

STATE PARK SYSTEM ADVISORY COUNCIL (RSA 216-A:3-k)

April 25, 2007, 9 a.m., NH Charitable Foundation, Concord

Members present:

Richard Ober, NHCF, Chairman
Sen. Bob Odell, Senate, Vice Chairman
Susan Arnold, AMC
Paul Doscher, SPNHF
Jeffrey Gilbert, Business community
Ruth Griffin, General public
Rep. Susan Kepner, RR&D Committee
Dir. Allison McLean, designee for Comm. Bald
Kathleen Reardon, Citizens Bank
Bill Roberts, Friends of Pisgah
Rep. Elisabeth Sanders, RR&D Committee
Maggie Stier, NH Preservation Alliance
Rep. Leigh Webb, House

Members absent:

Sen. Margaret Hassan, Senate
Craig Mayo, NH Snowmobile Association
Dick Huot, Tri-County CAP and NH ATV Club

Others present:

Benjamin Wilson, Historic Bureau Program Specialist
Johanna Lyons, Planning and Dev. Specialist
Tom Kokx, Kokx & Associates
Ted Kupper, Provan & Lorber
Jane Carey, Division Administrative Assistant
Barbara Ford, NH State Parks Intern

Welcome and Introductions. Senator Odell opened the meeting at 9:00am and began with turning over the Chairmanship to Dick Ober at which time Dick Ober graciously asked Senator Odell if he would be Vice Chairman. This meeting was held at the New Hampshire Charitable Foundation where Dick now works. He accepted the position of Chairman and explained about the NH Charitable Foundation that it is a statewide grassroots community organization established to improve the quality of life of New Hampshire Citizens.

Review of SB5 Report Review of Findings and Recommendations:

1.1&1.2 Bureau of Historic Sites – having been established and generally funded, Ben Wilson the Historic Sites Program Specialist was introduced. He explained his extensive background in historic preservation education and experience. His short term goals are to assess the historic sites, with long term goals of continuing maintenance plans to keep up and maintain sites. All historic sites are free to New Hampshire residents. With majority of past visitors being from out of state, this will bring more interest of these special places to New Hampshire residents for appreciation of their value and hopefully peak more interest. Generating Capital and Federal money and gearing up friends groups are ways to help improve historic sites. Ben stated that there are not just the marked historic sites, but all parks are historic sites and these venues should be revived to be more than a house tour. A suggestion was made to use successful historic sites as a model and have a future meeting on this.

2.1 Capital Improvements – There are two bonds totaling \$20 million to help State Parks over two succeeding bienniums. The Legislature needs to keep State Park needs in mind and keep this a priority. Capital projects are closely monitored with minimal deviation from the list.

3.1 Strategic Plan – This topic will be reviewed with Johanna Lyons and Tom Kokx today following the Study Report Review.

4.1 – 4.6 Funding and Public – Private Partnerships – PSNH and the Student Conservation Association (SCA) are partnering for the second year called the “Discover the Power of Parks” to conduct interpretive programs at seven state parks. The schedule for this effort will be announced at the Governor’s Conference on Tourism in May. Parks is going through a financial and performance audit that is looking at costs and benefits of leasing, outsourcing custodial maintenance and reservations. Some changes that were

recommended in the SB5 Report have been implemented. The reservation system is now done through a contract with a reservation company, Reserve America that also encompasses the parks retail operation; and Wi Fi service at the campgrounds and parks.

Recommendations - These are coming together.

5.1 - The audit of the Parks Bureau is well underway and will be done by the end of the summer.

5.2 - The Advisory Council is advocating for the parks system reporting to the Legislature, general public and key stake holder groups.

5.3 - The Director's annual report to the Legislature was submitted January 31, 2008.

5.4 - The last recommendation is that DRED update relevant statutes and this needs to get done.

This Commission Report was finished in November of 2006 and with the legislation of 2007 there has been remarkable progress made.

Director's Remarks – Director McLean

State Parks passes and new Parks Guides were given out to members of the committee to visit the parks.

To generate more revenue, new parks fee packages were passed out and increases were explained. Five or six additional Iron Rangers will be installed in the parks and will bring in approximately an additional \$65,000 annually. In the fall, pay stations at Hampton Beach will replace parking meters for a more efficient payment system for beach parking.

SB338 Capital project update; the language for the use of money collected through the parking meters at Hampton Beach is going through the legislature for changes to be able to use the funds more effectively.

Recommendation 3.1 of the Commission Report - The Division has contracted Tom Kokx and Associates to conduct a comprehensive strategic plan funded during the first biennium. Johanna Lyons gave an update of the development plan. The last strategic plan was done in 1987 and was more conceptual rather than workable. RSA 216-A outlines that a 10 year strategic development plan should be developed and implemented. Tom Kokx gave his background and spoke of his team members. He presented an initial outline for the Strategic Plan. A vision and mission statement will be developed. There will be interviews with parks staff, recreation user groups, public participation sessions and meetings with the SPAC. Data collection will be compiled using the division library, databases relative to parks facilities and other comparable recreation facilities within the state.

Field work will be done for the needs and opportunities of all sites, as well as individual sites and recommendations for both. An economic analysis will be researched for a good financial strategic plan. An overall understanding of the division will be developed through this comprehensive analysis. There will initially be a short term plan that will be responsive to the needs of the future. Kokx Associates will compile questions for State Parks Advisory Council to look into as they visit the parks. The SPAC is the steering committee to implement the strategic plan.

Out of state visitors and state residents are very different and we need to assure a quality New Hampshire experience for all of our guests and to develop a promising future.

Next meeting is scheduled for Friday, May 23, 2008, 9am at the NH Charitable Foundation, 37 Pleasant St, Concord.

Submitted by Jane Carey.