

MOUNT WASHINGTON COMMISSION
March 24, 2023 MINUTES *(Approved as amended on 05/19/23)*

A regular meeting of the Mount Washington Commission (MWC) took place at Rosebrook Lodge, Bretton Woods Ski Resort. Chair Bergeron called the meeting to order at 10:05 a.m., with a quorum present. Attendees introduced themselves.

PRESENT were Chair Ed Bergeron/Public, Phil Bryce/Public, Chris Ellms/Public, Carrie Gendreau/Senate, Derek Ibarguen/WMNF, Vice-Chair Rob Kirsch/MWObs, David Paige/House, Wayne Presby/Cog Railway, Drew Scamman/TownSquare Media, Sarah Stewart/DNCR Commr, Chris Thayer/AMC, and Howie Wemyss/Auto Road. Also in attendance were Allen Brooks/DOJ for the MWC, Dir Brian Wilson/DPR, summit partners and state park staff, and members of the public.

Minutes. A MOTION to accept the minutes of Jan 27, 2023, was made by Mr Kirsch and seconded by Sen Gendreau. The motion CARRIES as written with one abstention by Rep Paige who was not at the January meeting.

Master Plan. Commr Stewart said that there is a \$1million capital budget request for the summit assessment work that was called for in the Master Plan. There is broad legislative support for the funding request. DNCR is drafting the Scope of Work (SOW) based on comments received and the recommendations from the Master Plan. The SOW will be discussed at the next MWC meeting in May. The final SOW will become part of the Request for Qualifications proposal.

Fees paid to the State. Commr Stewart provided, situational awareness, a list of DNCR agreements and telecommunications leases at Mount Washington. When the parties have negotiated a workable draft agreement, the Commr will bring the draft before the MWC for comment. DNCR is working with the Auto Road for their use of the summit parking lots. Mr Presby asked whether DNCR is considering new telecom leases. Dir Wilson said DNCR has been approached by interested parties, but we are prioritizing the needs assessment work first. Mr Scamman was approached by telecom companies interested in installing a new tower and has referred them to DNCR. Mr Kirsch said the Master Plan is the guiding document for each project and the assessment is the first step to identify project recommendations.

Capital Improvements. Mr Hummel said that there were no updates to the capital projects since the January meeting, but that the water and sewer work will start in May. The assessment will help determine the needed requirements and improvements to the sewer system.

Park Operations. Mr Hummel reported that they are working on maintenance projects, including the summit info wall and renovations to the Gorham building. They are developing a brochure, an often asked for item at the info desk, that will include information about the summit and summit partners. Mr Hummel will share the draft brochure with the summit partners.

Mr Duvall said that the Cog is working on a digital app for the summit and all things Mt Washington, including links to the summit partners. He also said that the Cog is considering two proposals, from Bretton Woods Telephone and NH Electric Coop, to run fiber along the trestle to the summit. He has informed Commr Stewart of this effort. The summit partners agreed that digital media is the future.

Partner Reports. AMC. Mr Thayer said that Nicole Zussman, their new CEO, has started and visited all chapters throughout the region. AMC is trending toward positive occupancy. Capital projects include solar arrays at Pinkham, Camp Dodge and Zealand Huts to help achieve new zero goals. In partnership with the White Mountains Search and Rescue community, AMC staff responded to 87 incidents with a total of 650 hours service. Hut crews interacted with 36k people with 1,500 hikers changing their plans and nearly 400 unexpectedly spending the night in the huts. Trail projects include Year2 of the

Franconia Loop Trails; Year 1 of Ammonoosuc Ravine, Androscoggin Area Trails, Dry River Wilderness, Rumney Rocks, and Ethan Pond Trail; and Cardigan APT final phase. May 18-22 is the 2nd annual Trails Skills College in partnership with the WMNF.

Auto Road. Mr Reichert reported that winter operations had a slow start with icy conditions. They are working on a solar project at the base and will be working on the bridge that crosses the Peabody River. Winter operations are going well with the recent snowfall.

Cog Railway. Mr Presby said that this is their 3rd winter season with daily operations and strong ridership to Waumbek Station. They will be replacing the tracks between Waumbek Station and their maintenance facility. The Cog Railway is considering offering tours of their maintenance facility and a Marshfield run so that riders can choose from a variety of offerings with one-, two- and three-hour timeframes. They are working on an electric engine that would recharge on its way down by using regenerative braking technology.

MWObs. Mr Bush said that the recent extreme weather event had a worldwide reach, including on BBC. July 15th is the date of their Seek the Peak event and was launched with the WMNF, AMC and Auto Road. Formal invitations will go out, but all summit partners are invited to have a table at the Après Party. They are working with the WMNF Avalanche Center on weather forecasts and safety messaging. Mr Bush thanks Parks for the shared snowcat rides to the summit. They are working with the NH Homeland Security to have a meteorologist join in statewide emergency operations. The MWObs and the AMC are planning a joint internship to work on climatology research of the region. They are seeking federal funding for equipment that would fulfill their 2022 Master Plan goals as a world-class weather research facility. They received a Tillotson Fund award to pilot field trips for Coos County schools, including travel to the summit by Cog Railway; and are looking to expand the program to include the Auto Road. Eastern Mountain Sports, a MWObs sponsor, will be reaching out to the summit partners for input on documentaries that EMS is developing that will feature the summit, its history and its people.

Townsquare Media. Mr Scamman said they have had to rely on their backup antennae for broadcasting WHOM. He anticipates several weeks of spring maintenance.

WMNF. Mr Ibarguen said that the AMC and Obs has already mentioned several of the collaborative projects that are occurring. They are getting ready for the season and conducting winter timber harvest operations as part of their forest management, forest health and habitat objectives. Forest Service staff are collaborating with the Nature Conservancy on educational programming. The Forest Service is also preparing for the fire season.

AOB. Mr Hummel and staff continue to collaborate with the Pike's Peak staff on a variety of focus areas, including maintenance, retail and visitor services. Mr Presby offered to provide the contact information to his European counterparts.

Commr Stewart said that the NH Division of Travel and Tourism is looking to promote tourism that will occur around the solar eclipse on and around April 8, 2024.

Mr Kirsch suggested modifying the agenda to include the implementation of the Master Plan and adding June and October meetings to the schedule.

The question of whether the Commission should take a position on the possibility of renaming the summit to reflect its Native American names should be tabled until the Commission has collected information about the significance of the mountain to indigenous Americans as envisioned in the Master Plan.

The 2023 MWC meeting schedule is:

- Friday, May 19 at 10 a.m.
- Friday, June 23 at 10 a.m. *[added]*
- Friday, July 21 at 10 a.m.
- Friday, Sept 15 at 10 a.m.
- Friday, Oct 13 at 10 a.m. *[added]*
- Friday, Nov 17 at 10 a.m.

Adjourn. The meeting adjourned at 12:05 p.m.

Submitted by T. Tango-Lowy, MWC clerk.