

MOUNT WASHINGTON COMMISSION
June 21, 2019 MINUTES (Approved on 08/06/19)

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 10:05 a.m. Members present were 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, Diane Taliaferro/WMNF designee, Rep Wayne Moynihan/House, and Howie Wemyss/Auto Road.

Also present were Rob Adair and Barry Hoeg/HL Turner Group, Allen Brooks/AG Office, Alex Fries/Gov Office, Patrick Hummel/MWSP, Mike Pelchat/consultant to HL Turner Group, Seth Prescott/DNCR Project Mgr, Sharon Schilling/MWObs President, Edith Tucker/Berlin Sun, members of the public and Torene Tango-Lowy/MWC clerk.

Minutes. Mr Middleton moved to accept the minutes of November 2, 2018, and was seconded. The minutes were approved as written.

Master Plan. Communications facility. HL Turner Group presented their findings on the assessment of the Yankee Building (see [presentation](#) posted on the [MWC webpage](#)). The project work consisted of eight tasks, including a survey of communications tenants. The building has served well, although functionality is an issue. Recommendations include fire suppression systems, renovating and expanding the Yankee Building with the North Wing Phase I for \$5M and South Wing for \$4.2M, a new tower to replace the Armstrong Tower and RCA Tower, Phase 3 for \$2.5M for a total of \$12,884,505 including a 10% contingency. Members discussed the assessment and recommendations at length. The potential for additional communications tenants could offset some of the cost. The old generator foundation would be filled-in and used as a viewing platform. Equipment interference would be reduced by tailoring the rooms to the needs of the tenants.

Comm Stewart said the project addresses public safety concerns and requires broad legislative support with a coalition of public support. Sen Bradley spoke to the capital budget process and the state's current project priorities. This project will need to get into the next capital budget cycle beginning in Fall 2020. The economic value of the summit needs to be a focus. The MWC partners will need to work cooperatively to convince the Governor's Office and legislature to support the project request.

Sewage Treatment Plant. Mr Prescott gave a brief on HEB & Underwood Engineers assessment of the sewer pipeline feasibility study (see [Technical Memo](#) posted on the MWC webpage). HEB/Underwood considered summer only and year-round operations. They recommend having the wastewater and sewer treatment remain at the summit. Their recommendation is based on: the capital costs of the pipeline project is expected to be greater than the cost of expanding/replacing the summit treatment plant, the staff will need to meet the operational and maintenance challenges, the sewage treatment facilities at the base would be located on private land and would require easements, and additional study is needed for the subsurface disposal of high-strength wastewater. Mr Presby suggested considering a pipeline and treatment plant partway down the summit. Mr Prescott said the Cannon sewer pipeline works well in summer, but is a challenge in the winter when the volume of wastewater needed to operate the system effectively is too low. Members discussed the issue further.

Fee Collection. Park Ops. Mr Hummel provided his report on park operations (see his [presentation](#) posted on the MWC webpage). The first snowfall occurred on Oct 13th and the park buildings closed for the season on Oct 22nd. Winter work included cleaning, organizing and maintenance. A new sign for Tip Top House was installed, credit cards are now accepted for food service, and G&C approved the purchase of a new SnowCat. Chris Uggerholt, a long-time park staff of 20+ years, passed away on Jan 9th and will be missed. The first Cog train arrived on the summit on May 11th. The bathrooms were opened for that run with the SAB opened for the season on May 25th. Planned improvements include the Tip Top House, trash and recycling bins, improve interpretive displays, and hire a Plant Maintenance Engineer.

Partner Reports. Auto Road. Mr Wemyss reported a slow start to the season due to weather. They are in their 158th year of operations.

Cog Railway. Mr Presby said they are celebrating their 150th anniversary. They continue to work on replacing the entire line of rail.

MWObs. Ms Schilling reported two 171 mph wind gust events. Rebecca Scholand is returning as the Summit Operations Manager.

Townsquare Media. Mr Scamman said they made it through the winter, although they lost internet and microwave service when WHOM went down for several hours.

WMNF. Ms Taliaferro said the WMNF participates in the Alternative Transportation Group that is working on the I-93 parking issue and commends the State on setting out traffic cones and providing the shuttle service. They are celebrating the 200th anniversary of Crawford Path. The White Mountain Trail Collective was established to facilitate trail work. There are proposed rule changes going through the NEPA process. It is the 75th anniversary of Smokey the Bear and a celebration at Franconia Notch State Park is scheduled for August 15th. Three fatalities and one person still missing is a concern.

AMC. Mr Graff agreed that people are taking more risks when hiking. The AMC introduced the iNaturalist.org program that encourages hikers to take part in the Northeast Alpine Flower Watch project.

AOB. Mr Graff will call for another meeting to enable summit partners to work together on issues, as suggested by Sen Bradley. Agenda items include the carrying capacity study, the contract differences between the MWObs and the Cog, and the Cog's extension of its rail tract at the summit. He said the MWC needs to step-up and advise the Dept of Natural and Cultural Resources on these issues.

Adjourn. The meeting adjourned at 12:05 p.m. The next meeting is at the call of the Chair.

Submitted by T. Tango-Lowy, MWC clerk.