

Summer Quarterly Meeting, July 14, 2024,

Lenny's Camp – Holland, Vermont

Welcome – NEKGMC President, John Predom, opened the meeting at 1:00 P.M. He reported that Haigh Cabin is now open (officially dedicated June 1), and that the Main Club presented NEKGMC Section Director, Cathy Brooks, a President's Award at the 2024 Annual Meeting. With respect to Brighton Trail Days, despite a low turnout, the event was a success. Team Kingdom Express (the NEKGMC's fundraising effort for LT Day) was already underway. This year's hike will be Hazen's Notch to Route 242. We will need a drop off system, due to limited parking at Hazen's Notch (perhaps the Northern Frontier Section can assist?). John concluded his remarks, noting a busy summer of activities is planned.

Secretary's Report – NEKGMC Secretary, Michael Chernick, reviewed highlights from the Section's Annual Meeting held on April 7, 2024.

MOTION: Approve the Secretary's Report as presented (Victor Caamano/Paul Trojano). Approval of the motion was unanimous.

Treasurer's Report – In the absence of NEKGMC Treasurer, Angela Smith, Michael Chernick reviewed the report's highlights. The full text is as follows:

Northeast Kingdom Section ~ Green Mountain Club Quarterly Financial Statement As of July 10, 2024

Operating Account

Beginning Balance (as of 04/04/24) \$4,735.41

Income

Dues Sharing

Mar (posted 04/19/24) \$148.75

Apr (posted 05/13/24) \$198.75

May (\$ not deposited as of 07/10)

Cash Deposit (Sweatshirts) \$120.00

Expenses

Paul T. (Reimbursement Gift Card) \$100.00

Northwoods SC (Donation) \$500.00

Burke Mountain Clubhouse (Donation) \$100.00

Front Page Forum (Donation) \$100.00

Kevin W. (Trail Guides) \$100.00

Kevin W. (Maps) \$49.98

Dot Easy (Website) \$179.40

Dot Easy (Website) \$37.90

Dot Easy (Website) \$.30

Dot Easy (Website) \$1.44

USPS- Postage Sweatshirts \$14.80

USPS- Postage Sweatshirt \$6.50

Ending Balance \$4,012.59

Certificate of Deposit

CD#1 ...4489/Matures 01/12/2025 @.40% \$1,608.09

CD#2 ...3785/Matures 06/27/2025 @.40% \$1,768.03

Grand Total All Monies \$7,388.71

Angela Smith ~ Treasurer

The report was accepted as filed.

Presentation of the report sparked discussion of the extremely low interest rate being offered on the two CDs. Cathi Brooks (who is moving) indicated that she needs to turn over the debit card and the credit for Parker Pie. Returning to the CD interest rate issue, Ed Guest expressed a willingness to discuss the matter with Angela. There was also discussion (GMC Executive Director Mike DeBonis being present) of aligning the CDs more closely with the Main Club's banking.

Main Club Report – NEKGMC Main Club Director, Cathi Brooks, reported on the GMC's Annual meeting at Main Club. The cover of the meeting's program cited the major projects that have been completed. The list was long, including the opening of Haigh Cabin, the reconstruction of the Burrows Trail of Camel's Hump, various LT shelter and trail segment projects, and the response to the 2023 flooding across the State, which impacted the LT in multiple locations. Financially, the Main Club concluded FY 2024 (May 1, 2023-April 30, 2024) with a small operational deficit of \$44,000. Total operating revenue was \$2.17 million, or one percent above the budgeted projection. Contributions totaled a strong \$772,223, although membership revenue was reduced. Similarly, grants and fees for service payments were down (in part resulting from the July 2023 flood). But bequest income increased. Per GMC Board policy, 10 percent of the bequest revenue was dedicated to operational expenses, netting a sum of \$142,000 for immediate use. The success of the most recent Capital Campaign has facilitated increased endowment distributions, including \$50,000 dedicated to the Backcountry Caretaker Program. Operational expenses rose due to inflationary pressures. Although salaries were below the budgeted amount, health care, office, and programmatic costs all rose (the later in part due to Board facilitation activity). The FY 25 budget was developed with fiscal restraint in mind, assumes less reliance on unrestricted funds and increased grant and fee for service income. The budget also projects an increase in contributions as well as new revenue resulting from the publication of a new edition of the Long Trail Guide.

Construction of the new GMC Visitor Center is now in process. Inflation and a design change, intended to improve the building's energy efficiency, have raised the construction cost. \$310,000 from the Wissman Bequest and \$190,000 from the Groll Bequest will enable the project's revised \$1.5 budget to be funded in full. There was a review of the role the various GMC committees serve as well as reports from the sections.

Election of New Director to Main Club – Cathi Brooks is moving. This is a development the NEKGMC's Executive Committee thought might necessitate the selection of a new NEKGMC Director to the Main Club. However, many of the Main Club Board and committee meetings are conducted virtually. After discussing the matter, for now, Cathi has agreed to remain in her position, with another NEKGMC member attending in-person Board meetings in her stead. Paul Trojano, who chairs the Main Club's Camps' Committee, has agreed to represent NEKGMC at the September Board meeting.

KHT Corridor Management Plan – The GMC Executive Director, Mike DeBonis, attended the meeting to discuss the GMC's future role as the KHT Corridor Manager for Hiking under the auspices of the Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation. The GMC has served in this role since it was established in the early 2000s. The current term is concluding and a review, leading to a new term appointment, is forthcoming. The actual decision will probably occur in 2025. This discussion is focused on whether the GMC should continue in this role, recommend that NorthWoods (NWS) assume it, or propose that a joint division of duties be established. Mike explained that his goal this afternoon was to provide an overview of the Club's role in KHT. The Club's Trail Management Committee has established a subcommittee to review the GMC's role. His understanding is that in the beginning, GMC was viewed as the entity to oversee this role. Mike thinks that KHT operates differently than LT. GMC has an agreement with the NorthWoods Stewardship Center (NWS) to

perform the actual work. Public funding is allocated exclusively to NWS. The other issue is volunteer management. There is a multifaceted element (partnership- meaning the volunteers and institutional partners). There are both positives and negatives to GMC maintaining this role. KHT is a new recreational resource. Mike offered four future options

1. Maintain the status quo
2. Develop a revised funding process
3. Moving away from the KHT role
4. Completely discontinue the role

For today, Mike only sought to set up the discussion, regarding the future GMC role with respect to the KHT. The Main Club Board will finalize the GMC's proposal. The state makes the ultimate decision, determining which organization(s) serve as the KHT hiking corridor manager, for the new term, Luke O'Brien, a charter NEK GMC staff member, former NWS staffer, and now employed as a Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation (FPR) Recreation Specialist-though speaking personally-believes that state role will be for the Department of Fish and Wildlife (DFW) and not FPR. There is a state wildlife management area involved, and Luke thinks its presence will place the final state decision with DFW. Both are departments within the Agency of Natural

Resources. Cathi Brooks explained the four options. A lot of land is separately owned with different landowners (public and private). Based on GMC's trail experience, FPR selected the GMC to serve as the original KHT Hiking Corridor Manager. None of the state funding has passed through the GMC, but rather through NWS, which does not currently have a volunteer structure to maintain the KHT. A specially established GMC Trails Management subcommittee proposed handling the entire role over to NWS, which has expressed the opinion it can now perform the volunteer training. Luke O'Brien (again, speaking personally), thought that the KHT Corridor Manager's role was a coalescing project for establishing the NEKGMC section. He noted he was not (fully) familiar with the decision-making process. But he observed that the state's decision will probably not occur this year. Partners will look at a document proposing future scenarios.

It was noted that the role of volunteers is essential. NWS will need some form of Trail Management Committee. Ed Guest (an original NEKGMC member) stated it was logical to become co-managers with NWS. Michael Chernick spoke of the need for a partnership between GMC and NWS with a clear division of authority. He suggested that each organization be assigned specific duties in the final state document awarding the KHT Corridor Manager's role. The GMC Trail Management Subcommittee justified its proposal to end the GMC's role given that the public funds are not being allocated to the GMC. There was discussion of the NEKGMC's management of trail work other than KHT should the KHT role for GMC 's partnership ends. Mike DeBonis commented that GMC would maintain an NEK presence regardless, referring specifically to the major investment for the construction of the new Haigh Cabin. Luke spoke of the current KHT as Phase I and of potential future extensions. However, Mike questioned whether the KHT would ever be extended. Luke opined that new proposal might more directly address future development. He (Luke) inquired whether the Trail Management Committee desires a straw vote from the NEKGMC? Mike indicated in the affirmative but that it need not occur today. John Predom suggested conducting an online survey of the section's membership.

FPR Topics – Luke O'Brien, presenting in his official role, updated the section on various FPR matters as follows:

Wheeler Mountain – Luke spoke of the State's recent purchases on the mountain, including the cliff band, the summit, and the skinny corridor on the eastern edge for rock climbers. On the west end, there is now protection for the new hiking trail. Luke described the purchase as perhaps the best \$100,000 spent for land acquisition. He also suggested a small new connector trail between the Wheeler parking

lot and Moose Mountain. He commented that even in situations involving a willing seller and buyer a state land purchase takes time. He thanked the section for its support conducting trail work. When he can, he wants to express thanks. The major storm last week had an impact on FPR's facilities. The department will assess the storm damage. Luke would welcome information, through John Predom, on damage. The Gore East Trail (per Susan Winsor) is not accessible. Individuals may also report trail conditions to Kevin Williamson. Luke indicated that presently FPR is focusing on roads, trail conditions will then be examined. The Island Pond island has now been state acquired. For now, the island is status quo (no camping). FPR envisions developing remote camping on the island (with waste management provisions). Overnight camping would probably be by reservation. For now, there is only beach and diverse (day excursion) access. There are eagles on the island, which can be problem as areas need to remain vacant (no humans). Other projects on the FPR agenda include the Jay Long Range Management Plan,

updating (GMC/Vermont Housing and Conservation Board involvement). FPR has a seasonal staff person conducting the associated inventory. Hopefully, it will occur in a year or two. This includes LT and Catamount Trail land. The Willoughby South End parking lot work was completed last year. A professional trail builder will connect the different Willoughby South end parking lots and the beaches. There will be a degree of work on Pisgah South. This work does not (for now) include the upper parking lot. FPR has received concerns related to night fires and camping, which should not be occurring. Luke apologized to trail volunteers for certain work FPR completed without their knowledge. FPR work occurred on the Long Pond Trail, Telegraph Trail, Pisgah (East) Trail, North Trail (the North-Trail-East Trail Junction), and the Pulpit Rock Trail sign was retrieved. There is funding for work at Burke Mountain. Luke observed that the Red Trail on Burke Mountain can be vexing. At Wheeler Mountain, the FPR work is very localized to address a steep section. Due to the recent storm, at Black Mountain, a van loaded with gear became stuck.

Nevertheless, some work has been completed on the Black Mountain climbing access trail. There will be a week's worth of work at both Sentinel Rock and Perry Holbrook State Park. Both projects will be focused on puncheon replacement/installation. The Bald Fire Tower is being rehabbed in late August. A volunteer day is scheduled for Aug 24 (Sat) with access via the Mad Brook Trail. The roof on Bald Tower has recently been replaced. John Predom suggested certain trail modifications at Middle Mountain. Even though the Monadnock access remains officially closed, there is a tower roof problem requiring attention, which FPR can address. Lastly, John Predom told Luke that unauthorized camping is occurring on the KHT. Luke commented that until the corridor manger situation is settled that the camping question may not be finalized. He (Luke) noted all the proposed camping sites have been looked at. There are two sites that the landowners and the KHT partners could probably accept. Luke has a design for a shelter free compost toilet should KHT camping be approved.

Trail Adopters – NEKGMC Trail Adoption Coordinator, Kevin Williamson, reported there is not much change. The Moose Bog and Victory Basin trails are both up for grabs. Although short they are work intensive. Moose Bog is ADA accessible, and both are prone to blow downs. Moose Bog is on F&W land (which does not maintain its trails). John Predom reported he was out on Moose Bog recently and suggested that the NEKGMC conduct a work day on that trail. Luke suggested acquiring a couple of stirrup hoes for work on Moose Bog.

KHT Ramble – With respect to the proposed KHT Ramble running race, scheduled for August 10. Kevin Williamson will send out an e-mail for assistance to improve the KHT for the KHT Ramble. NEKGMC will provide support but not promote the race, as it is not a non-profit event. Cathi Brooks mentioned that the recent storm could have changed the KHT's status. Jesse (the KHT Ramble's organizer) needs at least 20 participants, and at last count he had nine. Cathi thought the event would be a good promotion for the KHT.

Camps – NEKGMC Vice President, Paul Trojano, also serves as President of the Main Club’s Camps Committee. He reported that the new Haigh Cabin is fantastic. Paul suggested there should a new exterior built on the Hadsel- Mares Cabin to incentivize rental of this older cabin. The screens at Hadsel Mares need work . Cathi Brooks understands from Molly at Main Club that work on Hadsel- Mares is planned for 2025. Most immediately, the lock on Hadsel Mares needs to be replaced. Paul was heading to the Wheeler Camps this Tuesday morning and offered to devise a temporary screen solution.

Hikes – NEKGMC Hiking Coordinator, Sue Winsor, reviewed the following proposed hikes:

Paul Trojano will lead a hike up Wheeler Mountain (date not specified)

August 24- Work hike to Bald Mountain Tower via the Mad Brook Trail.

August 31 – Jeff Morris will lead a Lamoille Valley Rail Trail bike excursion

September 8 – Steve Farrow will lead a hike on Hurricane Mountain

September 21 – Long Trail Day – The annual event features GMC section hikes of the LT. John Predom will lead the NEKGMC ‘s contribution starting at Hazen’s Notch and ending at Route 242.

September 28- Westmore Challenge- NEKGMC will staff the station at Mad Brook Trail.

October 12-13 – Wood stacking weekend at Wheeler Pond Camps.

John Predom expressed interest in establishing a committee to examine ways to encourage hike leadership.

Northern Frontier is interested in another joint event at the Jay recreation facility.

High School Participation – Luke O’Brien has been trying to reach out to schools for hiking programs.

North Country Union High School has a program called Kingdom Course. Steve Farrow agreed to contact the school. Luke thought we could direct the North Country students to specific facilities. Luke also suggested that the North Country and Burke Mt Academy groups might be interested in collaborative activities. Paul Trojano suggested inviting the high school groups to participate in the October wood stacking at Wheeler Pond Camps.

Membership – NEKGMC Membership Coordinator, Linda Caamano, submitted a report detailing the latest membership data for the NEKGMC.

Monthly Revenue sharing totals were:

March \$148.75

April \$198.75

May \$88.75

The quarterly membership totals were:

New Members (5)

Rejoined Members (6)

Renewed Members (19)

Dropped Members (7)

Resulting Revenue for the Quarter \$436.25

Adjournment – The summer quarterly meeting adjourned at approximately 3:35 PM minus a motion. Submitted by Michael Jay Chernick, NEKGMC Secretary