



**Minutes of the Vermont Passenger Tramway Board Meeting  
held on January 27<sup>th</sup>, 2022 virtually on Teams and in person.**

Board members and Staff present: Board members Scott Reeves, Ericksen, Sam Kessler, Chair Michael Harrington. Department Staff, Director of Workers' Compensation and Safety, Dirk Anderson. CFO, Chad Wawrzyniak, Mike Nellis, Erin Sylvia, Jack Savasta, Mike Morelli.

Public present: virtually

Board Chair, Commissioner Michael Harrington calls meeting to order at 1:05pm.

Meeting begins with special introduction of Director Dirk Anderson. Dirk advises the Board he has been with the Department of Labor, general counsel for the past 16 years. Upon the departure of Stephen Monahan, Dirk has assumed the position of Director of Workers' Compensation and Safety, which includes the Passenger Tramway Division. Welcome Dirk.

Board Chair, Commissioner Michael Harrington asks for approval of the September 30, 2021 meeting minutes if there are no questions or concerns.

Board member, Scott Reeves makes motion to approve.

Board member, Kirsten Ericksen seconds the motion.

Minutes approved.

**Fiscal Update: Chad Wawrzyniak, Department CFO.**

A fiscal year 2020 actual report is provided to the Board. CFO Wawrzyniak provides a very general overview of the budget in order to give Dirk an over briefing on the tramway budget. He states the fiscal year runs from July through June basis each year. This budget is currently is running on its predicted course with no issues, and lands at 49% at the six-month point. As a general rule, the budget will see line item increases during August and in November as this is when the yearly lift inspections begin. Additionally, the \$15,000.00 paid from the budget for the apprenticeship program. Overall budget appears right on track according to the presented budget to date.

Lastly, the fee due invoiced the Mountains a total of \$447,480.00 this past November. We collected \$450,467.00. Magic Mountain paid additional money with an unexpected new building project. This creates a welcomed surplus in the budget.

There are no questions or comments at this time.

### **Variance Approval for Stowe Mountain to have snow bikes: Mike Nellis**

During the 2020 season, Stowe was granted a temporary variance. Since that time, Jack Savasta has reviewed and approved the evacuation procedures the Mountain has put in place. Mike Nellis would ask the Board to officially vote to approve the usage of snow bikes on Stowe resort lifts. Board member Scott Reeves states he is abstaining from the vote as he is a Stowe employee.

Scott introduces Karen Wagner to the group as the employee representative for Vail. Ms. Wagner states to date they have had no snow bikes on their lifts even with the temporary variance in place. She states the Mountain feels confident in the procedures they have in place.

Board Member, Mike Tarricone asks Mike to give more details on what was originally asked for in this variance request.

Mike provides states that Stowe would ask that snow bikes be allowed on their lifts. That the speed of the lift will be slowed to 250 feet per minute when a passenger is loading onto the lift with a snow bike.

Board member, Mike Tarricone makes motion to approve the variance.

Board member, Kirsten Ericksen seconds the motion.

All members are in favor of approval.

John Hammond asks how many mountains currently have approval for these bikes.

Mike Nellis states there are five Mountains with variance approvals at this time.

Erin Sylvia asks for clarification on the specifics of this variance approval as she recalls the original request and temporary approval was for five specific lifts. She asks if this is still the case or are you now saying you are approving for any and all lifts at the resort allow snow bikes.

Mike Nellis clarifies, this will be for the five lifts they asked for originally, not all of them.

Erin will provide Stowe resort with an official document approving the use on the five listed lifts to include No. 1117, 1114,1106,1150, and 1115.

### **Variance Approval for Snow Skates at Magic Mountain: Mike Nellis**

Mike states that this is very similar to the Stowe approval. The process was started last year, Magic asked to allow the usage of snow skates only on their Green Chair. Since that time, Inspector Mike Nellis has observed and approved their loading, unloading and evacuation procedures. These passengers will load at the 250 per minute as well.

Board Member, Mike Tarricone asks if these rides must still use a retention device.

Mike states that yes, they must.

Board member, Sam Kessler asks for more of a description of a snow skate.

Mike Nellis states it is a snow board without bindings.

Board Chair, Michael Harrington makes motion to approve

Board member, Mike Tarricone seconds the motion.

All members are in favor of approval.

### **Falls From Lifts: Mike Nellis**

This is the seventh year that Inspector Jack Savasta has collected this data. The information is gathered with the idea of watch trends in order to help stop riders from falling. This current year is looking to be the highest number of falls to date, with a count of 13 at this time. The average fall is from 13 feet, the average age is 9 years old. One notable trend is riders sitting on their ski poles. This is something that many of the members of race teams do, and in turn is becoming a trend throughout.

Board member, Scott Reeves states that what they have been seeing is that when a rider is loading and trying to place poles under them, the rider has to lean way forward. He is looking to place a policy of not allowing riders to place their poles under them, however is not sure at this point how to enforce.

Board member, Sam Kessler states that the number of falls being caused by sitting on your poles could be even higher in actuality. What he has seen many times is in order to sit on your poles, they have to be placed almost behind the chair. So as the rider is unloading, the poles stay behind, and the rider almost has to straddle the poles. Although this doesn't qualify for a recordable fall, there are many of these near misses.

Board member, Mike Tarricone states the ski schools should limit the number of students per instructor. If this is not happening, perhaps a standard need to be set in place.

Board member, Scott Reeves states the child should be on the operator's side, with the child wearing their vest.

Overall, the group agrees more signage, better training will hopefully help with these numbers. Inspector Jack Savasta states he can provide more specifics if anyone would wish to review.

### **Winter Mountain Operations: Mike Nellis**

There are 29 Mountains open and operating at this time. Plymouth Notch is for sale currently and not open.

204 have been inspected by the State at this time with little to no overtime.

A new lift is going in at Stowe, the construction should start in May.

Board Chair, Michael Harrington would like to mention to the public members on the meeting that it is welcomed by the Department for them to share information they feel important such as public awareness campaigns, or issues they are experiencing where the Department of Labor can offer assistance. He asks if Molly Mahar is willing to share with the group what is happening with Ski Vermont and the apprenticeship program at this time.

Molly provides the group with Ski Vermont has some National messaging about lift safety and general lift safety. She has been working with Kyle Thweatt from the Department of Labor on National Safety Awareness month of January.

The apprenticeship program could use one more instructor at this time. Many have asked for an earlier class start time in May rather than July. Overall, program is running well.

**Safety Issue with speed switches: Mike Nellis**

Mike Nellis advised the group of his concern over speed switching on old and new Doppel Mayr lifts. He explains that the lift can be change from one rapid speed to another.

Be aware and training your folks on this issue.

Third party companies selling drives. Be aware of this market is out there and do your research before buying new drives. An engineering report still needs to be provided.

**Public Comment:**

Scott Cavanaugh, a public member addresses the group stating he has been involved in assisting a couple resorts in the variance process. He asks the Board if they would consider if one particular piece of equipment passes the approval process, can all resorts across the State use them so long as they submit a written request.

Mike Nellis states the reason this variance process was created to be sure that each resort has done the training and safety measures necessary on their Mountain. To open a blanket approval process takes that measure of safety away.

Board member, Kirsten Ericksen agrees with Mike Nellis. She believes it is important that it puts a more serious flavor to this process for each resort.

John Hammond states the code states all devices can be transported as long as its in writing.

This is the reason his resort will not ask for a variance on-going. It should be a request to approve an application vs. approval of a variance.

Mike Nellis wants to continue with the current process.

Dirk Anderson will look into the rules and standards and provide an opinion on this matter and get back to the Board regarding this question.

One of his top priorities is to approve the 2022 ANSI standards, and this particular issue may be addressed.

No further comments.

**Next meeting date set for April 14<sup>th</sup> at 2:00pm.**

Board Chair, Michael Harrington makes motion to adjourn

Board member, Mike Tarricone seconds

Meeting adjourned

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