

Mount Sunapee Advisory Committee Meeting

June 8, 2004

Mount Sunapee Resort – Spruce Lodge

Committee Members in attendance: Commissioner Sean O’Kane (Chairman), Melanie Bell-Harrington for Town of Goshen, Lionel Chute for F&L, Terry Dancy, Jack Diemar, Tim Drew for DES, Director Rich McLeod, Nancy Marashio, Phil O’Brien, and Dan Wolf.

Mount Sunapee Resort staff in attendance: Tim Mueller and Jay Gamble.

DRED staff in attendance: Torene Tango-Lowy.

Welcome and Introductions Commissioner O’Kane called the meeting to order at 9:35 a.m. He reviewed the purpose of the Committee and today’s agenda. Public comment would not be taken today, but DRED will hold a public hearing on the Master Development Plan (MDP) in August. Committee members introduced themselves.

Minutes Nancy Marashio motioned to accept the April 13, 2004 minutes. Rich McLeod seconded. Motion carries unanimously.

Old Business There was no old business to discuss.

New Business Jay Gamble presented the MDP and provided copies of the MDP to Committee members, DOT, and two copies each to the Towns of Goshen, Newbury, New London, Sunapee, Newport, and Bradford. Copies of the Executive Summary are available to the media. Jay mentioned that the presentation of the MDP to the Committee was rescheduled from May 11 to June 8 to allow the Mount Sunapee Resort (Resort) to complete a wildlife study. Jay presented the history of Mount Sunapee ski area, the improvements and proposed expansion of the ski facilities by the State, the legislative history for the lease of Mount Sunapee ski area, and the requirement of the lease Request for Proposals (RFP) to include proposed development and expansion of the ski facilities.

Jay presented the projects planned for Mount Sunapee contained in the MDP, including: a) projects previously approved by DRED, but not yet completed; b) new projects proposed; and c) details about the West Bowl expansion. Jay reviewed former Commissioner Bald’s statement dated February 27, 2002 of requirements that the Resort has met, including land adjacent to the Mount Sunapee-Pillsbury Greenway that will be donated to the State. The Resort plans to donate mountainous lands south of Mount Sunapee to the State to protect the summits in perpetuity.

Jay presented proposed improvements within the current leasehold: a) two new trails between Upper Ridge and Lower Blast Off; b) replace Spruce Triple with a quad chair; c) remove Duckling Double; d) install a moving carpet/beginner lift at South Peak; e) construct new sections of 2nd Ridge ski trail; f) create new skiing at South Peak; and g) install a culvert for Beck Brook near South Peak.

Based upon Natural Heritage Bureau’s findings in Polygon 20 and 23 for exemplary old growth forest values, the Resort has abandoned proposals for ski facilities development in those areas. The Resort proposes following the State’s 1961 proposal to develop the West Bowl area. Jay presented the West Bowl proposal that would involve realigning the lease boundary to the State Park boundary to allow ski facility development on State and abutting Okemo-owned land: a)

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install a detachable quad chairlift; b) install a moving carpet/beginner lift; c) construct +/-75 acres of new terrain; d) construct a new base area facility with limited guest services; e) construct new parking areas; and f) install utilities and infrastructure. The Resort will not request any other expansion of the leasehold boundary.

Jay reviewed the Environmental Management Plan (EMP). The EMP includes: a) water usage and conservation; b) wastewater disposal/treatment; c) drainage, erosion, and water quality; d) solid waste disposal; e) air quality and traffic congestion mitigation; f) forestry management; g) wetlands impacts; h) wildlife habitat preservation; i) scenic and aesthetic qualities; j) archaeological and historical resources; and k) economic impact analysis. In response to public input, the Resort expanded its traffic study and is in discussion with the Town of Newbury and DOT to address traffic impacts on peak-days. The Resort also expanded its run-off study. The wildlife and wildlife habitat study yielded no significant findings; the study included a field assessment and review of NHB, NHF&G, and federal data. The Resort works towards being self-sufficient in its water, waste, and emergency services needs to minimize the impact to municipal services. Additional economic and fiscal analysis is provided in the EMP.

Tim Mueller reiterated that the RFP for the operation of Mount Sunapee required respondents to include plans for the development and expansion of the Mount Sunapee Ski Area, thus there was the expectation of expansion. Tim hopes that Committee members and other organizations review the MDP proposal and impact studies as they make their recommendations to DRED. Phil O'Brien reviewed a letter to Commissioner O'Kane from the LSPA which states that there is no codified evaluation process for the State's review of large development projects, the decision-making for Mount Sunapee rests with Commissioner O'Kane, and an independent Environmental Impact Study would help address potential negative impacts. The Resort has a history of successful environmental permitting; the missing link is the criteria for this decision.

Terry Dancy stated the importance of the planning process for the future of Mount Sunapee to include Newbury, Goshen, and Sunapee communities. Also important is how the public sees the process: that it appears fair and reasonable. Beyond Mount Sunapee are the issues of quality of life and compelling public benefit. The question for the State is the use of a public park for commercial development and its impact 20-30 years out. For the MDP review, Terry suggests that a single public hearing may not be enough to satisfy the public. Terry expressed his appreciation for serving on the Committee; Tara Bamford, Executive Director of the UVLSPC, has been recommended for appointment. Commissioner O'Kane reviewed the appointment process for this Committee: the member organization makes their recommendation to the Commissioner, who makes his recommendation to the Governor for final approval.

Nancy Marashio agrees that there needs to be criteria for the lease expansion decision. She recommends that the public interest issue be an agenda item and that multiple hearings be held with a defined agenda and topics.

Commissioner O'Kane thanked the Committee members for their input and the public for their attendance. The meeting was adjourned at 10:30 a.m.

The next meeting is scheduled for July 13, 2004 at 9:30 a.m. at Mount Sunapee Resort.

Minutes respectfully submitted by Torene Tango-Lowy, as amended.