

## MOUNT WASHINGTON COMMISSION

May 20, 2022 MINUTES (DRAFT)

A regular meeting of the Mount Washington Commission (MWC) was held at Peabody Lodge, Cannon Mountain.

**Call to Order.** Chairman Bradley called the meeting to order at 9:40 a.m., with a quorum present. PRESENT were Sen Jeb Bradley/Senate, Ed Bergeron/for Public, Dir Phil Bryce/Div Parks and Rec, Derek Ibarguen/WMNF, Jack Middleton/MWObs, Wayne Presby/Cog Railway, Drew Scamman /Townsquare Media, and Howie Wemyss/Auto Road. Also in attendance were DNCR Commissioner Stewart, Allen Brooks/DOJ for the MWC, summit partners and state park staff, and members of the public, including Kris Pastoriza and Larry Garland.

**Minutes.** Mr Middleton MOVED to accept the minutes of April 22, 2022; SECONDED by Mr Bergeron. The minutes were APPROVED as written.

**NHB presentation.** Bill Nichols of DNCR Natural Heritage Bureau (NHB) presented findings on “Non-native plant species in Mt. Washington State Park and other alpine areas of the White Mountains.” The presentation generated good discussion, including how a plant is categorized as “invasive,” the potential educational opportunities about the alpine tundra, the collaborative effort of the WMNF and other partners to successfully control invasive dandelion, and potential ideas for the reduction of seed transfer from hikers’ footwear. Ms Pastoriza suggested that the number of visitors should be limited. NHB recommended updated surveys in the state park to direct and prioritize management.

**Master Plan.** Chair Bradley and the members continued their work on the master plan for the summit by working through the proposed deliverables listed in Table 1. They formulated final language for each deliverable, identified the entities responsible for implementation, and prioritized the target dates. They also reviewed the Additional Commission Concepts list that contained additional suggestions and issues raised at their last meeting. They determined which concepts to include in the master plan and other actions necessary. See master plan draft #4 for the revisions to Table 1 and additional concepts adopted. Discussion included:

- Deliverable #5 – Dir Bryce said that we need to understand the future needs and use of the summit property before determining what additional structures are unnecessary. Mr Kirsch suggested that the master plan should avoid being prescriptive. Ms Pastoriza said global warming and limiting access that relies on fossil fuels should be part of the plan’s environmental consideration. Chair Bradley said it is important to enable access to the summit by those who may not be able to hike up. Members mentioned that public access is protected in the deeded rights of the Cog and Auto Road; and, providing public access to the state park system and supporting tourism is required by statute.
- Deliverables #10-12 – There was discussion on “carrying capacity,” including documenting the rights of the Cog and Auto Road, assessment studies that could inform visitation, and the impact of weather and summit operations on the numbers of visitors.
- #13-17 – Mt Washington State Park (MWSP) is the only park that does not help support the park system. Would a change in statute be required to allow the transfer of funds from the Mt Washington Fund to the State Park Fund, or could this be done through Fiscal Committee? The 1971 master plan recommended a fee to access the park. A viable master plan would serve as the basis for legislative support for a fee. It should be documented that the Auto Road and Cog currently supports MWSP indirectly by adding the MWObs museum fee as part of their ticket price. The MWObs then uses a portion of the museum fee revenue to make their lease payment to the State. The Cog was concerned about raising revenue that is used offsite to support the park system. Dir Bryce said such revenue could be allocated to help offset the cost of summit capital projects. The partners will explore these concepts further.
- #33 – Mr Duvall and Mr R Presby will provide information about the new Pike’s Peak Experience at the next MWC meeting.

- #38 – Members discussed their concerns, the impacts, and expected roles pertaining to search and rescue operations on the mountain.
- Discussion continued after the lunch break, including on #56, whereby Mr Duvall reiterated that there is an opportunity for the State to enter into a ground lease for the Yankee Building with a third-party who could make the necessary improvements to the Yankee Building. Mr Scamman clarified that TownSquare Media exclusively owns one of the two summit communications towers.

Having completed their review of the Table 1, the MWC discussed the “Additional Commission Concepts” document, including:

- #1 – Mr Bergeron and Mr Duvall will draft a one-page summary of the history and status of the previous master plan recommendations.
- #3 – “Carrying capacity” will be incorporated in the master plan, including the state fire marshal’s occupancy capacities for the SAB and Tip Top House. Mr Iburguen said that “capacity” is not just a number, but a concept that spans disciplines, such as design plans to control the flow of foot traffic, visitor behavior data, and needs assessment data.
- #4 – Chair Bradley said a master plan provides the vision for the summit, and that baseline data can help clarify and inform the ongoing work of implementing the plan’s vision but should not hold up the master plan. Such data could provide the basis for mitigation and restoration recommendations. Mr Wemyss was concerned about making recommendations without understanding the current conditions and health of the summit. Mr Garland said that baseline data would set standards for what may happen in the future. Mr Iburguen will provide a cost estimate for conducting an environmental and engineering assessment of the state park and a list of potential consultants who can do the work. Chair Bradley may be able to get legislative support for funding for such work.
- #5 – Commr Stewart will talk to Andy Smith of the UNH Survey Center to investigate if they could conduct a survey of visitor’s experience at the summit.
- #9 – NHB could provide guidance regarding this concept.
- #12 – Mr Brooks will talk with Rep Umberger about her thoughts on the Yankee Building. Ms Tango-Lowy will provide the MWC with the link to the HL Turner presentation on the Yankee Building assessment given at the MWC meeting on June 21, 2019.

Mr Brooks will incorporate the comments into the master plan draft #4. Ms Tango-Lowy will post the master plan draft #3 on the MWC webpage.

Dir Bryce announced that, although it was a difficult decision, he is not seeking re-appointment as Director. The MWC members expressed their appreciation for his contributions and applauded him.

Mr Wemyss said that the Auto Road will be fully opened over Memorial Day weekend, and that the Auto Road will be completely paved to the summit. Mr Presby reported that the Cog Railway has completed its rail replacement project.

**AOB.** The next meeting is scheduled for Friday, June 10<sup>th</sup> at 9:30 a.m. at Peabody Lodge, Cannon Mountain when the MWC will finalize the draft master plan and discuss plans for holding public information sessions.

Adjourn. The meeting adjourned at 2:15 p.m.

*Submitted by T. Tango-Lowy, MWC clerk.*