

Mount Sunapee Advisory Committee Meeting

April 13, 2004

Mount Sunapee Resort – Spruce Lodge

Members in attendance: Herb Bennett and Melanie Bell-Harrington for Town of Goshen, Lionel Chute for F&L, Terry Dancy, Director Rich McLeod, Nancy Marashio, Phil O'Brien, and Dan Wolf.

Mount Sunapee Resort staff in attendance: Jay Gamble.

DRED staff in attendance: Torene Tango-Lowy.

Meeting called to order at 9:40 a.m. Director McLeod chaired the meeting and provided an update on Commissioner Bald leaving DRED. Committee members introduced themselves to the public. Herb Bennett introduced Selectman Melanie Bell-Harrington, who will be recommended by the Town of Goshen to the Commissioner to serve on the committee.

Minutes

Dan Wolf motioned to accept the March 9, 2004 minutes, as amended. Nancy Marashio seconded. Motion carries unanimously. Torene Tango-Lowy reported that the minutes will be available on the Parks website, www.nhstateparks.org, under the Public Notices section.

Old Business

Rich asked the committee for comments on the Annual Operating Plan 2004-2005 (AOP). Herb said that all work planned for this year had been previously approved. Melanie asked about trails access for snowshoeing. Jay referred to page 9 of the AOP stating that the trails connecting the Greenway Trails are open to the public, but that ski trails are not open to snowshoeing during the winter ski season. Rich mentioned that hiking on ski trails during ski operations are prohibited by RSA. Dan stated that no changes to hiking usage are proposed in the AOP. Phil clarified that the AOP will need DRED approval by June 30.

Nancy asked about the boundary-to-boundary skiing and whether it would impact the old growth area. Jay clarified this type of skiing and the operational aspect of it. Such skiing would not impact the old growth area. Dan and Nancy agreed that the AOP used the same language as last year regarding skiing off designated trails.

Phil asked if the New England Handicapped Sports Association (NEHSA) is part of a lease agreement. Jay said the arrangement is informal. The Resort does not collect rent; provides ski passes to the instructors; discounted tickets to members; and covers electric, water, and disposal costs to the building.

Dan asked about the proposed Mountain Edge Resort lease. Jay said they have the same target audience. Melanie asked if rent would be paid; Jay said yes. Rich stated that there is no agreement in place; but that any such agreement would require DRED approval. Phil asked if such an agreement is provided for in the lease; Jay said it is within the general aspect of business for ski operations. Dan said DRED could look into this further and continue discussions with the Resort. Nancy said the lease language is fuzzy on this. The Lake Sunapee Business Association has had an office onsite; she is not opposed to this proposal. Rich clarified that there is no agreement until something is in writing for DRED to review. Jay said the potential Mountain

Mount Sunapee Advisory Committee Meeting

April 13, 2004

Mount Sunapee Resort – Spruce Lodge

Edge Resort agreement was included in the AOP as part of Mount Sunapee Resort's continued work with the larger business community.

Rich asked if there were any other comments on the AOP. Jay said the Resort was approached by a local summer camp provider about offering nature- and environmental-based day camp programming at the Children's Center to kids aged 8-14. Such summer programming would become part of Mount Sunapee Resort's operations. Members did not object to this addition.

Rich asked if the Committee would recommend approval of the AOP. Members were in support of AOP approval with further discussion between DRED and the Resort about the proposed Mountain Edge Resort lease agreement. Nancy clarified that a conditional approval would be outlined in the Commissioner's letter to the Resort.

Lionel requested technical corrections to the AOP.

New Business

Lionel Chute presented the East Bowl study completed by the Natural Heritage Bureau. The assessment of the East Bowl forest was to: 1) determine the extent and locations of exemplary natural communities with an emphasis on old forests, 2) determine the ecological significance of the forest state- and region-wide, and 3) make recommendations based on findings. The Bureau took a two-part approach: reviewing historical documentation and field research. Coring samples support Forest Legacy values. The Bureau recommends designating the East Bowl as a Natural Area based on its exemplary status. The Bureau also recommends that existing infrastructure and the proposed work near Polygon 23 go forward as approved by DRED.

Members discussed the Natural Area designation. Lionel explained that there are no definitions, rules, or written guidelines of how Natural Areas are managed; but that such a designation would provide the greatest protection currently available. Phil asked if a statutory change or administrative rule would be needed to establish definitions and guidelines. Lionel said it could be done through administrative rule, but would need to go through F&L Director Phil Bryce and the Commissioner. Jay said that the Resort has voluntarily committed to not developing trails within Polygon 20 and to minimize impacts to Polygon 23 for the duration of the lease.

Members discussed recommending designating the East Bowl as a Natural Area. Dan and Rich would want to know the definition and implication of a Natural Area designation prior to making such a recommendation. Terry said the state has defined other natural resource areas, such as wetlands. Nancy wished to go on record that the Committee should support what can be done to protect the East Bowl. Members thanked the Resort for voluntarily doing and funding the study.

Mount Sunapee Resort Update

Jay reported that the Resort closed the ski season on April 11; totaling 130 days within the season and 229,000 skier visits. Jay estimates that the Resort will be making a payment of \$150,000 + inflation adjustment in May and 3% of gross in December for an estimated total of \$440,000. The Resort plans to open for the next ski season on the Friday after Thanksgiving.

Mount Sunapee Advisory Committee Meeting

April 13, 2004

Mount Sunapee Resort – Spruce Lodge

The Mount Sunapee Resort and UVLSRPC are holding another public hearing on Thursday, April 15 at 6:30 p.m. at Spruce Lodge. The Resort will make a presentation and answer questions brought up at previous public meetings. Terry said the indirect effects, many of which are outside the Resort's control, needs to be satisfactorily studied and addressed. Dan said the issues of leasing additional public land for private profit and the role of the state needs a thorough approval process. Melanie said the Town of Goshen selectmen submitted a letter to Governor Benson that requests more research. Rich said Commissioner Bald outlined the approval process for this issue: to address changes to the leasehold through the Master Development Plan and for the Commissioner to make recommendations to Governor and Executive Council. Many of the issues also go beyond what State Parks can address, involving local towns and DOT. Commissioner Bald has stated that he will leave the decision to the in-coming DRED Commissioner.

Nancy said there are no criteria to measure public benefit-public interest. Lionel said there is no mention of a natural heritage inventory of the proposed added leasehold area. Rich recalled that the original Natural Heritage report included the proposed area with no significant findings.

Other items

Nancy stated that it has been a privilege to serve with Commissioner Bald – for his professionalism, expertise, eminent fairness, and gift of talent to the region. Dan reiterated Commissioner Bald's openness, availability, and commitment to what is in the best interest of the state. Dan motioned for the Committee to go on record to thank Commissioner Bald for his work for the state and on the issues at Mount Sunapee. Nancy seconded. Motion carried unanimously.

Herb Bennett stated that it has been his pleasure to work with this Committee. Members are reminded that the Master Development Plan will be presented at the June meeting.

Next Meeting Date is May 11, 2004 at 9:30 a.m. at the Mount Sunapee Resort, tentative.

Regular meeting adjourned at 11 a.m.

Public Comment

Rich opened the floor for public comments.

Charlie Niebling, SPNHF, appreciates Mount Sunapee Resort's commitment to not expand into the East Bowl area. The Society also appreciates DRED's commitment to protecting adjacent lands for old forests values. With the 700-acre state-held easement, Commissioner Bald has followed through with the conditions [of his February 27, 2002 statement]. The Society is supportive of a Natural Area designation for the East Bowl; it can be done through internal administrative action, similar to DRED's telecommunications for mountaintops policy.

Jerry Karr said a heritage inventory is needed and should be part of the decision to approve the MDP.

Mount Sunapee Advisory Committee Meeting

April 13, 2004

Mount Sunapee Resort – Spruce Lodge

Dan Allen provided the committee with copies of a letter addressed to Commissioner Bald. Ski trails for snowshoe use needs further discussion.

Tom Elliot asked about revenues from tree cutting. Jay said the Resort follows established procedures, but the timber value has not exceeded costs. Rich explained that any yield goes to the Division of Forests and Lands for forest fire protection; such revenues are not part of the 3% gross outlined in the lease agreement.

Catherine Bushueff had a copy of the 1999 heritage study and said that the study seemed to apply to the leasehold only. She said the upper trails and areas outside the leasehold should be studied. She would like to see more detail on access to trails and facilities. She provided a letter to Commissioner Bald.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Torene Tango-Lowy.