsarge Greenway Coalition (SRKG) is reviewing the document. Some of the needed trail work is beyond the abilities of the SRKG, such as using chainsaws. Mount Sunapee Resort staff is properly trained and have been able to assist with work requiring chainsaws. Mr. Hummel will help the parties develop an annual work plan for the hiking trails within the leasehold.

Any Other Business. Mr. Miller asked if the revenue earned from summer activities could be applied directly to Mount Sunapee State Park. Director Bryce explained that the lease payment, including the 3% of revenue, is deposited to the Cannon Capital Improvement Fund by statute. Cannon's use of the Cannon Capital Improvement Fund enables more money from the State Park Fund to be used towards deferred maintenance park system wide, including at Mount Sunapee State Park. Recent improvements at Mount Sunapee State Park include upgrades at the state beach area and parking lot, a new playground, and improvements at the campground. Director Bryce will seek DOT's help with engineering solutions to address the water runoff problems of Campground Road.

Adjourn. The meeting adjourned at 11:40 a.m. The next meeting is at the call of the Chair.

Submitted by Torene Tango-Lowy, MSAC clerk.