

NORTH COUNTRY COUNCIL COMMISSIONER MEETING MINUTES

Zoom Video Teleconferencing

Thursday, October 29, 2020

4:00 p.m. to 6:00 p.m.

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Peter Higbee; Linda Moore; Raymond Gorman; Carrie Klebe; Jon Swan; Paul Robitaille; Sandra Butson; Robin Irving; Doug Grant; Vicki DeLalla; Carl Martland; Mark Decoteau; and Matthew Kelly.

PRESENTERS: Jack Savage, President of the Society of the Protection of New Hampshire Forests; and Ann Truslow, Vice President for Development of the Society of the Protection of New Hampshire Forests.

STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT: Michelle Moren-Grey, Executive Director; and James Steele, Finance Manager

4:00

- **Welcome & Introductions**

The meeting was called to order via the emergency order language (page 4)

- **Review & Approval of the FY21 Budget**

James Steele reviewed the FY21 Budget. Michelle Moren-Grey discussed the DRTC funding, as well as the difference between FY20 and FY21 in terms of the Federal grant funding. Discussion was had regarding the status of the budget, as well as the impacts of COVID.

MOTION: Commissioner DeLalla moved to approve the FY21 budget, as presented. It was seconded by Commissioner Decoteau.

Commissioner Irving: Approve.

Commissioner Klebe: Approve.

Commissioner Robitaille: Yes.

Commissioner Butson: Approve.

Commissioner Gorman: Yes.

Commissioner Moore: Yes.

Commissioner Swan: Yes.

Commissioner Grant: Yes.

Commissioner Kelly: Approve.

Commissioner Martland: Yes, approve.

Commissioner DeLalla: Yes.

Commissioner Decoteau: Yes.

The motion carried. (12-0-0).

Ms. Moren-Grey went over some of the current projects and grants.

- **Board of Directors for FY21 - Nominations for Members & Officers**

Commissioner Martland indicated that his nominations and recommendations are to continue with the current slate of Officers. The nominations were as follows:

Chairperson: Doug Grant
Vice Chairperson: Robin Irving
Secretary: Paul Robitaille
Treasurer: Jennifer Fish
Board Member: Carl Martland

MOTION: Commissioner DeLalla moved to approve the slate of Officers, as listed. It was seconded by Commissioner Moore.

Commissioner Butson: Yes.
Commissioner Irving: Yes.
Commissioner Klebe: Yes.
Commissioner Robitaille: Yes.
Commissioner DeLalla: Yes.
Commissioner Gorman: Yes.
Commissioner Martland: Yes.
Commissioner Decoteau: Yes.
Commissioner Moore: Yes.
Commissioner Kelly: Yes.
Commissioner Swan: Yes.
Commissioner Grant: Yes.

The motion carried. (12-0-0).

Commissioners expressed their gratitude to the Board Members.

Commissioner Martland announced that this weekend there is a proposed cell tower to be erected right at the entrance to Franconia Notch State Park, coming up Route 3, wherein a balloon test will be performed. He added that the postpone date, if necessary, would be the following Saturday.

Commissioner Swan inquired as to the concern in Dalton regarding the Lancaster Dispatch, and whether or not it has been addressed by North Country Council. Ms. Moren-Grey responded that NH-DOT operates the dispatch out of Lancaster, and that they are the ones who will be stopping service for dispatch in the next year or two. Commissioner Irving corrected the date, indicating they would be ceasing service by the 1st of the year. Ms. Moren-Grey indicated that Ben is working with the communities in the surrounding area to come up with a solution. Commissioner Irving added that the dispatch would be moving to Haverhill. Discussion continued regarding the agreements being circulated in order to provide services for the area.

5:00 Presentation: Forest Society North at The Rocks

Ms. Moren-Grey introduced the speaker of the presentation, as well as gave a backdrop to what would be discussed. Jack Savage made a presentation, accompanied by a slide show. He spoke about what they would like to accomplish in northern New Hampshire. He also touched upon the Master Plan for The Rocks. He described the different facilities at The Rocks. He gave an overview on the Conservation Plan.

Anne Truslow provided further description regarding the plans for The Rocks, as well as touched upon the community outreach sessions that have been conducted. She noted that the Batchelder Cottage is not a part of the future plans for The Rocks, but is rather currently serving as a training ground for the local Fire and Police Departments to be working on smoke operations and will come down in 2021.

The following questions were asked of the Commission:

- Q. Thinking about COVID, making the assumption that these plans were underway prior to COVID, and with the outdoor space, which is amazing and very purposeful, and exciting, have you increased or changed your thought process about how you use space and how that space may be developed?
- A. We just had a conversation with the Architects about that very thing a few weeks ago. We started to filter our plans through the COVID veil. You start to think about different things. We had envisioned open work areas that might be shared by any number of staff people, which is not great in COVID times. Maybe you want to have enclosed offices, ability to separate rooms. Ultimately, what we concluded with all the unknowns, is that what we needed to do, especially on our 2nd Floor, is to build in lots of flexibility so that we can change things as times change.
- Q. Have you thought of having an outside classroom with parking, so that those attending can actually stay in their car?
- A. That's a really interesting idea. With what we have in the landscape that we've created, you could actually do that. Might have to think about how to route people and so forth.
- Q. I have a question about trails on the property. About 20 to 30 years ago, I used to go out there snowshoeing and cross-country skiing. Are the trails still there and available to the local communities?
- A. They are. Some of them, from 20 years ago, are probably a little less accessible. There's 3 or 4 pretty actively used trails. There are daily dogwalkers who are there. There's a whole usual crew that seems to be using the trail system.
- Q. You have a captive audience of North Country champions before you, both regionally but then also for their own communities, all the way from the Canadian border and then down into the Waterville Valley area, and east and west. What would be helpful for you in your development of this, in ideas of how do you connect deeper into North Country Communities and how you expand that space to be encompassing?
- A. If you are from down below, you think of the North Country as a single place, and it's not at all. We need to connect Bethlehem with Errol and Littleton with Colebrook, and Berlin with Groveton in a way that allows us to work together. Encourage people to engage with us on this project in Bethlehem as something that is relevant to if you care about Pittsburgh or Milan, or anyplace else north of the Notches.
- Q. You did some public sessions earlier. Are those completely done or will you be doing more of those?
- A. What we put a pause on was getting into a more deeper discussion with local schools and school districts, mostly because of just capacity issues right now among schools and that things are so upside-down with COVID. That was paused to a more normal time, our new reality, whatever it turns out to be.

Discussion was had regarding the fact that The Rocks is a byways attraction. Ms. Moren-Grey indicated she will distribute the slideshow presentation to the Commissioners once she receives them, along with their contact information.

6:00 Adjournment

Respectfully Submitted,

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North Country Council Commission due to the State of Emergency declared by the Governor as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic and in accordance with the Governor's Emergency Order #12 pursuant to Executive Order 2020-04, this public body is authorized to meet electronically.

Please note that there is no physical location to observe and listen contemporaneously to this meeting, which was authorized pursuant to the Governor's Emergency Order. However, in accordance with the Emergency Order, I am confirming that we are:

Utilizing Zoom for this electronic meeting and all members of the Board have the ability to communicate contemporaneously during this meeting through this platform, and the public has access to contemporaneously listen and, if necessary, participate in this meeting through dialing the following phone # (929 436 2866) and Meeting ID: 852 2748 0744, or by clicking on the Zoom Meeting link provided in the agenda.

We previously gave notice to the public of the necessary information for accessing the meeting, including how to access the meeting using Zoom or telephonically. Instructions have also been provided on the website of the Commission at www.nccouncil.org

If anybody has a problem, please call (603) 444-6303 ext 2014 or email at mmoren@nccouncil.org.

In the event the public is unable to access the meeting, the meeting will be adjourned and rescheduled. Please note that all votes that are taken during this meeting shall be done by roll call vote.

Let's start the meeting by taking a roll call attendance. When each member states their full name, the entity being represented, and also state whether there is anyone in the room with you during this meeting, which is required under the Right-to Know law.