

MOUNT WASHINGTON COMMISSION
June 10, 2022 MINUTES *(Approved 08/23/22)*

A regular meeting of the Mount Washington Commission (MWC) was scheduled at Peabody Lodge, Cannon Mountain. A quorum was reached with the late arrival of Mr Scamman.

PRESENT were Sen Jeb Bradley/Senate, Dir Phil Bryce/Div Parks and Rec, Jack Middleton/MWObs, Wayne Presby/Cog Railway, Chris Thayer/AMC 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. Drew Scamman/TownSquare Media arrived later.

Master Plan. Those present continued their work on the draft master plan, dated 6/6/22. Public attendee Jamie Sayen asked that the MWC hold off on their approval of the master plan until the environmental studies were completed. Chair Bradley said that the commission is still working on a draft version of the plan and will hold two public meetings to solicit public comments on the draft plan.

Commr Stewart said that the UNH Survey Center could help develop an electronic survey that would be sent to its 7,000 polling participants. MWC members will send topics and issues of interest to Chair Bradley and Commr Stewart that can be used to develop the survey questions.

Mr Brooks provided an overview of the changes made to the draft master plan. Larry Garland applauded the changes to the draft plan, but thought the plan should address the assessments and information gathering more cohesively. Discussion and suggestions for changes to the draft master plan included:

- Organizing the master plan in accordance with RSA 227-B:6, I. Structuring the plan in a way that outlines the scope of work for the assessments. Group the deliverable table by topic area and add a column to reference back to the narrative section of the plan.
- Pg. 2: Mr Thayer asked about clarifying item VI. of the statutory language.
- Pg. 4: Rob Kirsch/MWObs asked that every summit entity be recognized.
- Pg. 5, ¶ 2: Add “impact of climate change and other environmental considerations” to what the summit assessment should include, “but not be limited to.”
- Pg. 6, ¶ 2: Add all summit partners, including AMC and WMNF. Need to address hiker access. Topics of discussion included deeded rights of access, the Dartmouth College deed and the right to pass. Mr Sayen asked if Dartmouth College could address their intent of their deed as it relates to overcapacity. Ms Pastoriza asked about the State’s sovereign immunity protections and DNCR liability to comply with state laws, handicapped access visitation, and current gun regulations when in a state park.
- Pg. 9, Part V: Change the term “hope” to “shall to the greatest extent practicable.” Mr Sayen commented that the plan was written in the passive voice. The MWC had requested the change to the passive voice. Commr Stewart wants to include language about Parks’ mission to also provide access to those who may not have the financial means. She will provide suggested language to Mr Brooks.
- Pg. 10, Sec. C: Dir Bryce said that the MWObs museum should be included in this section. Sec. E: Correct the capitalization of “State” to lower case.
- Pg. 11, ¶ 1: Change “should” to “will be considered when siting...” In Sec. G, Dir Bryce said that Parks collaborates with its sister Division of Historical Resources to preserve the historic setting of its buildings and cultural resources.
- Pg. 13-20, Deliverable Table: Mr Sayen asked if the assessment should include language about climate change. Dir Bryce thought the deliverable could tie back to the narrative changes being made on pg. 5. Mr Garland suggested using the same text from pg. 5 in Item #8, regarding the fuel tanks. Mr Thayer suggested adding WMNF to Item #12, pg. 15.

With the arrival of Mr Scamman, the MWC discussed Mr Sayen's request that the Commission vote not to approve the master plan until all assessments are completed. Chair Bradley said the DNCR will need to request funding for the assessments in its operating and/or capital budget requests that would be approved by legislature by mid-year in 2023. Once the funding is approved, the contracting and assessment work would probably take another year, at least. The master plan is needed to provide legislature with the rationale for the funding request. He said that an addendum could be added to the master plan based upon the assessment findings. Dir Bryce agreed that funding would be unlikely without justification identified in the master plan and that to put the plan on hold would be a mistake when the MWC's efforts were only recently restarted. Mr Kirsch agreed, adding that the master plan call for the assessments and information gathering.

Lucy Wyman suggested that the MWC complete the plan as draft, but not approve it until the assessments are done. Mr Brooks said the statute requires submission of the master plan to the Governor for approval, then to legislature for any enabling legislation. The master plan is envisioned as a tool. Chair Bradley said that competition for funding is a challenge with the multitude of priorities. Commr Stewart said that DNCR is scheduled to present its capital budget to legislature on June 20th. She will work with Sen Bradley on the funding request. Mr Brooks will expand on Sec. VI, Implementation to reflect the Commission's objective to conduct the assessments and to allow for modification of the master plan based upon the findings.

Ms Pastoriza thought that the activities occurring on the mountain should be considered as a whole. It was explained that the MWC's jurisdiction is only within the state-owned summit circle per RSA 227-B:1. Commr Stewart said the Cog's Lizzie Station proposal is outside the park boundary. DNCR supports the concept, and the proposal will go through federal, state and local approvals, including the WMNF, Coos County planning board, Natural Heritage and Fish and Game. DNCR and the Cog spent nearly two years discussing the Cog's original proposal to restore its track at the summit and other options that would relieve summit pressures and park operations. Mr Sayen commented that Lizzie's Station would impact the summit.

The MWC took a straw poll vote to accept the master plan as a draft document that will include the revisions discussed today. The Commission will hold two public information sessions to solicit public comment on the draft plan. The MWC will take a formal vote to accept the revised draft master plan just prior to the first public session. Written comments can be sent to MtWashingtonComments@dncr.nh.gov

- Monday, August 22, 2022, at 7 p.m. at the North Conway Community Center
- Tuesday, August 23, 2022 at 10 a.m. at the State House Room 100 in Concord

Cog General Manager Ryan Presby presented information on his visit to the Pike's Peak Experience in Colorado. The MWC broke for lunch following the presentation.

Capital Improvements. Park Manager Patrick Hummel reported that the water system improvement project will occur mid-July through September. Dir Bryce said that Parks capital and improvement projects and activities are summarized in the Director's Reports to the [State Park System Advisory Council](#).

Park Operations. Mr Hummel said that the Sherman Adams Building opened for the season on May 27th. Visitation is down and there was a medical emergency that resulted in a fatality on May 14th.

Partner Reports. AMC. Mr Thayer said that AMC's 200+ staff and trail crews are back at work. They held a trails skills training session with the WMNF in mid-May with 100 participants. The alpine stewards are back at work along the Franconia Ridge and Mt Washington trailways. The Museum of the White Mountains at Plymouth State is exhibiting "Watching the Seasons Change" through mid-September.

Auto Road. Mr Wemyss reports that the Auto Road open 7 days per week since the Memorial Day weekend with visitation slightly up. The Auto Road paved the last 6/10th of the mile to the summit.

Cog Railway. Mr R Presby said that visitation is slightly up, and staffing is better. As with other businesses, they are experiencing the impacts of weather and fuel costs.

MWObs. Communications Director Charlie Buterbaugh said that the Obs is celebrating its 90th anniversary. They are evaluating the design of a new anemometer at Mount Everest and look forward to the return of their Seek the Peak event on July 16th. They are searching for an Executive Director and continue to provide educational programming.

Townsquare Media. Mr Scamman was on the summit last Tuesday for spring maintenance work, including plans to repair the roof on the WHOM building. TownSquare is on a 3-year licensing rotation with the FCC.

AOB. Mr Sayen appreciates the MWC's consideration of the public's concerns expressed at these meetings. He reiterated that the Dartmouth deed requires interpretation and input from Dartmouth College as it pertains to controlling visitation at the summit.

MWC members are to generate 3-5 questions or topics to be used to develop the visitor survey and send them to Chair Bradley and Commr Stewart. The Commission will discuss these ideas at their August 23rd meeting.

The public information sessions on the draft master plan are:

- Monday, August 22, 2022, at 7 p.m. at the Conway Community Center
- Tuesday, August 23, 2022 at the State House Room 100 in Concord
 - 9:30 a.m. MWC to discuss the visitor survey
 - 10 a.m. MWC to solicit public input on the draft master plan

A regular MWC meeting will be called in September at Peabody Lodge to discuss the public input and to finalize the master plan.

Adjourn. The meeting adjourned at 1:15 p.m.

Submitted by T. Tango-Lowy, MWC clerk.