

NEK GMC Annual Meeting, March 30, 2025, Conducted via Zoom

This meeting had been scheduled to occur at the Community Information Center in Island Pond. Due to the inclement weather and the dubious hiking conditions, it was decided to conduct the meeting exclusively via Zoom.

Attendees: Beth Barnes, Cathi Brooks, Michael Chernick, Linda and Victor Caamano, Mike DeBonis, Steve Farrow, Jeff Fried, Duncan Goss, Jeff Morris, Luke O'Brien, John Predom, Julia Rapczynski, Bob & Janet Steinert, Paul Trojano, Kevin Williamson, Sue Winsor, and Maria Young

Call to Order: NEKGMC President John Predom, called the meeting to order at 1:02 P.M and offered the following comments:

President's Brief - March 30, 2025

We'll start this meeting by welcoming and acknowledging longtime member Michael Chernick. Michael is on the list of Charter Members dated August 2000; he has been with this section as long as it has existed. Since becoming president of this section, I have learned that without members like Michael we wouldn't have much of a club. Personally, I had no experience conducting a meeting and had to lookup "Roberts Rules of Order" prior to this meeting, just so I could reference it while giving Michael credit for keeping me on task.

Steve Farrow offered the following comments on the award:

The recent review of old photographs and records by our current president is so intriguing, and in a way, this history revitalizes our memories of wonderful, past experiences and people. It is hard to believe that it has been 25 years since our indomitable future first president's energy brought so many of us together to form the Northeast Kingdom Section of the Green Mountain Club. Those memories and one of those early club members include Michael Chernick. His knowledge, ability to recall important facts and information, as well as his service in maintaining the club's secretarial duties were so key in those early days and continue to be so today. This was matched by his enthusiasm for a good hike on one of our many amazing Northeast Kingdom trails or good dip in Holland Pond at Lenny's camp before a summer meeting. He has and will continue to lend his caring concern for and knowledge about our work, enjoyment of our mountains, maintaining as well as developing our trail systems, and the club's interests as a whole. We are fortunate for life-long participants and dedicated club members like Michael. So many great days out on the trails of the Northeast Kingdom and days at Lenny's camp. Best wishes Michael

Steve

Luke O'Brien offered the following comments:

When I was asked to write a note about Michael Chernick, my thoughts went immediately to the ruffled genius with the tan khakis, worn flannel, and crooked glasses who has been an enduring presence with the NEK GMC since the beginning. My first encounter with Michael was in the Cobleigh Library c. 2000 during a meeting of the ad hoc Northeast Kingdom Trails Working Group organized by Matteo Burani of the AMC in response to the Champion timberlands sale. Meeting alongside Beth Duggar, Jean Haigh, and other inspired trail enthusiasts, we brainstormed ideas for the future of the Champion Lands and laid the groundwork for the Northeast Kingdom Section of the Green Mountain Club. Not long after, Michael and Beth were awarded the GMC President's Award for their respectable efforts. Michael has a discerning mind that verges on legal and administrative brilliance. As the perennial Section he took countless notes, drafted numerous motions, and not a few special resolutions. Whether it was to honor a colleague (Dave Hardy, Jean Haigh), donate to worthy

organizations (Burke Clubhouse, NorthWoods), or carefully present the sentiment of the section to the Main Club, Michael was the go-to resource to capture the will of the group and get things right. His oversized down coat (often draped across the top of his hiking pack) and his well-worn Limmer boots were a dependable presence on many NEK GMC outings. Michael always volunteered to lead the more difficult hikes to the handful of 3,000-foot peaks in the NEK: Gore, Bald, Burke, Monadnock. Whether it was a love of these mountains or to reconnect with the ‘high peaks’ of the Northeast, or simply to get us out there to the highest and most remote areas, it often had the intended effect. At nearly every encounter, including- memorably- a few trips to the back halls of the State House where Michael and the legislative counsel do their work, I was always greeted by an awkward handshake and the exclamation ‘Hey Stranger!’. For Michael, I imagine the Green Mountain Club has been, alongside his long career in the State House, a central part of his life. He has been active with the Montpelier Section, the Main Club, the NEK Section, and has served a near continuous role as board member, Section Director, officer, and scribe. There is much that I don’t know about Michael, but I am confident in his unwavering support for the mission of the Green Mountain Club, his passion for the Northeast Kingdom, and the sense of belonging he finds in the people he has supported and surrounded himself with over the last 25 years. Never daunted by the need for a ride, or a place to stay for the night, or the shuffle of assorted gear. It has been a real pleasure to know Michael over the years and I reflect affectionately on the long car rides, overnight stays, tangled computer cords, quirky idiosyncrasies, and milestone moments that we have shared. The Champion corridor plan, Wheeler Pond cabins, fire towers on Bald and Monadnock, Annual meetings at Burke and Jay, the KHT, and so many councils, meetings and outings. We have lost some real champions in the NEK Section: Joe and Alice Robinson, Joe Anastasia, Dave Hardy, Karen Guest, and Jean Haigh. Michael is a constant in this Section and deserves every bit of praise we can heap on him. He is a kind and caring person, a brilliant mind, a Section stalwart, and a dear friend.

GMC Executive Director Mike DeBonis congratulated Michael, noting that he joined the section in 2000 and had served at Main Club Secretary and chaired the former History and Archives Committee.

After these many compliments, John Predom formally presented the award to Michael in a virtual manner. Michael Chernick humbly accepted this unexpected honor with great appreciation. John Predom and Cathi Brooks subsequently traveled to Montpelier to deliver the beautiful three dimensional plaque, which portrays Bluff Ridge.

Secretary’s Report - NEK Secretary, Michael Chernick summarized highlights from the January 2025 meeting. No motion of acceptance was recorded.

Treasure’s Report - In the absence of NEK Treasurer, Angela Smith, NEKGMC President, John Predom offered the following financial update that Angela submitted in advance.

Northeast Kingdom Section ~ Green Mountain Club

Quarterly Financial Statement, As of March 23, 2025

Operating Account

Beginning Balance (as of 01/12/2025) \$3,649.05

Income

Dues Sharing

Dec (posted 02/10/25) \$377.50

Jan (posted 02/24/25) \$93.75

Feb (posted 03/13/25) \$36.25

Expenses

John Predom (Printer Ink Reimbursement) \$57.89

Treeline Terrains \$284.08

Vista Print \$156.02

Ending Balance \$3,658.56

Certificate of Deposit

CD#14489/Matures 01/12/2026 @.40% \$1,614.51

CD#23785/Matures 06/27/2025 @.40% \$1,775.09

Grand Total All Monies \$7,048.16

Angela Smith ~ Treasurer

Main Club Director's Report – NEKGMC Main Club Director, Cathi Brooks, presented highlights from the March 2025 Main Club Board of Directors' meeting.

As of February 28, 2025 (which represents 10 months of the GMC's FY 25) revenue totaled \$2.1 million (92 percent of the budget and 109 percent of FY 24); Expenses were \$2.2 million (88 percent of the budget and 101 percent of FY 24). Other fiscal highlights were restricted cash (\$907,000); outstanding receivables (\$220,000- most significant due from Mt. Mansfield Co-Location and the Vermont Housing and Conservation Board); GMC Endowment (\$8.3 million); construction in progress (includes the new Visitor Center/Office and Bromley Tower (\$1.88 million); accounts payable \$19,000. Despite challenging circumstances, fiscal discipline and a healthy cash flow are enabling the Club to project a \$9,000 end of FY 25 surplus. The board's allocation of \$305,000 from the Wissman Bequest will support various projects (including renovations at Hadsel Mares). The Governance examination reviewing the board's and committee's sizes and functions will continue into 2026. Among recent achievements, GMC transferred the Rost and Thetford Tract to the State of Vermont for inclusion in Camel's Hump State Park. GMC was awarded a \$24,200 Vermont Housing and Conservation Board (VHCB) grant for the conservation of the Deer Camp Tract. Therefore, VHCB and GMC will co-hold the conservation easement. Major initiative have been made to manage the beaver population at Waterbury headquarters. The 2024 season had 67 corridor monitors, and the Strategic Conservation Plan continues to be implemented. A new LT Day Guide is being published. The latest Haigh Camp data documented 78 percent occupancy. Keegan Tierenyn is assuming responsibility of the camps' portfolio from Mollie Flanigan, Land Conservation Coordinator, who will now focus on LT Corridor preservation, to Keegan Tierney, Director of Field Programs. Cathi Brooks also mentioned that all LT/AT (Vermont) pit toilets have been replaced. There has been a slight relocation of the LT at Prospect Rock.

GMC Executive Director – Mike DeBonis

Mike DeBonis joined the NEKGMC 's Annual Meeting and updated the section on various Main Club developments , supplement Cathi Brook's comments.

Federal Funding - The most immediate issue before the GMC is the future of federal funding for programs and services. Approximately 20 percent of the GMC's expenses are federally funded. 30 percent of the overall budget is from government sources. 40 percent is from contributions. There are two sources for federal funding, the U.S. Forest Service and the Appalachian Conservancy. The GMC

Field Program has in recent years received approximately \$500,000. As of March 31, 2025, the GMC had not received information on any reductions. All federally funded activities are operated on a reimbursement basis. If there were to be a change in federal funding it would require a major pivot and significantly impact field staff work. As of March 31, 2025, all summer 2025 field work is proceeding as planned. Other factors impacting GMC's finances include inflation and health care expenses. Mike intends to stay in contact with the sections on GMC finances as much as possible. He is spending considerable time thinking about the federal cuts.

John Predom inquired on the pending hiking corridor management agreement for the Kingdom Heritage Trail. Mike indicated no decision has been made. Maria Young from Northwoods stated that she and Keegan have been discussing the issue. She believes that NorthWoods has the capacity to assume this responsibility and would be happy to see NorthWoods become the hiking corridor manager. Luke O'Brein from the Agency of Natural Resources' perspective stated that ANR is currently working on the Jay State Forest Management Plan to be followed with the plan for West Mountain. He did not believe a new Kingdom Heritage plan would emerge until 2026.

NEKGMC Elections for the 2025-2026 Term

The current members are completing their 2024-2025 terms as elected NEKGMC officers:

President – John Predom

Vice President – Paul Trojano

Secretary – Michael Chernick

Treasure- Angela Smith

Section Director – Cathi Brooks*

*This position is not up for a new term until the 2026 election.

Individual nominations were offered:

President – John Predom -Michael Chernick Nominated/Cathi Brooks Seconded

Vice President – Paul Trojano- Luke O'Brien Nominated/Beth Barnes

Secretary – Michael Chernick -Steve Farrow Nominated/Cathi Brooks Seconded

Treasurer – Angela Smith – Luke O'Brien Nominated/Cathi Brooks Seconded

Motion for the NEKGMC Secretary to cast a single ballot for the entire proposed officer slate

Steve Farrow Moved/Victor Caamano Seconded

John Predom called the question -Approved Unanimously.

Section Bylaw Project – Mike DeBonis resumed the floor to discuss the Section Bylaw Project. The Section Bylaw assessment is part of the comprehensive GMC governance review. It is currently in the information gathering phase. The sections' bylaws (at a minimum) will be reviewed for compliance with the Main Club's bylaws. There could possibly be a uniform section bylaws. Mike expects any proposed changes to be presented to the membership in 2026.

Trails Adoption – NEKGMC Trail Coordinator Kevin Williamson reported that most trails have an adopter. A segment at Middle Mountain and Pisgah South (possibly covered) need new adopters.

NorthWoods Stewardship Center Update – Maria Young, Executive Director at NorthWoods Stewardship Center, reported that NWS is going through a similar scenario as the GMC with respect to federal funding. There are a few puzzle pieces with the Appalachian Mountain Club and those are now

pending. The youth crew continues but it is different than the adult crew in the type of work it performs. She is thinking of developing a subsidized local project with the Vermont Youth Conservation Corps. Luke has one week of funding for the NWS (adult) crew at Gore /Middle Mountains. At Gore, the crew would focus on improving the brook crossing on the Gore Trail.

Mad Brook/Telegraph Trails--John Predom noted there are many (at least 50) trees down on the Mad Brook Trail on Bald Mountain. Kevin Williamson does not have an adopter for this trail. Luke O'Brien volunteered that ANR (FPR) has received two weeks of funding for work on the Mad Brook and Telegraph Trails .

Cabins - Luke O'Brien spoke of repairing the Bald Mountain Cabin's roof, which could involve a volunteer day on a Saturday in August. This activity would involve adult volunteers. The Gore Cabin's back wall collapsed. There are roof issues. The cabin is legally in a management limbo. ANR has considered working on the Gore Cabin, but it is at the bottom of the priority list.

Membership Coordinator – NEKGMC Membership Coordinator Victor C aamano was not certain that the membership data from Main Club was current. Separately, John Predom submitted a report to the Secretary for inclusion in the minutes.

March 2025,

Renewals Rejoined Joined Lapsed

Dec (24)	16	1	2	5
Jan (25)	6	1		
Feb (25)	2		1	
Total	24	1	3	5

Total Members -233

Voting Members - 288

Camps - NEKGMC Vice President Paul Trojano, who chairs the GMC Camps Committee, reported that \$55,000 is being expended (from the Wissman Bequest) on repairs to the Hadsel Mares Cabin. Paul listed the minimum items, including painting and screening. He was uncertain if the roof would be replaced. At the Haigh Cabin, he hopes for a permanent wood bin. The current arrangement is inadequate. He planned to visit the cabins on April 1 to check on conditions. He may need help moving wood and he inquired if NorthWoods might assist? Paul expressed concern about security at the cabins, especially Haigh. He hopes a more secure and effective lock system will be installed.

NEKGMC Outings Chair - Sue Winsor reported the following outings had occurred:

January – Bluff Community Trail, Unknown Pond

February – Kettle Pond, Wood Transferring, Split Rock, Victory Basin

March- Laraway Lookout, Burke Mountain

Sue Thanked John, Victor, Cathi , and Matt for leading hikes

A wood stacking weekend is scheduled for October 10-13. The NEKGMC has Haigh Cabin reserved for Friday, Saturday, and Sunday nights and Hadsel Mares Cabin for Friday and Saturday nights. The quarterly meeting will be held at Jean Haigh Cabin on Sunday October 12.

Paul Trojano offered to lead a hike on the LT from Route 58 to Hazen

John Predom offered to lead a hike on the Sunset Ridge Trail on June 7. He also suggested the

resumption of a spring hike at Perry Holbrook. Cathi Brooks also offered to lead a Holbrook hike in May. Luke O'Brien suggested later in May due to mud season. He also suggested a walk on the equestrian trails. John Predom reminded everyone that mud season is officially from April 1 till Memorial Day.

It was decided to propose Saturday June 21 as the date for Brighton Trails Day.

Newsletter – Beth Barnes discussed her future role with the newsletter. She is now living in Brownington.

Donations – The NEKGMC voted to make three financial donations:

Burke Mountain Club (\$100.00), Front Porch Forum (\$200.00), and NorthWoods Stewardship Center (\$500.00).

NEKGMC Sweatshirts – Interest was expressed in selling more NEKGMC sweatshirts. Cathi Brooks will obtain pricing /color information and report back.

Egg Roll Sale – Steve Farrow offered to give away eggs rolls made for the in-person meeting to anyone interested.

Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation (FPR) NEK Developments – Luke O'Brien, in his roles as an FPR recreation specialist, updated the section on recent and planned departmental activities locally. \$250,000 has been allocated for NEK trail work this year. He indicated there would be FPR, NWS and contracted crews working on the trails in the summer of 2025. Among the planned crew assignments are Mount Pisgah (6 weeks), Bald Mountain (2 weeks), Sentinel Rock (2 weeks), Burke Mountain (2 weeks), Groton State Forest (2 weeks). There will also be trail work occurring in the Westmore State Forest and at Wheeler Pond. Safety enhancements are planned at the Burke Mountain Fire Tower. A major FPR development was the State of Vermont's purchase of the Wheeler Mountain summit.

There was a brief discussion of the road conditions at Wheeler Pond.

Next Meeting -The Section proposed and it was subsequently confirmed the summer quarterly meeting will occur on Sunday July 20 at Lenny's Camp at Holland Pond. The times for the pre-meeting hike and potluck, as well as the actual meeting, will be announced at a later date.

Adjournment – Cathi Brooks moved and Michael Chernick seconded the meeting's adjournment at 2:20 P.M.

Approved unanimously

Submitted by Michael Jay Chernick, NEKGMC Secretary