

MOUNT WASHINGTON COMMISSION
June 17, 2016 MINUTES *(Approved on 12.16.16)*

A regular meeting of the Mount Washington Commission (MWC) was held at the Tip Top House, Mount Washington State Park.

Call to Order. Chairman Walter Graff/AMC called the meeting to order at 10:10 a.m. Members present were Sen. Jeb Bradley, Dir. Phil Bryce/Div. Parks and Rec (DPR), Mark Ericson/Townsquare Media, Paul Fitzgerald/for Public, Jack Middleton/MWObs, Wayne Presby/Cog Railway, Rep Karen Umberger/House, Tom Wagner/WMNF, and Howie Wemyss/Mt Wash Auto.

Also present were Commissioner Jeff Rose/DRED, Jennifer Barnhart/WMNF, Allen Brooks/AG Office, Nate Camille/MWSP, Mike Carmon /MWObs, Jake Lamontagne/DPR, Mike Pelchat/MWSP, Seth Prescott/DRED, Fallon Reed/Dept. of Safety, Anna Rulli/DPR Intern, Edith Tucker/Reporter, and Torene Tango-Lowy/MWC clerk.

Minutes. Mr. Middleton moved to accept the minutes of March 18, 2016; Rep. Umberger seconded. The minutes were approved as written.

Master Plan. Rep. Umberger reported on the Master Plan Subcommittee's tour of the Yankee Building. Discussion included emergency measures, structural soundness, efficient use of space, and organization of communications equipment. The subcommittee suggests that DRED assess the Yankee Building to determine any needed capital budget requests. Discussion continued regarding the logistics of renovations or new construction, impacts to communications tenants, and the need to consult with the Div. of Historical Resources on Yankee's historical value.

Dir. Bryce provided a copy of DRED's FY 2018-23 Capital Budget request that includes \$936K for a sewage treatment plant and \$200K in FY' 18-19 and \$3mil in FY'20-21 towards the Yankee Building. DRED Architect Tom Mansfield relayed to Dir. Bryce that he thinks the proposed \$3mil is too low. Rep. Umberger reiterated the need for an assessment of the building.

Potential funding sources was discussed, including federal Homeland Security grants. Dir. Bryce explained that the summit communications revenue is allocated to pay the bond for the purchase of the Dartmouth summit parcel and that Mt. Washington is the only park whose revenue does not contribute back to the greater state park system that supports non-revenue parks, park system operations, and deferred maintenance.

Rep. Umberger also suggested the need for a study of the summit's capacity and that the State should consider Mr. Presby's proposal to have a sewer line installed along the Cog track and a sewage treatment plant at the Cog base, similar to Cannon's system. Dir. Bryce said that the \$936K capital budget request is for a new summit sewage treatment plant; this was prior to the discussion of a summit-to-base sewer line and base station sewage treatment facility.

The subcommittee is not likely to continue meeting, but offered assistance with the review of an RFP for the capacity study. Dir. Bryce said the Mt. Washington Fund FY 2016 report is being completed before we know what monies may be available to fund the study. Mr. Wagner suggested the need to understand both the social/visitor experience and the carrying capacity of the summit. Mr. Wemyss recommended getting a copy of Colorado's Pike's Peak Master Plan.

Fee Collection. Dir. Bryce said the FY 2016 financial reports are being completed. In answer to member's questions, both the summit communications and Obs lease payments are deposited to the Mt. Washington Fund. Further discussion will occur at the next meeting when the final reports should be available.

Capital Improvements. Septic System. DRED Public Works Manager Seth Prescott reported that he works closely with DES on all permitting and that DES has been very collaborative with DRED on the summit treatment plant. He requested of DES a study period for the nitrate/ammonia levels. The treatment plant is rated to process 3000 gal./day. Some days, 7000 gallons of sewage is produced, requiring storage. The study would help determine what the system can handle, what the needs are, and will contribute towards the development of a long-term sewage treatment plan. Mr. Prescott responded to the limitations of using the decommissioned empty above ground fuel storage tanks to store unprocessed sewage. DES has requested that DRED have a Level II wastewater treatment certified operator who can provide the required technical reports and system modifications to improve performance. The current long-term plan focuses on the existing treatment plant: it does not address the potential need to increase the system's capacity.

Park Operations. Mr. Pelchat reported a mild winter and cold/icy spring. The park opened mid-May. Nate Camille is in training as Plant Manager II to focus on the wastewater treatment plant. Jim Sherrard recently retired. Park staff assisted with four rescues and one body recovery; there was report of a hiker with a hand gun that was dealt with. The Commission discussed search and rescue (S&R) costs: Sen. Bradley had proposed legislation for payment of rescue on a sliding scale that was opposed by the volunteer S&R community. The bill was amended to what is now the Hike Safe Card and generates \$75K to NHF&G.

Replacement of the Tip Top House ceiling is 90% done. The Commission was encouraged to tour the new Sherman Adams entryway that provides shelter to Cog passengers, enables better trash handling, and is more visually appealing and better operating doors.

Partner Reports. Auto Road. Mr. Wemyss reported that they are in their 155th season and had a great Memorial Day weekend. Paving is delayed to fall due to the spring weather. Renovation of the Stage Office is on hold. Motorcycles Only Day brought 2,100 riders. The annual footrace is scheduled for Saturday and the Sunrise drive is on Sunday. They expect to break ground on the base Hotel in the coming months. Rep. Umberger discussed traffic control on Route 16.

Cog Railway. Mr. Presby reported that the summit switch is complete and they are starting to lay down the planks. They plan to have the switch operational next spring. They are running triples to the summit on a regular basis: two steamers and six diesels make their biggest fleet yet. They redid the base station over the winter and will be paving the parking lots. Memorial Day weekend had one of their biggest days ever.

MWObs. Mr. Carmon expects a busy year with new booking software for summer day trips in partnership with the Auto Road. This year is the 16th annual Seek the Peak and 367 hikers have registered so far.

Townsquare Media. Mr. Erickson reported minimal winter damage to their communications equipment. A tower crew will be onsite on Monday for any needed repairs.

WMNF. Mr. Wagner introduced the Androscoggin District Ranger Jennifer Barnhart. They responded to the shooter incident: no one was hurt. It was an uneventful winter and June 1st marks the return of S&R responsibilities to NHF&G. They are recruiting for a new snow ranger. Due to a bid protest, the renovation of the Dolly Copp Campground will be delayed. Current projects include a trail survey to gage the hiker experience, continuation of dandelion removal and continued collaboration with partners to raise hiker safety awareness.

AMC. Mr. Graff reported that they also expect a busy season; the hut system is reaching capacity. They are expanding their education programs in Coos County and in Maine.

Other Business. Mr. Graff thanked Commissioner Rose, the Master Plan Subcommittee and Dir. Bryce for their support of Mount Washington. Commissioner Rose thanked the Commission for the important work it does, recognizing that there are many challenges and stakeholders that must consider what they would like to do and what the realities are in providing for the services and safety of the public. Sen. Bradley agreed that more could be done with strong planning and proposal documents supporting the capital budget request. Sen. Bradley and Rep. Umberger will help to support a realistic budget request for the summit.

Ms. Fallon from Dept. of Safety/Homeland Security and Emergency Management (HSEM) introduced herself and reported that she had met with Mr. Bergeron/MWObs about potential grant funding to develop an emergency action plan for the summit. She also informed the Commission that her office offers “active shooter” training called CRASE (Civil Response to Active Shooter Event). All state employees are required to take the training and those interested in the course can contact her for more information.

The meeting schedule is as follows:

- September 16 at 10 a.m., Tip Top House (weather permitting)
- December 16 at 10 a.m., location TBA
- March 17, 2017 at 10 a.m., location TBA
- June 16, 2017 at 10 a.m., Tip Top House (weather permitting)

Adjourn. The meeting was adjourned at noon.

Submitted by T. Tango-Lowy, MWC clerk.