

State Park System Advisory Council (RSA 216-A:3-kk)
June 10, 2019 Meeting Minutes (*Approved on 01.10.20*)

A regular meeting of the State Park System Advisory Council (SPAC) held at the Willey House, Crawford Notch State Park, was called to order by Chairman Gilbert. A quorum was present.

Council members present: Chair Gilbert for business, Rick Blanchette/Friends of the Wapack, Dir Bryce/DNCR designee, Buddy Dionne for motorized recreation, Rep Ebel/PW&H, Ruth Griffin/Public, Matt Leahy/SPNHF, Rep Renzullo/RR&D, and Rep S. Smith/RR&D Chair.

Also present: Commissioner Stewart, Art Charbonneau/Supv Central Region Parks, Janet Damiano/VP Forest Lake Assn (FLA), John Dickerman/Crawford Notch Manager, Eric Feldbaum/Community Rec, Grant Goulet/Retail Supv, Ellen Hays/past Pres FLA, Mike Housman/Supv Park Ops, Chris Marino/DNCR Business Admin, Ben Wilson/Dir Historic Sites, Brent Wucher/Parks Public Information Officer, and Torene Tango-Lowy/SPAC clerk.

Call to Order: Chair Gilbert called the meeting to order at 10:10 a.m. Attendees introduced themselves.

Advise the Director: *Director's Report.* The report was sent in advance. Members may provide any additional comments to Dir Bryce. There are 10K park plates registered and represent 10% of the park budget at \$753K.

Roundtable. Mr Dionne said the experience and staff at Lake Francis Campground were great. Rep Smith commented on the parking situation along I-93 at Franconia Notch State Park. Dir Bryce will provide the variety of passes and complimentary entry into parks that the tollbooth staff contend with at the next meeting.

FY2019 Financial Forecast. Mr Marino discussed the Parks Forecast Q4 2019 report. At this writing, the ending balance of (\$1.6M) is due to encumbrances, supplemental funding of capital projects, planned investments, and deferred maintenance projects. Dir Bryce discussed planned parks improvements, deferred maintenance of over \$1M, FEMA projects, rainy days impact up to \$2M in revenue, being "out of space" with park capacity at 100% on holiday weekends, and campground improvements. Unfortunately, the campground-bonding bill (HB 580) was killed in the House.

Discussion topics. Mr Wucher reported on Parks advertising plans and social media strategy to market to NY, CT and RI visitors, and to encourage weekday visits and extended vacation days. Franconia Notch State Park was voted as one of the nation's top 50 state parks.

Dir Bryce reported on the proposed landfill in Dalton that abuts Forest Lake State Park. The applicant filed for a lot-line adjustment with the planning board, but it was denied. The town is considering emergency zoning. Parks would consider potential impacts, such as water quality. Although currently a no-fee area, a campground could potentially be sited at that state park.

Members discussed the hiker shuttle service at Franconia Notch. Dir Bryce said the Parks has no jurisdiction over I-93. However, Parks was able to quickly implement the shuttle service program, given the financial flexibility granted to Parks by statute. The service is working well, but needs to pay for itself: riders are charged \$5. Parks plans to charge a parking fee at Lafayette Place and the Falling Waters trailhead to encourage people to park further out and use the shuttle service. The WMNF, Forest Society and North Country Council received a grant for a transportation study. Comm Stewart has a good working relationship with DOT and DOS.

Dir Bryce said Parks would update its administrative rules to implement the smoking ban just signed into law, clarify its permitting requirements, the bus pass program, group use and drones. He will look to Council to participate in the public hearings to be held around the state. He also plans to submit an updated Fee Package that was last approved by the Fiscal Committee in 2012. Parks performance reporting will be sent to the Council and posted online.

Capital & Parks Improvement Project: The Jenness Bathhouse grand opening is scheduled on June 14th. Mr Housman reported on the four-season bathhouse at Monadnock, the Umbagog bathhouse and seawall repair at Ellacoya. Mr Marino reviewed the FY2020-2021 capital budget request passed by the Senate at \$6.685M, reduced from the House amendments of \$7.485M. Rep Ebel reports that the House concurs with the Senate capital budget amendments. DNCR had submitted a total of \$14.4M in capital projects. \$1.9M was requested for campground toilet buildings and \$720K is apportioned. Dir Bryce appreciates the support of legislature for Parks budget. Parks will use some of its operating budget for campground improvements, but continual investment is important. The \$740K for the Sunapee beach boat ramp was not a DNCR request and although there is potential to provide additional boating access, the geographical constraints will not provide deep-water boat access that NHFG's Wild Goose site was to provide. Parks is concerned about the impact to beach goers, the ongoing maintenance and dredging costs, and the feasibility of the proposed design. Mr Leahy spoke about Recreational Trail Program (RTP) grants for trail maintenance, such as at Monadnock.

Act as an Advocate for State Park System: Legislation. Rep Smith and Dir Bryce reviewed Parks-related bills, including the Sunapee boat ramp, off-leash dogs, smoking restrictions through rule-making, horse manure, and OHRV trails. The Hampton parking fee bill was killed and the rooms tax bill would not affect RV/tent campsites. Some bills were re-referred in Committee.

Agreements. Members discussed the Beach Butler proposal and concluded with concerns about exclusive use and financial equity. The Council agreed that the seacoast parking lease program should not expand. The program should continue to support the overnight lodging businesses, but not facilities that have converted to residential condominiums.

Approve Minutes: Mr Blanchette motioned to approve the Sept 28, 2018, minutes; seconded by Ms Griffin. The minutes were approved.

Public Comment: Ms Hays and Ms Damiano expressed their concerns about the landfill proposal submitted by Casella. Concerns include water and groundwater quality, wetland impacts, air pollution and smells, seagulls and truck traffic. The Bethlehem landfill is a real world example. Casella has not yet submitted its DES permit applications.

Adjourn. The meeting adjourned at 12:20 p.m. Lunch was provided, followed by a tour of the Willey House and Crawford Notch State Park.

Submitted by T. Tango-Lowy