

Fall 2024 Quarterly Meeting, October 13, 2024,

Wheeler Pond Camps – Barton, Vermont

Attendees: Cathi Brooks, Linda Caamano, Vince Caamano, Michael Chernick, Jeff Commons, Steve Farrow, Jeff Morris, John Predom, Paul Trojano, Janet Steinert, and Sue Winsor

Call to Order – NEKGMC President, John Predom, called the meeting to order at 1:15 P.M. He distributed a document labeled the President’s Brief, reporting on the proposed end-to-end KHT Ramble (canceled but an abbreviated Bluff Community Trail Hike was held), the lumber carry to the Bald Mountain Tower site, Long Trail Day activities and fundraising, and the results of the 2024 Westmore Mountain Challenge, for which the NEKGMC staffed a break station, and summer hiking activity. The document will be published in the forthcoming edition of the NEKGMC newsletter.

Secretary’s Minutes – NEKGMC Secretary, Michael Chernick, reviewed the highlights of the 2024 summer quarterly meeting held at Lenny’s Camp in Holland, Vermont. MOTION [Trojano/Brooks] moved to approve the secretary’s minutes as presented. The motion was approved unanimously.

Treasurer’s Report – In the absence of NEKGMC Treasurer, Angela Smith, NEKGMC Secretary, Michael Chernick reviewed the report as NEK GMC Treasurer, Angela Smith submitted as follows:

Northeast Kingdom Section ~ Green Mountain Club, Quarterly Financial Statement as of October 1, 2024

Operating Account

Beginning Balance (as of 07/10/24) \$4,012.59

Income

Dues Sharing

- May (posted 07/19/24) \$88.75
- June (posted 08/09/24) \$227.50
- July (posted 09/11/24) \$71.25
- Aug (posted 09/23/24) \$225.00
- Deposit (Maps/Guides) \$87.50
- Deposit (Maps/Guides) \$97.75

Map sales at Brighton State Park)

Expenses

- GMC Main Club (Maps) \$49.98
- John Predom (Reimb. Snacks Westmore Chall.) \$174.57
- Vista Print – Canopy \$965.14

Ending Balance \$3620.65

Certificate of Deposit

CD#14489/Matures 01/12/2025 @.40% \$1,610.52

CD#23785/Matures 06/27/2025 @.40% \$1,770.70

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Grand Total All Monies \$7,001.87

Angela Smith ~ Treasure

The Treasurer's Report was accepted as filed.

There was again discussion on the low interest for the CDs and potential alternative banking options for our checking account. Regarding the minimal CD income, NEKGMC Director, Cathi Brooks, agreed to speak with the GMC Executive Director, Business Manager, and Treasurer to discuss using the same credit union (New England Federal) as the club. The problem stems from the value of the CDs. Each is under \$2,000.00. The higher bank/credit union CD rates, based on a minimal survey, appear to be triggered with a \$10,000.00 minimum deposit. Also, the section is not looking to merge its CDs into the Main Club's. As for the bank, the section, since its inception, has banked at Passumpic Bank, as it has convenient local branch offices in the NEK. The question was raised if the section is allocated any Wheeler Pond Camps' rental income. The answer is that GMC and not the NEKGMC retains all of Wheeler Camp's rental income.

Director's Report – NEKGMC Director, Cathi Brooks, reported on recent developments at the Main Club, based on the September 2024 Board meeting and the associated director's package. She reported that the GMC received an additional \$966,000.00 from the Wissman Bequest. \$500,000 was deposited in the GMC endowment. Per Main Club policy, 10 percent (\$96,000.00) was allocated to operational expenses. The balance is being held temporarily in reserve for later disbursement to specific projects.

On the Long Trail: Major accomplishments were the completion of the Bromley Tower, the virtual completion of the Minerva Hinchey Privy and Shelter, and the Forest City Trail Truss Bridge. 2024 was a great summer for volunteer participation as the Long Trail Patrol experienced its most successful season since 2018. An assessment of the July 2024 floods recorded "widespread damage between the Breadloaf Wilderness and the Jay State Forest." Moderate damage was primarily located between Bolton Mountain and Mount Mansfield. The GMC has submitted, to the Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation an initial estimate of \$261,000 to address all the moderate damage. The July flooding altered the GMC's summer activities, but all major projects for the season were completed.

With respect to corridor protection and monitoring, the goal of 100 percent legal protection continues forward. The Club transferred the Rost and Thetford Tracts to the Department of Forests, Parks and Recreation for inclusion in the Camel's Hump State Forest. The Club had purchased these parcels as potential sites for the Winooski River Bridge, but the bridge was built at a different location. GMC was awarded a \$24,000.00 Vermont Housing and Conservation Board (VHCB) grant for the conservation of the Deer Camp Tract. Once transfer of the parcel to the State of Vermont occurs, the GMC and the VHCB will jointly hold the conservation easement. The main Club has recently welcomed seven new corridor monitor volunteers, who were trained, and the total number of corridor monitors now stands at 67.

Off the LT, the Jean Haigh Camp was dedicated on June 1 at Wheeler Pond, and the Main Club staff is now managing an active beaver population at the Waterbury headquarters site. The beavers are active dam builders, and the staff is endeavoring to accommodate the beavers while also protecting the GMC's property.

Organizationally, the Club is engaged in a structural review. This study is examining the roles of the Executive Director, the Executive Committee, and the Board, their interactions, and whether each is assigned the appropriate tasks. Regarding the Board, this multi-year review

will assess whether a smaller Board is correct for an organization the size of the GMC and potentially different Board representational models for the sections. The committee structure is also being examined. As for the sections, the study is examining if any liability issues arise from the sections management of funds and further if governance guidelines should replace section bylaws. A consultant is being hired to assist with this process.

Although the FY25 (which began on May 1, 2024) financials are proceeding as planned, staff, GMC Chief Financial Officer, Jason Buss, Executive Director, Mike DeBonis, and Assistant Executive Director, Alicia DiCocco, have determined that the Club needs to reduce its FY 25 budget in the amount of five percent reduction. This decision, which the Board signed off on at its September meeting, results from looming financial pressures, including the Club's health insurer's informing the GMC of a 25 percent increase (\$24,000). Possible changes in the health plan's specifics are being discussed. Most immediately, two positions, Director of Operations and Membership Coordinator, were eliminated. The membership duties will become the responsibility of the recently hired Development Director, Rhonda Forcier. The administrative responsibilities will be assigned to other remaining staff members. The revised budget projects also calls for increases in contributions, but decreases in revenue derived from membership, grants, and publications, as well as reductions in personnel expenses, supplies' costs, and other additional expenses. For the next few fiscal years, annual expense increases will need to be limited to three to five percent. Revenue from unrestricted donations, fee for service projects, and planned giving will need to increase.

Wheeler Pond Camps Update – According to combined reports Cathi Brooks and GMC Camps Chair and NEKGMC Vice President, Paul Trojano, the occupancy rates at Hadsel Mares and Haigh Cabins were 69 and 73 percent, for the most recent reported time-period. The percentage of Haigh Cabin renters, who were GMC members, was 73 percent and at Hadsel Mares 69 percent. The most recent wood stacking benefited from Sterling College and North Country Union High School students' great assistance. There is a need for a fourth wood bay at the upper level and a new bay for Haigh Cabin. The locks at both Wheeler Cabins still need replacement. John Predom will send suggestions on the camps to Paul Trojano for forwarding to the Main Club, including a request to enforce a no micro-spikes policy for inside both cabins. John Predom had fallen down the steps at Haigh Camp prior to its opening. Access improvements leading to Haigh Cabin are required. There will be a separate handicapped access trail leading to Haigh Cabin.

NEKGMC Membership – While there is a Membership Officer vacancy on the NEKGMC Executive Committee John Predom has been performing these duties. He reported as follows:

July – Membership Report

- 6 renewals -10 Members
- 8 drops – 10 members

August Membership Report

- 13 renewals – 15 members
- 2 joined – 4 members

Totals for July and August

- 25 renewal members
- 10 dropped members

- 4 new members

Total membership numbers are currently unavailable

Outings – NEKGMC Outings Coordinator, Sue Winsor, announced the Golden Road Hike on Saturday November 2 (time not specified). This will be the fifth anniversary of Jean Haigh's last hike, which was at this location. Then on Sunday December 8, Michael Chernick will lead a fifth anniversary rendition of the Jean Haigh Memorial Hike on the Mount Hor CCC Road. There was discussion regarding the ownership and hiking situation at the radar station in East Haven. No remedial action has occurred on the summit to remove the old military structures. Sue mentioned that most of our hiking successes are spontaneous

Miscellaneous Items – Per Paul Trojano's suggestion, John Predom secured FPR permission to staff a table at either Pisgah or Wheeler trailheads. This will include membership signups and map/guidebook sales. These events would utilize the new canopy tent. Linda Caamano mentioned the Saint Johnsbury First Fridays program and Newport City has community gatherings Wednesdays and Saturdays. Steve Farrow will check on the Newport situation. Both are possible membership recruitment/information distribution venues. NEKGMC Trails Adopter, Kevin Williamson, having worked this afternoon on Wheeler Mountain Trails, mentioned the importance of cleaning water bars at Wheeler Camps' Trails.

Mount Monadnock – John Predom reported that two GMC hikers experienced a positive encounter with the owner of the gravel pit at the trailhead, who indicated a willingness to reopen the trail. Kevin Williamson will follow up.

Tools – Discussion was held on reimbursing the purchase of tools for trail work. Sue Winsor suggested a tools' list be made available to members. The discussion turned to the specifics of which tool should be purchased if any. MOTION [Farrow /Caamano) If a member desires to purchase a hand tool for trail work, subject to Kevin Williamson or John Predom's providing purchase authorization, he or she may proceed with the purchase. The bill would be submitted to either of these individuals for reimbursement. The vote was unanimous.

Gnome Stairs Trail – Sue Winsor reported this trail is problematic. She suggested a new blazing project is needed. This is a potential spring project. This project would require permission of the trail's owner.

First Day Hike – Sue Winsor will lead a State sponsored First Day (January 1, 2025) hike at a location to be determined.

Next Meeting – Tentatively Sunday January 12, 2025 at the Northwest Stewardship Center.

Adjournment at 2:27 P.M. MOTION [Brooks/Morris] to adjourn the meeting. The motion was approved unanimously

Submitted by Michael Jay Chernick, NEKGMC Secretary