

Mount Washington Commission
July 23, 2008 Meeting Minutes
Mount Washington State Park, Tip Top House

Members in attendance:

Paul Fitzgerald, Public (Chairman)
Wayne Presby, MW Cog Railway (Vice Chair)
Senator John Gallus, Senate
Walter Graff, AMC
Guy Gosselin, Public

Jack Middleton, MW Observatory
Tom Wagner, WMNF
Howard Wemyss, MW Auto Road

Members absent:

Rep Martha McLeod, House

Paul Ingersoll, Public

Others present:

Scot Henley, MW Observatory
Ken Rancourt, MW Observatory
Randy Cooper, MW Observatory
Ed Bergeron, MW Observatory
Dr. Peter Crane, MW Observatory
Dr. Alex Pszenny, MW Observatory
Keith Lannom, WMNF
Gail Scott, Berlin Daily Sun

Director Allison McLean, Div Parks and Rec
Tom Mansfield, DRED Architect
Paul Leary, DRED Communications Administrator
Mike Pelchat, MW State Park Manager
Seth Prescott, DRED Public Works Manager
Joe Kopitsky, MW State Park
Jobie Chase, Bureau of Public Works, Project Manager
Torene Tango-Lowy, Commission Clerk

I. Welcome. Vice-chairman Wayne Presby called the meeting to order at 10:10 a.m. Chairman Paul Fitzgerald and Jack Middleton arrived a few minutes later.

II. Minutes. Senator Gallus MOTIONED to approve the January 29, 2008 minutes as written. Mr. Wemyss SECONDED; motion CARRIES.

III. Summit power project. Mr. Mansfield provided a brief review of the completed Phase I and II work. He then presented an update on the current Phase III work, which includes construction of the summit electrical building. The slab foundation for the electrical building was poured last fall and the pre-cast housing has been constructed. DRED is finding the site, located on the southeast corner of the Sherman Adams Building (SAB), to be problematic. The slab had to be constructed higher aboveground than originally planned due to hitting ledge, snowdrifts that occurred over the winter will likely block the air ports, the springtime heavy rains caused flooding across the slab, and the double-door entry required for servicing the generators will require grading alterations to meet the change in the slab's elevation. These issues compromise the desired low-visibility and operational integrity of the building and generators.

DRED recommends re-siting the power distribution and backup generators in the canopy, using three of the bays. The type of materials proposed for the enclosure would be the same as what is used on the SAB to create a unified visual effect. This location provides easy access for the staff conducting inspections, checks and maintenance; and easy access for the tractors that would be used in servicing the generators. The remaining bays would be closed on one side to provide a windbreak for guests entering/exiting the SAB and a shelter for waiting Cog riders.

Discussion ensued. The old powerhouse location is not desired by the State because of the distance from the SAB and concerns for staff safety while traveling to/from that location during required inspection and maintenance during the winter. The old electrical lines would need to be upgraded at this location. Travel to the powerhouse location is impossible during 100 mph winds. The backup generators have kicked on without problems about 12 times since the grid power was initiated last Thanksgiving; the generators are likely running during periods where winds are in excess of 70 mph. The recent acquisition of the Dartmouth parcel provides new, additional options for siting the electrical building. The Yankee Building is 70 years old. The pre-cast electrical building is owned by the State; it would not visually work under the canopy; it could fit within the powerhouse footprint. If not used, it would be a stranded cost.

It was mentioned that the fuel lines need replacement to be in compliance with DES; the lines may be reconfigured closer to the summit. Mr. Fitzgerald commented that the powerhouse site and a partially underground building attached to the southern wall of the SAB were considered as options. Mr. Mansfield reminded members of his report outlining the concerns he had about the partially underground site, including cost,

the difficulty in accessing the generators to service them and staff safety. Mr. Pelchat suggested that perhaps the enclosure of the canopy could be reduced to half the area, with paving that would direct traffic.

The Phase III project is still within budget. The Commission would like an analysis of potential power distribution sites, including visual renderings, in time for a September meeting. Long-term impacts and needs should be considered. Potential sites should include the canopy, the powerhouse and the underground addition at the southern wall of the SAB. The powerhouse foundation would need some repair but is in good shape. Mr. Leary responded to a question: the powerhouse has insufficient space to house additional communications equipment. The Commission expressed interest in a long-term plan for the Yankee Building. Mr. Fitzgerald asked for a MOTION for the Commission to obtain from DRED additional analysis on the three potential power distribution sites, plus the Yankee Building site, to be presented at a September meeting. Mr. Middleton so MOVED; Mr. Presby SECONDED; the motion CARRIES unanimously.

Mr. Middleton asked if the Attorney General's Office should be consulted to determine if Dufresne-Henry should be faulted for the impractical southeast site. Mr. Mansfield said that the southeast site was not part of the draft Dufresne-Henry report, but was a later addition to the report. Mr. Presby said Dufresne-Henry based their report on information that was provided them.

IV. Septic system rebuild. Mr. Fitzgerald took a moment to thank and congratulate Mr. Pelchat on successfully hosting the first ever Commission meeting to occur on the summit in the winter. Mr. Fitzgerald received a memo from the Observatory about their concerns regarding the septic system rebuild, which he forwarded to Director McLean. Mr. Jobie Chase, the project manager, provided the group with a summary of the project. DES had found the sand filter system of the existing septic system in failure. The existing system does not work well in the harsh environs of the summit.

The State is in the design phase of a packaged waste water treatment plant, site and outfall. The packaged plant will contain and treat wastes year round with remote sensing and a tertiary treatment process for improved effluent quality. This system has been implemented in cold, remote regions, including the Arctic, Canada and Alaska. DES, Bureau of Public Works and DRED have been actively involved in the research and design review. Stantec is doing the design work and permitting, LifeWater manufactures the system, and White Mountain Communications is doing the site work. Construction is planned for later in 2008. The system uses a membrane bio reactor and UV treatment, and can process 150-30,000 gallons/day; the summit currently processes 5,000 gals/day. The system will meet all regulatory standards. DES determined that the Cutler River drainage was appropriate for effluent discharge. Treated solids/sludge will be collected and removed from the site. Park staff will become trained, certified system operators.

Mr. Wagner stated that the Forest Service has not been consulted on this, as is required under the permitting process. Mr. Chase said the State is still in the design phase. The permitting process will follow, with the appropriate parties consulted for comment. The discharge will be by overland flow, delivered in batches, with an apron to disperse the outflow. The system is monitored daily by remote sensing, inspected weekly and the membrane has a 5-10 year lifespan. The aboveground 40' x 8' x 9' container will be partially concealed. Any residual scent will be dependent upon weather conditions, but will be a great improvement over the current system. The State intends to keep the tanks in the SAB functional.

Attendees discussed the system. The 5,000 gal/day projection for the summit is based on existing data, with a 10-15 year history of waste water sampling. Mr. Bergeron, who served as a consultant engineer to AMC, cautioned against LifeWater's "black box" design. Mr. Presby asked about independent testing. DES and State engineers spoke directly with their Alaskan counterparts, who recommended the LifeWater system as reliable and appropriate for the application. There are 150 working systems in place. The State is expecting receipt of additional design and schematics within two weeks. The construction phase will be aggressive: replacing the pipeline from the SAB to the first manhole using an "arctic" pipe that has a heat trace, and continuing under the Cog track. The current electrical system is adequate to meet the package system requirements. The Cutler site for the outfall will minimize the length of the pipeline, but the current outfall site may still be considered. The apron will reduce outfall freeze. The system design will be customized to the site. The electrical cost of heating has been taken into account; the heat tape will be used when necessary.

Mr. Henley asked about continued water restrictions – there should be fewer restrictions. Mr. Rancourt asked about fiber optic – the State is poised to the opportunity. Mr. Wagner was concerned about the schedule: the Forest Service should be brought in early in the review. Mr. Presby agreed, especially with any pipe work

occurring under the track. Mr. Presby asked if the State will deed back to the Cog the unused southeast site. Mr. Wemyss said the State is operating in a vacuum, that the partners can offer valuable comment if brought in early. Mr. Chase said the State was bringing the project design to the point where it could be reviewed and discussed. Mr. Fitzgerald stated that the Commission is advisory, but needs to be engaged at the appropriate timeframe. Director McLean said the State follows proper due process as required by regulation; however, she looks to the Commission on how to improve the process without preempting the normal course of feasibility and design. Members discussed options for improved communications. Mr. Cooper suggested updating the Master Plan. Mr. Fitzgerald said there are no funds for a Master Plan. Members were willing to work on the Master Plan as volunteers. Members also wanted a subcommittee on summit operations. Mr. Fitzgerald and Director McLean will work out more regularly scheduled Commission meetings, a more detailed agenda, an operations subcommittee, a Master Plan subcommittee, and other options for improved communications.

V. State Park buildings and grounds appearance. This topic will be a regular agenda item, intended to improve the appearance of the summit as is possible. Mr. Cooper suggested that all staff vehicles should park in the designated parking lots. Msrs. Henley and Presby expressed interest in serving on the Master Plan subcommittee.

VI. Report from partners. AMC June numbers are up, despite the high cost of fuel.

Auto Road Mr. Wemyss reports that visitation is suffering from the inclement weather, but the numbers are still good. Retail is up; car counts are down but it is still early.

Cog Railway has seen similar effects, reported Mr. Presby. Ridership was up, but slowed with the rain. The new diesel engine has been in operation since May 15 with three trips/day and no breakdowns. It's been on 20% bio-diesel fuel since June. The Cog plans to build two more diesel engines. They are cleaning up the old wood along the tracks and investing in a rubber track vehicle for the cleanup.

Observatory Mr. Henley reports that the fiscal year closed the \$1.8 million budget with \$32 in the black. They have invested in their website. Saturday is their big "Seek the Peak" fundraiser with 300 people registered and a goal of \$100,000. The "Science in the Mountains" program connects with science centers nationwide, and recently connected in to Alaska for two hours. A former Observatory employee is now stationed at the South Pole and will also connect in.

Parks Mr. Pelchat reported that bad weather has caused a great increase in hikers needing assistance, thereby taxing the park staff. Although the Hike Safe initiative has improved hiker awareness, more effort is needed to educate hikers on how to make an appropriate decision to initiate a hike or to continue their hike. 175 hikers needed transportation down over the weekend. The park staff is seeing more novice hikers who are ill prepared. Perhaps there should be enforcement against reckless hikers on the trails.

Director McLean reported that the Division has seen an increase in visitation at its southern area parks, but a small decrease at the northern parks. There is still a deficit in the State Park Fund. The State Park System Advisory Council is assisting the Division with the legislatively mandated system-wide master development plan, which should include the summit. A draft of the plan is targeted for December; outreach public meetings are being held. The Division is implementing 35 construction and maintenance projects funded by the \$6 million capital improvement budget. The performance and financial audit is nearly done with a draft report in August. The Division is working on its next biennial and capital budget.

WMNF Mr. Wagner reports similar summer visitation. They have met with NH Fish and Game on the Hike Safe message which is getting out to the public, but needs to be utilized. The Forest Service is reviewing the utilization of its facilities and may make operational changes based upon public usage. The Campton office will be LEED certified and move in is planned for next year. Mr. Wagner introduced the new Deputy, Keith Lannom.

Mr. Fitzgerald thanked the members and attendees. A September meeting will be scheduled. The meeting adjourned at 12:52 p.m.

Submitted by T. Tango-Lowy.