

**Mount Washington Commission**  
**Meeting Minutes of October 24, 2007**  
**Mount Washington Observatory, Weather Discovery Center**

**Members in attendance:**

Paul Fitzgerald, Public (Chairman)  
Wayne Presby, MW Cog Railway  
Rep Martha McLeod, House  
Paul Ingersoll, Public

Howard Wemyss, MW Auto Road  
Guy Gosselin, Public  
Tom Wagner, WMNF designee

**Members absent:**

Senator John Gallus, Senate  
Jack Middleton, MW Observatory

Paul Cunha, AMC designee

**Others present:**

Randy Cooper, MW Observatory  
Scot Henley, MW Observatory  
Harold Burns  
Edith Tucker, Coos County Democrat  
Gail Scott, Berlin Daily Sun

Tom Mansfield, DRED Architect  
Paul Leary, DRED Communications Admin  
Mike Pelchat, MW State Park Manager  
Torene Tango-Lowy, Clerk, Div Parks & Rec

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I. Welcome Chairman Paul Fitzgerald called the meeting to order at 10:05 a.m. Members and attendees introduced themselves.

II. Approval of minutes Rep. McLeod motioned to accept the minutes as written; Mr. Wemyss seconded. Motion carried, unanimously.

III. Power update Mr. Mansfield reported on the Phase 2 work of installing the transmission line to the summit. The project is going well, thanks to the work of White Mountain Communications, Cog Railway and MWSP staff, and good weather. If the weather holds, they will complete Phase 2 within the month and will energize the power cable this season. Power will be switched between grid and generator, as may be necessary; the transmission cable is currently running over the Ammonoosuc River. Restoration and erosion control work will also be completed in this phase. Mr. Presby stated that drainage is working well, following yesterday's 2.5" of rain. Mr. Wemyss stated that as a private citizen, the visual restoration of the trench and above treeline will be important.

Some Phase 3 work for the summit electrical building has started: the transformer has been delivered to the summit with the help of the Auto Road; and the concrete slab foundation for the summit electrical building was poured. Mr. Wemyss said the road will be in the right condition in late June before the summit electrical building components can be transported up.

Rep. McLeod asked about the costs. Mr. Mansfield stated that although there were extra costs for the steel conduit, there were savings on the cables; he anticipates remaining within budget. Mr. Cooper noted that the 1971 Master Plan recommended summit electrical power, with an estimated cost of \$205,000.

Mr. Fitzgerald and commission members congratulated the State, the partners, and contractors for a job well done.

IV. Report from partners AMC. No report.

*Auto Road.* Mr. Wemyss reported a successful summer. They closed on Sunday, October 21, but had to turn away 140 cars on Monday. Attendance was up 6%; tours and gift shop/café sales were up 5.5%. Six miles of road was newly paved in October. The Road will be down for repairs tomorrow for about one week.

*Cog Railway.* Mr. Presby reported a rough summer start that improved in July. Ridership is up 6%; revenues up 10%. The biodiesel locomotive is offline, but all other diesel engines are in their final stages

with a test scheduled in late November. The culvert work over the Ammonoosuc River is scheduled for early May 2008; materials are being stockpiled. Winter trips are planned for weekends only.

*Observatory.* Mr. Henley reported a great summer. MWO hosted a two-day climate change symposium in conjunction with their 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary at the Mount Washington Hotel. Retail is up and, although museum attendance was down, the net result was double. They'll have six staff members on the summit, in two shifts; they also have six new Trustees.

MWO is preparing to expand their educational programs. They are currently fundraising to provide for live video in classrooms (\$380K over two years), as well as for a new snow tractor. They are pursuing a federal grant for \$450K. Good media attention continues with Good Morning America scheduled on November 19 and a National Geographic segment on extreme weather. Mr. Leary requested that MWO recognize MWSP in its media efforts. Mr. Henley said that they do, but the media doesn't always pick up on it. Good coverage for MWO will help all partners in increased visitorship.

*State Parks.* Mr. Pelchat reported on the Park Manager's Fall Wrap Up meeting held last Friday. The Division was able to reduce its deficit by \$1 million from \$2.5 million through aggressive deficit reduction measures. The State Park Study Committee had recommended \$20 million over two bienniums for capital improvements to State Parks. \$6 million was budgeted for this biennium for capital improvements and deferred maintenance, including \$400K for the septic system at MWSP.

The park closed on October 21 with 300K visitors worldwide, especially from Canada (40%). The late foliage season helped to push revenues up 4% on retail and food. Park staff assisted with 19 medical trauma incidents and 50 minor injuries, but no fatalities. The septic system has been winterized. The Snowcat/Bombardier was serviced at Cannon and is back at the base. There was discussion about the septic system upgrades, including waterless urinals. There was discussion about whether savings from the electrification project would lapse to the General Fund, or if the savings could be used toward other MWSP improvements. Mr. Fitzgerald will inquire about this.

*WMNF.* Mr. Wagner reported that the Forest Service is celebrating 75<sup>th</sup> years of research at the Bartlett Experimental Forest. They are transitioning to winter operations; taking over Search and Rescue operations and providing volunteer ski patrol. In cooperation with local police, they successfully conducted a sting operation against unlawful activities occurring along the Cog Railway.

Barnie Gyant is now with Siuslaw National Forest in Oregon and the Service is recruiting for his replacement. Construction for the new office complex in Campton has started: it will be LEED certified and completion is expected in 2009. They continue to operate under a Continuing Resolution, but anticipate a final budget in March.

#### V. Any other business

Mr. Leary reported that talks with Dartmouth College for the summit acquisition are ongoing. The State treasurer is drafting the payment proposal and schedule. Mr. Fitzgerald would like this issue to be a regular agenda item.

VI. Adjourn Mr. Fitzgerald would like to plan for a winter meeting sometime in January or February, on the summit to allow the Commission to understand the winter operations. He will coordinate with MWSP and MWO for transportation and tours. A firm commitment will be required from Commission members, as transportation will be limited.

The meeting adjourned at 11 a.m. The next meeting is at the call of the chairman.

*Submitted by T. Tango-Lowy.*