

MOUNT WASHINGTON COMMISSION
Meeting Minutes of June 30, 2005
Mount Washington Summit – Tip Top House

Members in attendance:

Paul Fitzgerald, Chairman
Senator John Gallus, Dist. 1
Howard Wemyss, Mt Washington Auto Road
Paul Ingersoll, Public

Jack Middleton, MW Observatory
Chris Thayer, AMC designee
Bill Dauer, WMNF designee

Members absent:

Wayne Presby, Cog Railway, Vice Chair
Rep Gene Chandler

Guy Gosselin, Public

Others present:

Ken Rancourt, Mt Washington Observatory
Ken Jones, Mt Washington Observatory
Bruce Sloat, Mt Washington Observatory guest
Harold Burns
Robert Kischko, Dufresne-Henry
Allan St. Peter, Dufresne-Henry
Tom Mansfield, DRED Architect

Sean O’Kane, DRED Commissioner
Allison McLean, Div Parks & Rec
Mike Pelchat, Mt Washington Park Manager
Dona Sanborn, Mt Washington State Park
Diane Holmes, Mt Washington State Park
Chris Uggerholt, Mt Washington State Park
Torene Tango-Lowy, Div of Parks & Rec

Call to Order Chairman Paul Fitzgerald called the meeting to order at 10:45 a.m.

Approve minutes Paul Ingersoll moved to accept the February 18, 2005 minutes. Senator Gallus seconded; motion carries.

Items for consideration: Electrification project Tom Mansfield, DRED Architect, addressed the questions asked by the Commission at the last meeting. *Total project costs* are estimated at \$3.1 million, based on the use of the existing powerhouse foundation for the summit generation building and fiber optic communications. Rep. Chandler sponsored an amendment to the capital budget to increase the bond from \$2 million to \$2.6 million. DRED separated this project into three contracts that went to bid: a) Construction of a base electrical substation; b) Trestle conduit installation; and c) Installation of fiber and power cables. White Mountain Communication was awarded all three bids on cost; the contracts were approved by G&C on June 22. DRED, through the AG’s office, is still negotiating the easement with Cog Railway. Project consultant Dufresne-Henry has had a change in personnel; Robert Kischko is the project manager. The state electrical inspector has inspected the grounding and bedding of the conduit.

The next steps are for: a) Dufresne-Henry to complete the summit electrical building feasibility study; b) Site the summit electrical building by the end of July so that an onsite, pre-bid meeting can be scheduled for Fall; c) Obtain G&C approval of the summit building contract over the Winter 2005. Mr. Wemyss had thought the Cog Railway easement was finalized. Director McLean said the point of negotiations concern indemnification language. Mr. Fitzgerald asked if DRED is optimistic that it can accomplish the project within the appropriation. Mr. Mansfield replied in the affirmative; the cost will be adjusted in the summit electrical building work.

Electric cost to the end-user: Mr. Mansfield reports that the cost is difficult to determine at this time. The cost study shows that pre-fire user cost was \$.40/kw hr. However, maintenance costs, fuel for backup generators, and personnel costs will need to be factored in. The PUC has determined that the State will not qualify as a utility; but the PUC will advise DRED in the establishment of a rate. Director McLean will follow up on this issue. Mr. Pelchat answered Mr. Ingersoll’s question about current power costs: Costs for power only is \$329,500/yr, which includes the \$250,000/yr Yankee/Cellular bond. The \$750,000-800,000 total cost converts to \$.41/kw; it includes fuel costs and a portion of personnel costs for maintenance tasks. Fuel costs are currently at \$1.50/gal; 70,000 gallons are stored for the backup generators and heating. Ms. Holmes stated

that meters will be installed to track power costs. Mr. Middleton stated that the Yankee Building generates income. Mr. Wemyss questioned the inclusion of the bond debt in the cost. The end-user cost for power will increase from \$.40/kw hr.

Reduction of fuel farm tanks and tower structures: Mr. Mansfield reports that the fuel tanks are still needed for heat and fuel for the backup generators. DRED will assess the fuel needs through the next 3-5 years before removing any tanks. Mr. Kischko estimates a worst-case scenario of two weeks to bring the power line back up from a complete failure; the backup generators would provide power in the interim. The State will be responsible for line maintenance, but can contract out the repairs.

Mr. Wemyss asked about the gray tower located on the Dartmouth property – it may be a liability. Director McLean said that Parks is inventorying its structures and leases; she will follow up on the Channel 8 tower.

Dartmouth negotiations: Director McLean provided an update: The appraisal is due to DRED by July 15. The appraiser is working with Dartmouth's consultant to capture the current leases and values. The appraisal is expected to lead to a workable agreement.

Mr. Kischko presented members with the summit electrical building options that are being studied. The building would need 600-700 s.f. The criteria were electrical distribution capability, cost, and location. Option A: at the current location of the existing generators, lower costs, and distribution system in-place. Option B: at the Yankee Building; lower costs; however, generators would be difficult to site. Option C at the old powerhouse site; costly; on leased land; footprint is oversized. Option D near the stairway to the Auto Road parking; adds another structure; costly; and difficult construction. Option E within a joint use building with the Cog Railway; adds another structure; partially on private land. Dufresne Henry will refine designs and costs by the end of July.

Mr. Fitzgerald reminded members of the need to minimize the summit structures. He also suggested vaulting the electrical facility into the powerhouse cellar-hole and keeping it a low profile. Mr. Kischko responded to Mr. Ingersoll's question: noise will be minimal near the Sherman Adams Building (Option A). Mr. Ingersoll was also concerned about Park staff safety during winter maintenance tasks. Mr. Pelchat responded that Options D and E are not preferred. He was concerned about having all electrical systems in the Yankee Building, although a fire extinguishing system would be installed. Option A would be efficient for heating.

Mr. Rancourt suggested that re-excavating under the southwest-side entry of the Adams Building and vaulting the electrical facility could provide another option. The debris could be used to fill the powerhouse cellar-hole and the top of the building could be used as a deck. However, the lines would cross the Cog Railway. Mr. Mansfield said the existing distribution system is located near the old powerhouse site; electrical distribution may need rethinking. The feasibility report will be distributed to the Commission when available.

Organization reports AMC – Mr. Thayer reports a slow start due to weather. All AMC services are up.

Auto Road – Mr. Wemyss reports the slowest start for a season. The Auto Road is offering an extended guided tour to allow for short hikes. They will soon open the Red Barn with memorabilia and historic vehicles.

Cog Railway – No report.

Observatory – Mr. Rancourt reports that infrastructure improvements are continuing. A real-time weather wall is being installed with weather kiosks located on the summit and the Auto Road base station. The season had a slow start. Fees to the summit museum will be discontinued.

State Parks – Mr. Pelchat introduced his staff. He reported a slow start, but strong last two weeks. Visitation has not returned to pre-Sept 11 attendance. The park does not currently break even. Mr. Pelchat expressed concern over increasing competition with summit partners and hopes such issues can be resolved. The new

egress from the Weather Room has been completed. Access to the Tip Top House is now free of charge; Washburn prints will be on display for sale.

WMNF – Mr. Dauer reports that the Forest Plan is still on schedule for September. The Forest Service has repaired many of the trail bridges. The snowmobile trail along the Base Road has been widened.

Any other business Director McLean would like to collaborate with the Commission and summit partners. She will provide the Commission with information about Park operations, including financials. Senator Gallus mentioned Senate Bill 5, the study committee of the State Park System.

Meeting adjourned at 12:25 p.m.

Submitted by Torene Tango-Lowy, Division of Parks and Recreation.