



Adirondack Park Agency

KATHY HOCHUL
Governor

BARBARA RICE
Executive Director

ADIRONDACK PARK AGENCY **DRAFT January MEETING MINUTES**

Thursday, January 11, 2023

AGENCY MEMBERS, DESIGNEES, AND EXECUTIVE STAFF PRESENT

John Ernst, Chairperson
Benita Law-Diao, Member
Art Lussi
Ken Lynch, Member
Zoë Smith, Member
Dan Wilt, Member
Rebecca Miller, NYS Empire State Development
Matt Tebo, Dept. of State
Joe Zalewski, NYS Dept. of Environmental Conservation
Barb Rice, Executive Director - Remotely
Sarah Reynolds, Associate Counsel

ABSENT AND EXCUSED

Mark Hall, Member

LOCAL GOVERNMENT REVIEW BOARD PRESENT

Gerald Delaney, Executive Director

AGENCY STAFF PRESENT

Ben Amos
Amy Hall
Bart Haralson
Mitch Jones
Dan Kelleher
Bob Kreider, NYS ITS
Mike Martin
Keith McKeever
Craig Michaels
Megan Phillips
Dave Plante
Lizz Schuyler
Kiley Wilber

Link to video and audio recordings of the proceedings to be added.

1. CALL TO ORDER and 2. WELCOMING REMARKS

The meeting was called to order at 9:04 am. Chairperson Ernst wished everyone happy new year, noted that board member Mark Hall would not be in attendance and announced that Matt Tebo has been made the permanent DOS designee to the Board.

Chairperson Ernst was very pleased that Governor Hochul mentioned granting funds to local governments for water system upgrades in the State of the State and thanked the Governor for signing the Birds and Bees Act in December, which helps protect New Yorkers and wildlife from harmful pesticides.

PUBLIC COMMENT

John Privitera who has a camp in Garnet Hills spoke about sound pollution issues in relation to Barton Mines.

John Passacantando of North River spoke about concerns regarding the expansion of Barton Mines, is not against the mine just it's expansion.

Dave Gibson offered thanks to the APA and DEC for entering into a compliance agreement regarding a violation of the SLMP which occurred on the West Canada Lake Wilderness Area.

4. APPROVAL OF November 16, 2023 AGENCY MEETING MINUTES

On motion of Dan Wilt, seconded by Benita Law-Diao, the November minutes were unanimously approved, with Art Lussi and Rebecca Miller abstaining.

5. RECUSALS

None

6. MOTION FOR EXECUTIVE SESSION

Associate Counsel Sarah Reynolds noted that no executive session was needed.

7. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Executive Director Rice welcomed everyone and began by noting that once again areas of the Adirondack Park had been hit with extremely bad weather, adding that the Agency would be ready to assist towns with any needed emergency permits for repairs.

Next Executive Director Rice introduced Elizabeth Schuyler, Ph.D., as the new Supervisor, Natural Resource Analysis, and announced that Mike Martin and Kiley Wilber had both been promoted to permanent positions as Office Assistant 1's.

Executive Director Rice offered congratulations to all of the newly elected supervisors and mayors, adding plans to reach out to all of them personally with further plans visit each town and village in the Park this year. Megan Phillips, Deputy Director, Planning and planning division staff will be assisting with this endeavor.

The second Annual Adirondack Planning Forum will be held April 24th and 25th at the Hotel Saranac, more information will be forthcoming.

Lastly, Executive Director Rice noted that Governor Hochul has announced funding for water infrastructure improvements through the comprehensive Climate Change Resilience Plan which makes moneys available to low-income towns.

8. MOTION TO ADJOURN INTO COMMITTEES

Without objection the Agency adjourned into committees at about 9:27 am.

Economic Affairs Committee

The committee meeting convened at approximately 9:27 am.

Economic Affairs Committee Members Present

Brad Austin, Joe Zalewski, Committee Chair Mark Hall was absent, John Ernst sat in instead.

Other Members and Designees Present

Benita Law-Diao, Art Lussi, Ken Lynch, Zoë Smith, Dan Wilt, Rebecca Miller.

Local Government Review Board Present

Gerald Delaney, Executive Director

Agency Staff Present

Barb Rice, Sarah Reynolds, Dan Kelleher.

Economic Services Overview and Update (Dan Kelleher)

Dan Kelleher provided an overview of the assistance opportunities available to local governments through the Agency's Economic Services Unit. Services available, at no cost to municipalities, include economic development planning, demographic and market analysis, project feasibility, and industry recruitment. Dan Kelleher highlighted that the Agency seeks to be flexible in the services provided and if a community has a need that isn't being fulfilled, the Economic Services Unit will try to accommodate the request. The committee meeting concluded after a brief question and answer session.

Old Business

None

New Business

None

The committee meeting adjourned at approximately 10:05 am.

Link to video and audio recordings of the Economic Affairs presentation and following discussions to be added.

State Land Committee

The committee meeting convened at approximately 10:05 am.

State Land Committee Members Present:

Benita Law-Diao, Zoë Smith, Joe Zalewski (DEC)

Other Members and Designees Present:

John Ernst (Chair), Rebecca Miller (ESD), Art Lussi, Matt Tebo (DOS), Dan Wilt

Local Government Review Board

Gerald Delaney, Executive Director

Agency Staff Present:

Sarah Reynolds, Barb Rice, Megan Phillips, Mitchell Jones, Matt Kendall, Craig Michaels

(1) Planning Division Report (Megan Phillips)

Deputy Director Phillips began with a rail trail update. The Phase 1 segment from Lake Placid to Saranac Lake is complete and a ribbon cutting ceremony was held on December first of last year. Phase 2 from Saranac Lake to Floodwood Road is open to the public for winter use and will close again in the springtime when construction resumes. Phase 3 from Floodwood Road to Tupper is in the planning phase, DEC will issue the bid package this winter. Construction will start in the spring/summer of 2024. DEC has been dealing with some flooding along the rail trail corridor due to beaver activities, they replaced a culvert in Tupper Lake and cleared three others near Fowlers Crossing, ongoing beaver activity appears to be one of the biggest challenges in the future management of the trail.

State land staff continue to prepare unit management plans with DEC and is currently working on the proposed final plans Golden Beach and Rollins Pond Campgrounds. Other plans in the queue include John Brown Farm and Debar Mountain Wild Forest.

State land staff also provided comments on the proposed Middleton Bridge project in Warren County and potential effects to the Adirondack Forest Preserve Historic Landmark historic resource as part of the US Department of Transportation Act of 1966, Section 4(f). In the same vein, staff reviewed and participated in a meeting with the New York State DOT regarding proposed changes to the Statewide Programmatic Agreement related to impacts on historic properties in New York State.

Staff are also engaged in ongoing working groups and initiatives, including the DEC/APA Accessibility Advisory Committee, a Jenkins Mountain visitor use management demonstration project update, and a meeting with the High Peak Wilderness Visitor Use Management Project core team to review visitor use data collected over the summer.

The Local Government Services team processed 94 variance referrals in 2023, three of which were reversed. Approved Programs are required to refer certain variances to the Agency for review and under certain circumstances the Agency can reverse the local variance. Staff process approximately 100 variances a year and typically only 2-4 are reversed. Local Government Services staff are also actively working on approved program amendments with the Town of Hague (for their sanitary code) & Town of Westport (for signs & administrative changes). We anticipate that these amendments will come before the board later this year.

The Save-The-Date for the second annual Adirondack Planning Forum is posted on the Agency website. This year's conference will be held at the Hotel Saranac on April 24 and 25.

(2) 2023 State Land Classification Package

Megan Phillips presented a summary of public comments received and highlighted changes made from the Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (DSEIS) to the Final Supplemental EIS (FSEIS). On motion of Zoë Smith, seconded by Joe Zalewski, the committee voted unanimously to advance a resolution to the full board to accept the FSEIS and authorize the Executive Director to make non-substantive technical corrections to the FSEIS, to prepare a findings statement and decision, and forward the Agency's recommendations for classification to the Governor for approval.

(3) Lake George Beach and Battlefield Park Unit Management Plan Amendment

Chuck Vandrei presented the public draft amendment to the 1981 Lake George Beach and Battlefield Park Unit Management Plan for construction of a facility for the internment of 18th century human remains from the Lake George area, and Mitchell Jones shared Adirondack Park State Land Master Plan considerations for Intensive Use Areas. On motion of Zoë Smith, seconded by Benita Law-Diao, the committee unanimously voted to authorize a joint public comment period with the DEC.

Old Business

None

New Business

None

The committee meeting adjourned at approximately 11:10 am.

Link to video and audio recordings of the State Land presentation and following discussion to be added.

Full Agency resumed at approximately 11:10 am.

9. Committee Reports

a) Economic Affairs Committee

John Ernst reported that the committee had heard an very good overview of the Agency's economic services unit from Dan Kelleher.

b) State Land Committee

Ken Lynch reported that the committee had heard a report from Megan Phillips.

Next was a presentation on the 2023 State Land Classification Package by Megan Phillips, recapping the public engagement process and discussing comments received, as well as highlighting any changes made from the Draft Supplemental Environmental Impact Statement (DSEIS) to the Final Supplemental EIS (FSEIS).

On motion of Ken Lynch, seconded by Art Lussi, the board voted unanimously to accept the FSEIS and authorized the Executive Director to make non-substantive technical corrections to the FSEIS, to prepare a findings statement and decision, and forward the Agency's recommendations for classification to the Governor for her approval.

Last was a presentation by Charles Vandrei, DEC, and Mitchell Jones on the Lake George Beach and Battlefield Park Unit Management Plan Amendment

On motion of Ken Lynch, seconded by John Ernst, the board voted unanimously to approve the Agency entering into a joint public comment period with DEC.

10. Interim Reports

The Administration, Enforcement, Legal Affairs, Local Government Services, Park Ecology, Park Policy and Planning and Regulatory Programs committees did not meet this month.

Dan Wilt noted that the Deputy Director's monthly report was in the Board's mailing package.

Local Government Review Board Report

Jerry Delaney offered to accompany Executive Director Rice on visits to towns and villages within the Park. Jerry Delaney responded to comments that Art Lussi made during the State Land Committee regarding the difficulty in making reservations at DEC managed campgrounds, adding that it's something Local Government Review Board has brought to DEC's attention before and is hopeful there will be improvements. Jerry Delaney is looking forward to visiting the Lake George Battlefield site.

11. Member Comment

Benita Law-Diao replied to Art Lussi's comments from the State Land Committee questioning if we would want to discourage Canadian and out-of-state visitors from coming to our state campgrounds.

Chairperson Ernst read a statement which said:

"Over the holiday period I read a story, which was a re-run from earlier in the year regarding the possibility of locating our headquarters to downtown Saranac Lake. It really got me excited again about this intriguing opportunity.

The APA Act, which I referred to at last April's Adirondack Planning Forum as New York State's original smart growth plan, designates hamlet areas as the service and growth centers of the Park. Promoting growth in hamlets protects open space and helps build sustainable, vibrant, and diverse communities. Revitalization of village and city downtowns is a bedrock component of sound land use policy and smart growth principals. Investing in built environments is also consistent with recently passed State legislation including the Community Risk and Resiliency Act, the Smart Growth Public Infrastructure Act and the Climate Leadership and Community Protection Act.

This very well will be a lead by example transformation opportunity. I believe moving our headquarters to an Adirondack hamlet would help to advance the goals New York State has set out in terms of sustainable land use practice and climate change mitigation.

So, as Chair of the Adirondack Park Agency, I strongly encourage that Executive Director Rice and her staff continue to evaluate the option to relocate our headquarters to the Village of Saranac Lake site. I look forward to learning more about the specifics of the Agency's due diligence I the months ahead."

Matt Tebo said that regarding Chairperson Ernst's comments on Smart Growth, that the Dept of State administers the Downtown Revitalization Initiative, a competitive grant program, from which Saranac Lake received \$10 million in 2019. Matt Tebo believes that moving the APA to downtown Saranac Lake helps further the goals of DRI and applauds the staff and Board for exploring this possibility.

Rebecca Miller added that in terms of economic development, to move the APA headquarters to Saranac Lake sound like a smart move from many aspects.

12. Old Business

None

13. New Business

None

14. Public Comment

None

Link to video and audio recordings of the full Agency presentation to be added.

Chairperson Ernst said that the next meeting will be February 8 and 9 2024.

The meeting was adjourned without objection at approximately 11:20 am.

John Ernst, Chairperson