

MOUNT SUNAPEE ADVISORY COMMISSION (RSA 21-G:11)
MAY 29, 2019 MINUTES *(Approved 06/09/20, Roll Call Vote: 8 yea, 2 abstention)*

A meeting of the Mount Sunapee Advisory Commission (MSAC) was held at the Town of Newbury Veterans Hall on May 29, 2019, a quorum being present.

In attendance. Members present were Sarah Stewart/Dept Natural and Cultural Resources (DNCR) Commissioner & MSAC Chairman, Melanie Bell/Town of Goshen, Director Philip Bryce/Div Parks and Recreation (DPR), June Fichter/Lake Sunapee Protective Association (LSPA), Doug King/Dept of Transportation (DOT), Nancy Marashio/Society for the Protection of NH Forests (SPNHF), Steven Schneider/Upper Valley Lake Sunapee Regional Planning Commission (UVLSRPC), Sabrina Stanwood/Div Forests and Lands (DFL), and Dan Wolf/Town of Newbury.

Also present were members of the public, Senator Ruth Ward, Bruce Schmidt and staff/Mount Sunapee Resort (MSR), Seth Prescott/DPR, and Torene Tango-Lowy/MSAC clerk.

Call to Order. Commissioner Stewart called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m. She and the members introduced themselves to the audience.

Minutes. Ms Fichter moved to approve the June 19, 2018 minutes; Mr Wolf seconded. The minutes were adopted as written.

Mount Sunapee Resort Annual Operating Plan 2018-2019 (AOP). Mr Schmidt recognized and thanked Jay Gamble for the work he accomplished as the Resort's VP/General Manager. Mr Schmidt worked with the Mueller's for 36 years, recently as the VP/General Manager at Okemo. He said the AOP is in the same format as previous plans and went through the 2018-2019 AOP. Refer to the AOP for specific information. An addendum to the AOP will be provided to clarify discrepancies.

Mr Schmidt pointed out the updates MSR has made to the AOP, including the following: As a publically traded company, Vail does not publically disclose its visitation (AOP p. 12). The Duckling Double lift will be removed and sent to State surplus (p. 14). Snowmaking has averaged 702 hours over the last five years (p. 15). The Emergency Operating Plan will be updated with new contact information (p. 20). The Resort used the state beach parking lot once during the 2018-19 ski season. The Rare Plant Resources section (p. 27) will be updated in the addendum to capture comments from the Natural Heritage Bureau. The Resort will continue to follow Best Management Practices (p. 29). The State Parks logo was included on the summit sign and the Resort will continue to work with Parks to emphasize the partnership on its signage and in its marketing (p. 33). Maintenance projects are planned this summer, estimated at \$600K (pp. 35-36). Dir of Mountain Ops Alan Ritchie is retiring after 30+ years at Mount Sunapee.

Mr Schmidt answered questions from the MSAC members about the 2018-19 ski season and the Epic Pass, including how the Epic Pass is accounted for as part of the lease payments to the State. Dir Bryce stated that skier visits and the Pass programs would be disclosed to the State as part of MSR's independent audited financial reports. The State recently conducted its own audit and the Division has audited MSR's records onsite at Okemo. Ms Marashio appreciated the long overdue updates to the signage. Ms Fichter said she looks forward to working with MSR as the LSPA works on the 2019 watershed plan.

Ms Stanwood will check into the permanent protection efforts for Polygon 21 and 23 located within the East Bowl. Mr King said that according to their records, DOT is not responsible for the Campground Road but is willing to provide consultation on road drainage improvements. Dir Bryce will work with MSR on the road.

Hiking Trails. Mr Schmidt reported that MSR completed the spring cleanup of the hiking trails located within the ski area leasehold, per the Cooperative Maintenance Agreement. SRKG President Mr Eliassen thanked Mr Sanborn of the Cardigan Highlanders for all the trail maintenance work he had done on the Summit and Newbury trails. In answer, Dir Bryce said the department is finalizing its chainsaw policy for volunteer groups.

There was a discussion on signage and blazing of hiking trails. Dir Bryce said the division is in the process of filling the Volunteer Coordinator position.

Commissioner Stewart said she would accept written comments on the AOP from the public through June 7th. She opened the floor to the public for comments on the AOP.

Mr Banks said he had historical photos of the summit.

Ms Bushueff appreciates Vail's efforts to add the State Park logo on its signage, but she would like to see a "Mount Sunapee State Park" sign. Vail's advertising, promotions and website should convey that it is a state park. She wants more information on the Epic Pass. She said the interpretive trails are not well maintained or clearly marked.

Mr Johnson said the events and activities are displacing the public. Dir Bryce said he faces the same challenges throughout the state park system, but will follow up with Mr Schmidt to find a balance.

A member of the public said she hiked the summit three times and thought it unfair that she was unable access the summit facilities due to private events.

Mr Flanders said Vail promised transparency, yet won't provide skier visit numbers. The Sunbowl Road is in terrible shape and the Resort should not use their snow-cats on the road. Mr Prescott answered his concerns about the spray fields and lagoons. Ms Fichter answered his concerns about the water monitoring of the state beach.

A member of the public said he is a long-time skier and hiker. He supports the State-Vail partnership. Mt Sunapee ski area is a day-trip for skiers. The lease revenue goes to Cannon and keeps Cannon competitive. He is concerned that Mt Sunapee will not be competitive if improvements are not made. Skiers will need to pay more and the skier visits data should be made public.

A member of the public agrees that Mt Sunapee ski area is a day-visit facility. The day pass tickets need to be affordable for locals, children and seniors; keep the Okemo-Mt Sunapee joint pass. Mr Schmidt provided the various discount ticketing promotions offered by the Resort. The Resort staff needs to slow down when travelling on Campground Road and better signage to the state campground is needed.

Ms Bushueff said that early public involvement is needed as the Resort begins work on the next Master Development Plan (MDP). Dir Bryce said public comment is always welcomed at any time. The Resort develops their MDP and submits it to the State, and then the public process would begin in response to the MDP.

Commissioner Stewart thanked the MSAC and public for attending. She welcomes written comments on the AOP from the public, due by June 7, 2019. Comments can be mailed to the Concord Office or emailed to MountSunapeeComments@dncr.nh.gov

Adjourn. The meeting was adjourned at 11:20 a.m. The next meeting is at the call of the Chair.

Submitted by Torene Tango-Lowy, MSAC clerk.