

Special Members Meeting
March 6, 7:00 pm
Grey Mtn Room, Mt. McIntyre Recreation Centre

Board members Present: Dan Boyd, Sue Carr, Tim Sellars, Lisa Vowk, Keith Ramage, Brian Boorse, Keith Thaxter.

Regrets: Ernie Berken, Tami Hamilton

Facilitator: Tony Lomas

Welcome and Introductions:

Lisa welcomed everyone and introduced board members. Lisa gave a brief overview of how the board operates, and a brief history of Mt. Sima. Lisa then welcomed Tony Lomas the facilitator for the evening. Tony explained the rules of order and how he would facilitate the meeting.

How did we get here?

Tim explained the three issues and challenges that had closed Mt Sima for the season. The issues and challenges were related to the chair lift, the t-bar and the snowmaking system. Considering the safety concerns with the t-bar, outstanding chair lift deficiencies Snowmaking problems compounded by the warm weather, retaining qualified staff and the remaining costs of trying to get open, hill management recommended that Mount Sima close for the season. The board respected this recommendation and the hill was closed after 5 days of operation. The board further made the commitment that the lifts will not open to the public until they have been examined by a certified lift expert, problems diagnosed/fixed and it is confirmed that they are safe to operate. The decision to close for the season was an agonizing decision for all involved.

Lisa then spoke on the impact of the Canada Winter Games. The games were great success and left Mt. Sima with a beautiful chalet, new grooming equipment, improved snowmaking system, freestyle/mogul terrain, run improvements, and a half pipe. The ski area can no longer operate as it has done in the past. It has outgrown the role as a seasonal operation, with only a 4-month season. Part of moving forward will be a new plan including considerations for year-round operation. Lisa then explained the financial situation of GNSS. The Society had more payables than money available to pay. (A handout was available to members as they arrived). The handout showed the income and expenses from the last three ski seasons, as well as a proposed budget for 2008/2009.

Where are we now?

Sue explained what happens with this year's season pass holders. This season's passes would be honored next season. If pass holders would not be able to use their pass next season, they could sell the pass to another individual. GNSS would assist those who wanted to sell their passes. Punch cards would also be extended and honored next season. The Society regrets that they are not able to refund money for passes. The Society does not have the money to refund pass holders. Several ski hills are offering discounts to Mt. Sima season's pass holders: Smithers, Shames Mountain (Terrace), Alpen Glow in

Anchorage, Watson Lake and Dawson City are all offering reduced rates to Sima Pass holders. Eagle Crest in Juneau is offering free skiing to Mt Sima Pass holders.

What next? Partnership discussions.

Short term and long term planning is needed; the current model is not working. The board is looking for an advisory committee/transition team to assist with moving forward. The team could include members from business, stakeholders, community, Sport and Recreation, Economic development, Yukon government, City of Whitehorse, etc. Year-round recreation operations should be considered.

Follow up:

The Board is proposing a general meeting in late April or early May to invite the members and the public to attend and become part of the transition team.

Tony Lomas (facilitator) then took over the meeting and asked for questions and concerns. Questions and concerns would be listed, then the board would respond. Below are the question/concern and the board's response.

1. Have a Strategic plan, separate O&M from Governance.
 - ✍ The Board Agreed to seriously work on a "Strategic Plan".
 - ✍ Maybe change from Area Operations Manger, to Indoor Operations and Outdoor operations Managers.

2. Talk with the Whitehorse Cross Country Ski Club (WCCSC), maybe learn from the past experiences. WCCSC has now over 1,100 members.
 - ✍ The Board agreed, sharing struggles and successes would be helpful.

3. Revisit snowmaking feasibility study. Seems to be a disconnect from actual to O&M.
 - ✍ The feasibility study was more for the design of the system, not actual operation.
 - ✍ Fuels prices play a major part, cost per litre have doubled.
 - ✍ The board will examine efficiency.

4. What is the board's immediate goal? (Fall Start Up)
 - ✍ Step-by-Step plan. (Gant Chart)
 - ✍ Critical to start NOW!

5. Credit for Pass (going back to Korea)
 - ✍ Unable to refund pass, could help sell pass.
 - ✍ There is a language barrier, board member to help after the meeting.

6. Does the board have an 8-10 week cost accounting for fall start up?
Costs, Accountability, Staffing.
 - ✍ This is an immediate concern for the board, and they will be working on a time line

7. How will GNSS regain the trust from consumers, pass holders, local business?

- ✍ This does concern the board, hopefully by showing that they are working hard to have a successful opening. Prove it by having a successful opening next fall.
 - ✍ More marketing
 - ✍ Ideas provided by the audience for a media day at the hill
8. How will the board deal with negativism, climate variations, and recognition?
- ✍ Definitely a challenge which needs to be considered in planning.
9. How can GNSS plan more for the northern conditions? (Climate)
- ✍ Summer recreation, more use of the facility would help offset the costs of just having a winter operation. Hiking, biking, etc.
 - ✍ Renting out the new chalet will help.
 - ✍ More marketing, sales and sponsorship.
10. Will the board visit the idea of Publicity/Marketing (strategy).
- ✍ Absolutely!
 - ✍ The Chalet is available.
 - ✍ Promote and encourage more community events.
11. Can the board improve on Communication with members/public?
- ✍ The board can and will.
 - ✍ The board will start by posting newsletters on the web site.
www.mountsima.com
 - ✍ Gather email addresses from those who would like regular Sima update and newsletters.
 - ✍ Commitment to send out emails on a regular basis.
12. Programming Management. (Keep working with groups such as Young Riders).
- ✍ Maybe have a coordinator for the Big Picture.
 - ✍ GNSS does value user groups, does sympathize with the Young Riders, losing Eyvi Smith and the ski hill is a blow to the leaders and youth.
13. Would GNSS plan for a funding strategy? (Tax Credits)
- ✍ Yes
 - ✍ GNSS would work towards year-round staffing.
 - ✍ Maybe look to sharing staff with the City of Whitehorse.
 - ✍ Continually search out all areas of possible funding.
 - ✍ This would lead into the next steps of “Short-term and Long-term Planning”
- 14&15. Strategic Planning and Sustainability covered in previous/up-coming questions and answers. Partnering with WCCSC.
The Cross Country Ski Club supported and commended GNSS for having the Members meeting.
- ✍ GNSS most willing to learn from WCCSC struggles and successes.

16. A youth stood and spoke about how sad he is that Sima is not open and is willing to volunteer.
- ✍ The board recognized and shared his sadness.
17. Members shared concerns about wanting to volunteer (eg. snowmaking)
- ✍ The board acknowledged the concern.
 - ✍ Agreed to communicate when volunteers are needed.
 - ✍ Acknowledged the concern that youth need to volunteer. There may be some insurance issues when having youth volunteer, the board would look in to the matter.
 - ✍ The Board would develop a process to engage members and volunteers.
18. Would the board members be held liable for GNSS debts?
- ✍ Under the Society's Act the board did not believe they would be liable.
 - ✍ The board hoped that they would not be liable, but would do some investigation on the issue.
19. User groups are willing to provide transition support.
- ✍ The Board was delighted and acknowledged the support.
 - ✍ Support is needed and wanted.
20. When and how would the board deal with lift maintenance/deficiencies?
- ✍ Immediately, although limited by the availability of funds.
 - ✍ Apply for grant money.
 - ✍ Start working on a short-term and long-term plan.
21. How does the board plan to honor passes in the future?
- ✍ The board would look at what happens in other ski areas.
 - ✍ Continue to research and revisit the existing policy.
22. Would the board commit to increase communication?
- ✍ Absolutely.
 - ✍ Will work on email and web site methods.
23. Would the board commit to increase sense of community and member ownership?
- ✍ Yes!
 - ✍ The Board is open to ideas on how to improve.
24. Would the board consider Privatization?
- ✍ Anything is possible. To this point, the board had not considered it. As of right now, it couldn't economically support itself as a private hill.
 - ✍ For consideration in planning.
25. Tax Credit?
- ✍ Apparently possible, a little more information needed.

26. Icycle Sports are planning a summer Mountain Biking event. Still in the planning Process, hopeful for some time in August.

✍ GNSS is pleased to be a part of this event.

27. Why are you on the board?

✍ For the love of skiing, and for family.

✍ Great to have a ski hill for the community, want to see success.

✍ Was a vision in 1989, the City would not take it on, so a few committed people took on the challenge, and enjoyed the planning and success of the hill.

✍ Very rewarding and great to see the youth/and general public enjoying the hill.

✍ Wanted to see glade runs continued.

The question and answer period ended at 8.45.

Another member's meeting is planned for late April early May.