

MOUNT WASHINGTON COMMISSION
Meeting Minutes of April 23, 2004
Mount Washington Summit – Tip Top House

Members in attendance:

Paul Fitzgerald, Public, Chairman
Wayne Presby, Cog Railway, Vice Chair
Senator John Gallus, Senate Dist. 1
Howard Wemyss, Mt Washington Auto Road
Walter Graff, AMC, Ex Officio

Rep Gene Chandler, Speaker
Jack Middleton, MW Observatory
Tom Wagner, WMNF, Ex Officio
Paul Ingersoll, Public

Members excused:

Guy Gosselin, Public

Others present:

Rob Kirsch, Mt Washington Observatory
Kenneth Rancourt, Mt Washington Observatory
Peter Crane, Mt Washington Observatory
Will Abbott, Mt Washington Observatory
Katie Stuart, WMNF – Androscoggin Road

Director Rich McLeod, Div Parks & Rec
John White, DRED Engineer
Mike Pelchat, Mt Washington Park Manager
Richard Cushman, Mt Washington State Park
Torene Tango-Lowy, Div of Parks & Rec

Chairman Paul Fitzgerald called the meeting to order at 1:00 p.m.

Approve minutes A motion to accept the amended minutes of September 25, 2003 was made by Jack Middleton and seconded by Paul Ingersoll. Motion carries unanimously.

Items for consideration Rich McLeod reviewed the documents he provided: 1) Mount Washington estimated unappropriated surplus FY 2004 for -\$173,872.02; 2) Mount Washington income and expenses statement FY 2002 & 2003; 3) G&C requested action for the lease agreement with the Mount Washington Summit Road Company; 4) G&C requested action for a contract with Dufresne-Henry for electrical transmission engineering services.

On items 1 and 2: Rich stated that the fire insurance settlement is expected to be in the \$600,000 range. Paul Fitzgerald has asked Rich to provide Parks financial reports when they are issued in January. Commission members can contact Rich if there are any questions. On item 3: Parks is compensating the Summit Road Company for winter road use. On item 4: Dufresne-Henry will analyze the means to provide grid power to the summit, determine backup generation needs, and site analysis for an electrical generation plant. The report is expected late summer with a competitive bid process to follow. John White informed the group of his recent discussions with PSNH, including their incomplete proposal, additional costs not included in the proposal, and per-kilowatt rates. Members discussed the Northern Power study of power generation options. The options studied were neither financially nor operationally feasible for Mount Washington.

Organization reports *Mount Washington State Park* Rich commended Mike Pelchat on the assistance Mike provided in the winter search and rescue effort in the Great Gulf area. Mike also recognized the Observatory, Fish & Game, and National Guard in that effort. Mike provided a report on last season: both Food & Gift and Tip-Top House revenues ended down. He reviewed the winter operations, and the maintenance and improvements tasks completed. Park opening is May 8, with food and gift shop services open by Memorial Day weekend. Mike will continue to work with the Fire Marshal on permits, including an exit plan for the Sherman Adams building that will increase capacity to 400 people. Paul Fitzgerald asked about the maximum usage of the generators. Mike said that testing the generators with all appliances on uses 50% of generator capacity. Paul Ingersoll asked if there had been sewer blackwater problems when the septic system was pumped. Mike said there were no problems; there are holding tanks connected to the system.

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Mt Washington Observatory Rob Kirsch introduced the new Executive Director, Will Abbott. Will reported that the Discovery Center is open May 22 and that the Observatory's five-year plan is available for review. Will reviewed the recently awarded NOAA grant to upgrade the research facility. The grant is for specific capital improvements, including 1) improved voice/data communication, 2) summit investment, and 3) atmospheric research. The Observatory is continuing its lease negotiation with the State. A meeting to discuss the lease will be held immediately following this Commission meeting.

Mt Washington Railway Wayne Presby reviewed the Railway's winter projects. Trains transported skiers during November through March. The Railway will install a snowmaking line to the Womback Tank that will provide beginner and intermediate ski terrain. Ski Magazine will be doing a story on the Railway for next season. Wayne provided an update on the new passing loop and a new engine, both will reduce fuel use by 80%. The Railway will convert its engines to oil-fire over the next three years, reducing coal smoke and cinders.

Mt Washington Auto Road Howie Wemyss reports an early opening of May 8 on the summit and the 100th anniversary of the first Mount Washington road race. Events are planned during July 9-12 that will include a Stanley Steamer road race.

AMC Walter Graff reported on the opening of the Highland Center and the 37-acre ecological reserve project near Moosehead Lake in Maine. The AMC had a balanced budget last year with a reasonable winter. The AMC has also been holding joint meetings with the National Forest Service on the WMNF 15-year plan.

White Mountain National Forest Tom Wagner introduced Katie Stuart, who works at the Androscoggin office. Tom said the 2003 report is available and provided the "Highlights" brochure. The report will help guide the WMNF 15-year planning period. Paul Fitzgerald asked about the user fee program. Tom said it has been a rocky start, but the program has been working well over the last couple of years. The program provides for public services and has reduced the maintenance backlog. The pilot program is currently before Congress. Speaker Chandler said the user fee program is running more smoothly in the Saco and White Mountain districts, but is against the fee program.

Paul Fitzgerald introduced new Commission member, Senator Gallus, who replaces Senator Burns.

Old Business

Summit Power Rich McLeod reported that the state is still negotiating with Dartmouth College about the powerhouse site; the lease runs to 2010. The focus has been on the estimates for the 9-acre parcel. Parks will continue to consider siting for future power and relocating the generators from the Adams building. Paul Fitzgerald urged all possible haste for resolution of the fire cleanup and relocating the generators. Wayne Presby asked about power cost analysis. Rich will provide those costs. Rich reports that the WMTW subleases are a \$250,000/year cost to Parks. The fire resulted in a \$40,000 loss from the FAA and half the revenues from Yankee Microwave, but losses may yet be recouped with power generation. Wayne Presby said that costs needed to be looked at to determine the viability of permanent power. Rich said the Dufresne-Henry report would also provide that determination. Jack Middleton asked about a sewer line along the railway. Rich said that the power issue needed to be resolved first, to see what can be budgeted.

Meeting adjourned at 2 p.m.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Torene Tango-Lowy, Division of Parks and Recreation. Amended 5/11/04.