

MOUNT WASHINGTON COMMISSION
December 15, 2017 MINUTES *(Approved on 04/13/18, as amended)*

A regular meeting of the Mount Washington Commission (MWC) was held at Franconia Notch State Park, Park Headquarters.

Call to Order. Chairman Walter Graff/AMC, having a quorum of members, called the meeting to order at 10 a.m. Members present were Dir. Phil Bryce/Div. Parks and Rec (DPR), Mark Ericson/Townsquare Media, Paul Fitzgerald/for Public, Martha McLeod/Public, Clare Mendelsohn/WMNF, Jack Middleton/MWObs, Wayne Presby/Cog Railway (Vice-Chair), Rep. Karen Umberger/House, and Howie Wemyss/Auto Road.

Also present were Ed Bergeron/MWObs, Allen Brooks/AG Office, Kevin Devine/MWSP, Gary MacDonald/MWObs, Tom Mansfield/DNCR Architect, Sharon Schilling/MWObs President, Edith Tucker/Berlin Sun, Hal Wilkins/public, and Torene Tango-Lowy/MWC clerk.

Minutes. Mr. Presby moved to accept the minutes of October 13, 2017; Mr. Fitzgerald seconded. Ms. Mendelsohn requested an amendment to the minutes. The minutes were approved as amended.

Master Plan. Dir. Bryce referred to the article “Capacity Reconsidered: Finding consensus and clarifying differences” sent to the MWC in advance of the meeting. He provided a draft RFP for Park Capacity Public Use Analysis / Visitor Use Management Framework for MWC to review and provide comments following the break. The project would assess Mount Washington and Monadnock state parks.

Fee Collection. Dir. Bryce had provided a draft copy of the FY2017 financial report for Mt Washington State Park at the last meeting and had no further updates.

Capital Improvements. Mr. Mansfield provided an update to the capital improvement projects: a) Communications building assessment, including the October onsite investigation and a questionnaire being sent to communications tenants; b) Sewage treatment plant, including continued monitoring, planned modeling for capacity, options for future needs, and the September 2018 completion date; c) Water system improvements – this effort will start in the Spring.

Park Operations. Mr. Devine provided an update on park operations, including staff certifications for sewage treatment operations, winter projects, and his early assessment of park and summit operations.

Partner Reports. Auto Road. Mr. Wemyss reported on a good summer, a process for highway traffic flow, hotel construction update, and storm recovery update. Great Glenn opens today.

Cog Railway. Mr. Presby provided copies of the 1894 Agreement between the Pingree heirs and the Mt Washington Railway Co. that includes certain rights held by the Mt Washington Summit Road Co. Mr. Presby is concerned about infringement on rights held by the Railway and expanded overnight use on the summit. The Railway intends to move forward with building a facility for its staff at the summit, although there is no timetable for the project. Copies of the 1980 Agreement between the MWC, the State, Mt Washington Railway Co., and Marshfield Inc. for the construction of the new summit building (now named the Sherman Adams Building) was provided. There was a brief discussion.

MWObs. Ms. Schilling reported that they are reviewing the collection of admissions to the summit museum and museum entryway traffic flow. The Cog Railway no longer contributes toward advance payment of museum admission for its riders under the agreement with the MWObs and the Auto Road. They are working with Parks to coordinate their Sno-Cat winter trips to the summit.

Townsquare Media. Mr. Erickson reported being ready for winter. They have a new communications lease with the State and are paying the new rate which is in line with the market. He referred a Verizon inquiry to Tracey Boisvert, DNCR’s Land Agent. Dir. Bryce said that Parks is looking to move communications equipment off of recreational facilities so as to reduce the impact to the facility’s structural integrity. Mr. Erickson discussed the FCC Main Studio Rule that will require having hardcopy broadcast documents publically available at the place of license: the summit. Members discussed the FirstNet issue, its potential impact to Mt. Washington and asked to relay the concern to Commissioner Rose and Div. Forest & Lands.

WMNF. Ms. Mendelsohn reported on the recovery effort from the October storm, the Avalanche Center is operational, and plans to celebrate WMNF’s centennial year, along with the National Wild & Scenic Rivers

Act and the National Public Trails Act. Next year also marks the 200th anniversary of Crawford Path, the oldest trail in the nation. They are working with REI to assist with trail work on Crawford Path.

AMC. Mr. Graff reported a good summer and fall, and anticipate a good winter. They are in their new office in Charlestown, MA. There are no major projects in NH, but are working closely with Parks and WMNF on a variety of recreational issues.

The MWC took a short break.

Leases & Agreements. MWOb's brought forward two items for MWC review and approval to expend Summit Museum Funds. Dir. Bryce read from the Lease Agreement, Sec. 18.b.3, which outlines the process for approval and use of the restricted fund for Summit museum display maintenance and replacement. Mr. Wemyss motioned to approve the request to purchase a new computer to run the Panorama Exhibit (up to \$1,140); Mr. Presby seconded; the motion was approved. Rep. Umberger motioned to approve the request to purchase turnstiles to manage museum entry and admissions (up to \$16,109.01); Mr. Middleton seconded; the motion was approved following a brief discussion.

The MWC entered into a non-meeting session with its counsel, Assist. AG Allen Brooks, at approx. 11:35 a.m. The MWC returned to its public meeting at approx. 12 p.m.

Carrying Capacity RFP Dir. Bryce received comments on the draft RFP, including omitting certain pre-judgmental wording such as "overcrowding" and "limitations," assess impacts on summit partners and abutters, average length of visits, environmental impacts on surrounding lands, operational actions for visitor use, investments in parking facilities, don't limit the number of meetings with the various committees, require onsite visits during the peak season, specify the deliverables, whether to include the budget, if the budget is included reduce the value of the cost criteria, and the use of the summit during the shoulder season and off-season. Dir. Bryce asked members to send any additional comments to him. He will send a revised copy of the RFP to the MWC and he may have MWC members assist with the vendor selection process.

Adjourn. With no other business, Ms. McLeod motioned to adjourn; Mr. Erickson seconded. The meeting adjourned at 12:30 p.m.

The next meeting is scheduled for March 16, 2018.

Submitted by T. Tango-Lowy, MWC clerk.