



MINUTES OF THE STATE LAND COMMITTEE MEETING
August 13, 2009
DRAFT

Committee members in attendance included Agency Chairman Curt Stiles, Committee Chair James Townsend, Members William Thomas, Richard Booth, Cecil Wray and Designee Elizabeth Lowe, Department of Environmental Conservation. Joining the Committee were Members Arthur Lussi, Frank Mezzano, Lani Ulrich, and Designees Christopher Walsh, Department of Economic Development and Riele Morgiewicz, Department of State. Local Government Review Board Executive Director Fred Monroe also participated in the meeting. Staff included Planning Director, James Connolly, Agency Counsel, John Banta, and Assistant Planning Director, Richard Weber.

The Committee meeting convened at approximately 1:00 p.m.

State Land Activity Report (R. Weber, APA)

Mr. Weber asked if there were any questions relating to the activity report. None were presented.

Committee Chair Townsend noted that a packet of comment letters were distributed relating to the classification/reclassification proposal for Bog River/Lows Lake area. Mr. Weber then gave a brief summarization of the comments received during the public hearings as well as the written comments submitted to the Agency. He noted that the public hearings have concluded and the necessary environmental assessment and determination of significance according to SEQRA has been completed. Staff is now in the process of preparing a hearing record and a final proposal for future Agency consideration and approval. He noted that any additional public comment letters would be provided to Agency members and asked that they retain the copies distributed today for their future reference.

Travel Corridor Unit Management Planning Memorandum of Understanding (R. Weber, APA, E. Frantz, DOT)

Mr. Weber acknowledged both Ed Frantz, DOT, and Karyn Richards, DEC, for their assistance in helping to prepare the Draft MOU. Mr. Weber reviewed the travel corridor definition and guidelines as outlined in the SLMP. He spoke about the Adirondack Highway

Council (1974-1985) that was established to implement a common vision for Adirondack transportation systems that strengthened the natural character of the Adirondack Park. The Council was created, in part, in response to the challenges posed by the travel Corridor guidelines listed in the SLMP. Due to the Highway Council's efforts, a series of unique standards were developed for travel corridors including the yellow on brown signage, rustic guide rails, scenic overlook designations and other design standards to blend with the Park's character. Coordination with other planning initiatives resulted in the Scenic Byways Program, Department of State planning initiatives and other Hamlet and Community Planning efforts and is a very important component in the development of travel corridors.

Mr. Weber stated that the intent of the MOU is to provide process and content for the development of travel corridor unit management plans as required by the SLMP. The DOT has agreed to take the lead on development of unit plans on behalf of DEC and in consultation with DEC and the Agency. DEC, DOT and APA agree each agency's program responsibilities are enhanced by coordinated policy and planning development and implementation. The MOU does not diminish authority or responsibilities of the participating agencies.

Mr. Weber noted the public comment period will remain open until September 2, 2009. Staff will review the public comment record and prepare a final draft MOU for Agency consideration at the September meeting.

Ed Frantz reviewed some of the history of Adirondack Park transportation. He spoke about the data collection techniques used by DOT to gather information to assess the various transportation features and needs within the Park.

Committee Chair Townsend suggested that on page 2 of the draft MOU, the fourth whereas clause should be strengthened to reflect what the SLMP states and that the function of these travel corridors may be the only interaction the visitor has with the Park; the first impression is very important.

Member Thomas stated that the hamlets in the Park would benefit from better signage.

Member Ulrich stated that the design content is important for travel corridor signage. She added that maintenance for scenic vistas is also an important consideration for travel corridor management plans.

Chair Stiles asked what the difference is between the MOU and the Green Book that was prepared by DOT.

Mr. Weber responded that the Green Book provides general guidelines and standards for managing the highways whereas the travel corridor management plan prioritizes management practices in relation to the existing resources within the corridor.

Mr. Connolly added that the Green Book outlines each agency's policies and procedures associated with travel corridor management but does not specify the direct responsibilities of the involved agencies for the development of specific corridor plans as envisioned by the State Land Master Plan. The MOU will lend more clarity to the roles of each involved agency.

Member Lussi suggested that perhaps with better coordination of the three involved agencies, an alternative solution to the use of road salt to maintain Adirondack roads during the winter season could be found to alleviate the amount of environmental damage that occurs with the current practice of applying salt to icy roads.

Member Booth asked about the process that will be implemented to foster coordination among the three agencies if disagreements between the agencies occur. He noted that Section 814 is not mentioned in the notification process section outlined in the MOU. He then referred to the word "adjacent" as it is used to describe local governments in the draft MOU, and advised that different descriptors should be applied. He then referred to the list of resources that should be specifically identified and noted that wetlands and river corridors are not included. On pages 4 and 5 under items 5 and 6 travel corridor management goals and travel corridor management issues, it seems that these items are limited in scope and do not include issues that are mentioned in previous pages of the document. In 5b, referring to the guiding principles to protect the Park-like character, the highway's primary purpose is to move people safely, and this concept should not be lost in the drafting of this document.

Member Morgiewicz stated that DOS had some concerns regarding planning initiatives of local communities and how local government concerns can be addressed and incorporated into the MOU process.

Member Ulrich noted that several of the pictures that were used in the presentation did not have visible power lines in them.

Member Mezzano suggested that power lines may be setback behind trees to better screen the utilities. Mr. Weber responded that additional impacts are likely to be sustained in this scenario as it tends to create another corridor which contributes to further fragmentation of habitat. Thus the value of the visual resource must be weighed against the ecological resource.

Local Government Review Board Executive Director Fred Monroe stated that he would like to see better coordination with local governments which has been done on the federal level. He would like to see some reference in the MOU that will foster such coordination and allow greater input from local governments.

Committee Chair Townsend noted that the public comment period will remain open until September 2, 2009.

Counsel Banta noted this is not "policy" or "guidance" and the opportunity for comment is simply to give adequate time to coordinate public input and review of the involved agencies. Therefore, it would be legally appropriate to consider at the September meeting authorizing the Chairman to sign the MOU.

Old Business

None.

New Business

None.

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 2:00 p.m.

JEC:REW:lhb