

COÖS COUNTY PLANNING BOARD
North Country Resource Center
Lancaster, NH
February 15, 2023

The regular meeting was opened at 6:05 pm by Chairman Scarinza.

Roll Call:

John Scarinza – Chair: Present	Scott Rineer- Vice Chair: Present
Jennifer Fish – Clerk: Present	Tom McCue: Present
Ed Mellet: Present	Rick Tillotson: Absent
Mike Waddell: Present	Rep. Troy Merner: Present
Commissioner Ray Gorman: Present	Mike Ouellet - Alternate: Present
Leon Rideout - Alternate: Absent	

Also in Attendance: Tara Bamford, Planning Consultant (via Zoom); Ed Brisson, Hannah Campbell, Rich McGarry, and Les Otten-Dixville Capital LLC; Daniel Bernadett, PE ArcVera Renewables; Jon Warzocha P.G. , Horizons Engineering, Inc.; Attorney Earl Duval, Wayne Presby and Ryan Presby, Mt Washington Railway company; Kaela Tavaras, North Country Council (via Zoom); Commissioner Robert Théberge, Rep. Arnie Davis and members of the public and press.

PUBLIC COMMENTS NOT RELATED TO AGENDA ITEMS

None

APPOINTMENT OF ALTERNATES

Chairman Scarinza appointed Mike Ouellet for member Rick Tillotson.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

Mike Waddell asked that he be marked as excused from the January meeting because he called Chairman Scarinza to let him know that he wouldn't be attending due to illness. Mike Ouellet made a motion to approve the minutes with Mike Waddell marked as excused. Ed Mellet seconded the motion. There was no further discussion. The motion passed 9-0

NEW BUSINESS

- a. *Mt. Washington Railway Company – Conceptual discussion on upgrades to Waumbek Station*

Earl Duval appeared before the board to discuss improvements that they want to make to Waumbek Station. The improvements would include grid power, extension of existing food & beverage and beer & wine licenses, and a lean-to for the storage of firewood. The lean-to would 8'X10' on blocks with anchors. The lean-to would be within the setbacks. Mr. Duval asked if they would need to amend the site plan or would they just need zoning permits. The board

decided that a zoning permit application should be submitted, and it can be reviewed by the board at the next meeting.

- b. Notice is hereby given in accordance with RSA 676:4 that the Coös County Planning Board will hold a public hearing on February 15, 2023, at 6:00 p.m. at the North Country Resource Center on Route 3 in Lancaster, NH regarding a site plan application submitted by Dixville Capital, LLC. For expansion of the Balsams Ski Area on NH Route 26 in Dixville (Tax Map 1626, Lots 1,2,3,3,3,4,6,3, 6.4 and 6.4a). The proposal includes ski lifts, ski terrain, snowmaking, and a gondola and ski back bridge over NH Route 26.*

Scott Rineer recused himself from the meeting. Ed Brisson presented an overview of the site plan application to the board. The ski area plan covers 250 acres with 7 new lifts and 100 acres of glade skiing. There will be a gondola from the Lake Gloriette House to take skiers to the top of the mountain and there is also a ski-back bridge over Route 26.

Daniel Bernadett, P.E. was introduced to the board. Mr. Bernadett stated that he is a New York State Professional Engineer and has 30 years of experience in the wind industry. He is currently employed as the Global Director of Wind Engineering with ArcVera Renewables. Mr. Bernadett gave a presentation on wind turbine risk analysis on the probability of a skier being hit by an object. He said that the chance of someone being hit is 3,625 times lower than being struck by lightning. Mike Waddell asked who would be liable if someone is hit by wind turbine debris or ice. Rep. Davis asked if there is ice on the blades that throws them off balance, wouldn't the turbine shut down and then the threat of being hit is minimized. Mr. Bernadett replied that yes that it is the normal operating protocol. Mr. Otten stated that he is the landlord for the land and NextEra the owner of the wind turbines is the tenant. Mr. Otten stated that NextEra refuses to participate in the discussion around the ski area. Rep. Merner said he had a contact representing NextEra and would be willing to provide a letter to the board. Chairman Scarinza said that it would be very helpful to hear from NextEra.

Chairman Scarinza asked Mr. Bernadett about contacting Vestas, the manufacturer of the wind turbines. Mr. Bernadett stated that he did recently, and they sent an email. Mr. Bernadett said he would provide a copy of the email to the board. Tara Bamford asked if the risk analysis modeling that was prepared was for 575 feet from the wind turbine to the ski trail. Mr. Bernadett confirmed that 575 feet was what he used. Tara Bamford also asked for his sources and references he used in the model to include in the file. Tara Bamford stated that the question about liability is for the board's attorney Christine Johnston. Tara also stated that Attorney Johnston advised that the most important thing for the board to do is require the applicant to provide an expert with credentials using accepted methodology to provide information on safety and it is up to the board to make a judgement on whether what was presented is adequate.

A member of the public, Mr. Dennis Pednault, P.E. asked about the energy usage and the use of renewable and sustainable power. Mr. Otten responded that all the buildings will be heated with wood chips. The buildings will be designed to be the most energy efficient as possible. He said that they will be using more electricity than they are currently but that the resort will provide jobs and an economic boost to the area.

Chairman Scarinza opened the meeting to public comments. Commissioner Robert Théberge stated that he wanted to reassure the public that the height of the gondola going over Route 26

does not impede traffic. He also asked about if the gondolas and if skiers have another way to access the ski area. Ed Brisson stated in the first phase of the plan that the gondola is the only access.

Jamie Sayen, Stratford, stated that he thinks the project has serious problems and it is going to being a massive energy user. He asked the board to take that into consideration when making its decision on whether to approve or not the application.

Kaela Taveras, North Country Council, provided an overview of the written comments that she submitted prior to the meeting. The ski area plan has been determined to be a project of regional impact and Ms. Taveras organized her comments within the framework of the "Developments of Regional Impact Review Guidelines for the North Country Per NH RSA 36:54-58" adopted October 28, 2010, by North Country Council Representatives. She reviewed six areas of interest and highlighted 3 areas to the board. The areas Ms. Taveras particularly focused around were available housing for staff, traffic, emergency management services, and pollutants or degrading air quality or water quality and impacts on the forest.

Commissioner Gorman discussed stated that the Balsams project will increase the surrounding areas tax base. Mike Ouellet said that the Colebrook planning board is in the process of doing a study on affordable housing. There were no other public comments. Chairman Scarinza closed the public comment portion of the hearing at 8:03pm.

Chairman Scarinza asked for an update on the AoT and stormwater management designs. Ed Brisson stated that the AoT application will be submitted on Thursday, February 16th and the stormwater information was just provided to Tara Bamford on Tuesday, February 14th. John asked about the design and engineering of the stormwater and that it meets the county's regulations by not creating an additional runoff, but it doesn't address man-made snow. Jon Warzocha stated that that question came up during the 401 Water Quality certification process with the state of NH. An analysis of the runoff was provided to Tara showing that the runoff won't negatively impact the surface water. Tara explained that even though it is a small increase the county's regulations don't allow any increase therefore a waiver will need to be requested. The consensus from board members is that if it is a minimal impact then the waiver will be considered.

Follow-up Items

The meetings with NH DOT have not been scheduled yet so it is still an open item.

The board needs to have updated site plans. The applicant requested that the site plans stand with a condition that trails can be constructed as they have AoT permits.

Tara recommended that the board think about a performance guarantee for the ski back bridge. She would like to see an estimate for decommissioning of the bridge. It can be included in conditions of approval.

Chairman Scarinza asked the applicant if an extension would be agreeable. Mr. Otten stated he was fine with extending the review for 60 days to give the board the time needed to grant a decision. Mike Waddell made a motion to extend the site plan review for 60 days and Tom McCue seconded the motion. There was no discussion. The motion passed 8-0.

Mike Waddell made a motion to continue the hearing to Wednesday, March 8, 2023 at 6pm at the North Country Resource Center. Tom McCue seconded the motion. There was no discussion. The motion passed 8-0.

Scott Rineer rejoined the meeting.

OLD BUSINESS

None

RATIFICATION OF ZONING PERMITS

546	Mt. Washington Railway Company	Thompson/Meserve Purchase	1/12/23	Welcome entrance archway
547	Lane, Jonathan & Amy	Millsfield	1/18/23	40'x30' Duplex

Ed Mellet made a motion to ratify the zoning permits and Mike Waddell seconded the motion. There was no discussion. The motion was approved 9-0.

TIME AND DATE OF NEXT MEETING

The next meeting is March 8, at 6 pm in Lancaster.

ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by Mike Ouellet seconded by Ed Mellet to adjourn at 9:13 pm. All approved, 9-0.

Respectfully submitted,
Jennifer Fish, Clerk