

MOUNT WASHINGTON COMMISSION
April 23, 2021 MINUTES (*Approved 06.04.21*)

A regular meeting of the Mount Washington Commission (MWC) was held by videoconference.

Call to Order. Chairman Bradley called the meeting to order at 2:00 p.m. and read the *Checklist to ensure meetings are compliant with the Right-to-Know law during the State of Emergency*. PRESENT by roll call were Sen Jeb Bradley/Senate, Dir Phil Bryce/Div Parks and Rec, Paul Cunha/AMC, Paul Fitzgerald/for Public, Derek Ibarguen/WMNF, Paul Ingersoll/for Public, Jack Middleton/MWObs, Wayne Presby/Cog Railway, Rep Karen Umberger/House, and Howie Wemyss/Auto Road. Several members of the public and state employees were also in attendance.

Minutes. Mr Middleton MOVED to accept the minutes of Feb 19, 2021; SECONDED by Rep Umberger. The minutes were APPROVED as written by roll call YES vote by Sen Bradley, Dir Bryce, Mr Cunha, Mr Fitzgerald, Mr Ibarguen, Mr Ingersoll, Mr Middleton, Mr Presby, Rep Umberger and Mr Wemyss.

Capital Improvements. Mr Mansfield reported that the sewage treatment plant design plans will be completed by the end of the month for a late summer bid release. Onsite work will start in spring, 2022. The \$1,020,000 capital budget funding for water system improvements were approved by the House and DNCR will present its capital budget request to the Senate on May 11th.

State Park Report & Operating Plan Review. Dir Bryce, who serves on the Governor's Re-opening Task Force, said that a consolidated Universal Guidance was just approved, with specific guidance for certain activities. It allows businesses to decide if they want to have more restrictive safety protocols and allows visitors/consumers to decide for themselves whether they feel safe to patronize that business. Parks is working with the Commissioner on park operating plans, including metrics for monitoring COVID-19, staffing challenges, updated cleaning protocols, capacity measures and suggested mask use.

Mr Hummel is working on a phased opening for the Sherman Adams Building (SAB), increasing the capacity up from last year's cap at 75 people and providing access to the ground floor should the MWObs open the museum. He anticipates a mid-May Phase I opening and will manage capacity onsite in real-time, rather than through the advance reservation system. The water bottle filling station, picnic tables and benches will be available to visitors, but the Tip Top House will remain closed until the interior work is completed.

As was done last year, the summit partners will coordinate the placement of portable toilets at the summit. Ms Dunn asked about mask requirements within the museum. Dir Bryce said it may be the MWObs decision as the lessee, but he suggests the use of masks if people are within the 6-ft. distance. Mr Presby said the Cog is operating at 50% capacity and requires riders to wear masks to instill guest comfort, but will continue to evaluate customer behavior. Everyone agreed that public safety protocols adopted by businesses will continue to evolve based on COVID statistics and vaccination rates.

Mr Mansfield met with the state fire marshal to establish a maximum capacity for the SAB. With the size of the doorways, and by locking the overhead doors at the main entrance open (allowing for wind conditions) and updating the emergency exit alarms and signage, the maximum capacity of the main floor is set at 475 and the ground floor at 278 people. These improvements can be accomplished within Parks' current budget.

Ms Dunn reported that they are waiting to schedule transport of the new ventilation units to the summit museum.

Master Plan. Chair Bradley said he is looking to restart the master plan effort and is considering using Harvard Law School's Negotiation & Mediation Clinical Program as a resource to help the Commission resolve the various issues and interests of the summit partners. Commr Stewart said the Harvard program has helped organizations with vision and big idea projects, including the NH Court System. Mr Haley, a graduate of the program, said the program can help stakeholders to bring forward diverse ideas and perspectives to complete a comprehensive master plan. Chair Bradley asked DNCR and the AG's Office to bring forward an application to the Harvard program at the next MWC meeting.

Partner Reports. AMC. Mr Cunha said the huts will open in June with limited capacity. AMC hopes to increase the capacity by July. Masks are currently still required.

Auto Road. Mr Wemyss said the Auto Road will open to self-driving tours on weekends beginning May 8th, and will open fully for Memorial Day weekend. Van capacity will be held to 6 people and masks will be required. They are also doing some paving work.

MWObs. Ms Dunn said they are hiring for the summit museum. To protect the summit observers, they will not have the museum attendants stay overnight. Next year will be the Observatory's 90th year of summit operations and they are working on their strategic plan.

Cog Railway. Mr W Presby said the Cog is currently operating daily to Waumbek Station, and begin operations to Skyline today. They will provide daily service to the summit by the end of the month.

AOB. The next meeting is scheduled for June 4, 2021, at 9 a.m. at Cannon's Peabody Lodge. The agenda will include summit opening plans and the master planning effort with the possibility of using the Harvard Negotiation & Mediation Clinical program as a resource.

Adjourn. Mr Presby MOVED to adjourn; SECONDED by Mr Ingersoll. The meeting adjourned at 3:45 p.m. by unanimous vote.

Submitted by T. Tango-Lowy, MWC clerk.