

Big Lake Development Company testimony for LUPC public hearing.

June 7, 2022

Testifying for Big Lake;

Perry Williams: Managing Partner, Big Lake Development Co., LLC

Matt Dieterich: Executive Vice President, James W. Sewall Co.

Terrence Dewan: Principle, Terrence J. Dewan and Associates

I do solemnly and sincerely and truly declare and affirm that the evidence I shall give shall be the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth.

Topics:

1. **Project overview**

- We want to bring back Big Squaw and develop a sustainable four-season outdoor resort.
- We plan to change the name after we get input from the local community.
- The existing conditions at the village and upper mountain are beyond repair, so our plans start with tearing down the hotel, base lodge/restaurant and old chairlift to the top.
- We plan to keep the T-bar lodge and the triple chairlift. The Friends group has done a great job of updating the lodge and maintaining the lift and their efforts have been very helpful in keeping the mountain alive.
- We plan to build new year-round facilities in the same general upper village area.
- Our focus is on outdoor recreation of all kinds, not just downhill skiing. We plan to welcome snowmobilers, XC skiers, ice fisherman, ATV'ers, hikers, bikers, dark sky gazers, hunters, fishermen, and all the other activities are that special to this region. It's about getting outside, however people enjoy it.

2. **State lawsuit**

- This property is unique in that it was owned by the State of Maine from 1974 to 1986.
- When the State sold the property, it put a deed restriction on the land requiring that the lifts and trails must remain open to the public.
- The current owner has not kept the property open, so in 2016 the State filed a lawsuit forcing whoever owns it to install a chairlift and open the top of the mountain.
- But it's not quite as simple as just installing a new lift. It also needs a new base lodge, a new hotel, a new snowmaking system, a new sewer system, a new water system, a new electrical system, upgraded parking areas and access road, etc.

3. **Replacement of existing facilities**

- The deed restriction has required us to evaluate the total feasibility of redeveloping this property.
- We hired the outdoor industry experts and developed a master plan based on the location, the market, and the unique attributes of Big Squaw.
- We agreed from the very start, 4 years ago, that if we can't do it right, then we won't do it at all.
- The project must be able to sustain operations for 50 years.
- Our plan developed into the following core elements that are the subject of this LUPC application.
 - A multi-function base lodge / conference center
 - A 63-room hotel
 - A Tap house / restaurant
 - An event center for weddings and outdoor functions
 - A detachable chairlift to the top
 - A T-bar from the lower lodge to the mountain village
 - An all-new snowmaking system
 - A Zip tour ride from the top to the bottom of the mountain
 - A sewer line to Greenville
 - A new water system
 - Upgraded electrical systems
 - High speed internet connections
 - Upgraded access road and parking areas
 - A new maintenance garage
- Our research, planning and feasibility studies have shown that this core level of improvements are what's needed at this property to make a successful, sustainable operation.

4. **Compliance with LUPC standards and other regulations**

- Worked directly with LUPC and applicable consulting agencies to create an environmentally sensitive design
- Conducted environmental studies
 - Soil sampling and classification
 - Hydrogeologic investigation
- Conducted Wildlife studies
 - Lynx
 - Bicknell Thrush
 - Northern Spring Salamander
 - Roaring Brook Mayfly
- Enhanced environmental footprint
- 100 Foot Stream Buffers
 - All structures outside of the Stream Buffer
 - Eliminated existing building locations that were not compliant with current standards
- Compliance with IF&W requirements

- Improvements of existing conditions
 - Replacement of existing culverts with open bottom culverts at 1.2 times stream width
 - Replacement of existing eroded pond outlet with open channel and bridges
 - Removal of existing structures within stream buffers, including removal of hazardous materials
 - Sustainable snow making water intake
- MDOT Traffic Movement Permit received
- Bureau of Public Lands Submerged Lands Permit received
- Shoreland Alteration Permit received
- Roadway redesign to meet current standards for safety, visibility, etc.
- Stormwater management system designed to meet all applicable standards

5. Visual Impacts

Overview

- The resort has been designed to comply with the Harmonious Fit and Natural Character standards of Chapter 10.
- Chapter 10 calls out the concern for potential visual effects to *roadways, scenic byways, major water bodies, coastal wetlands, permanent trails, or public property within three miles.*
- Planning for the mountain recognizes the scenic value of Moosehead Lake (rated Outstanding for Scenic Quality) and the surrounding natural environment.
- Viewshed analysis demonstrates that the planned improvements will be minimally visible to the Moosehead Lake Scenic Byway, Moosehead Lake and Mountain View Pond, and the trails on Little Moose Public Reserve Land due to topography and vegetation.
- Beyond three miles, the proposed base village buildings will be comparable in visibility to the existing buildings that will be removed.

Compliance with LUPC Standards

- Removing existing buildings not in keeping with the vision.
- Rebuilding the village in the same general location
- Minimizing tree clearing and site disturbance: roadways, sewer line, water line, snowmaking lines, T-bar, chair lift, zip line.
- Minimizing the number of light fixtures and following LUPC standards.
- Non-essential lighting will be on a timer that will shut them off after certain hours.
- The ski runs and associated infrastructure will not be lit.
- All exterior lights will be full cut-off.

Base Village Design

- Simons Architects: following a Scandinavian design aesthetic fitting for the mountain.
- Designing the hotel, base lodge, and brew pub as a coordinated base village
- Using materials inspired by those used in historic buildings in the Moosehead area
- Selecting materials with dark colors to minimize color contrast.
- Siting individual structures to maintain existing vegetation to visually break off the mass of the building while framing views to the lakes and mountains.

Conclusion

- Major improvement from current conditions
- The visible changes to the mountain should have no effect on the continued use and enjoyment of the surrounding scenic resources. If anything, the transformation of the mountain into a well-planned contemporary 4-season resort should be seen as a positive addition to the surrounding community.

6. Economic benefits

- We've projected the project will create 250 – 300 new quality jobs, jobs that will bring economic benefits to the town, the region and the State of Maine.
- These jobs are designed to be year-round with the projects 4-season focus on outdoor recreation.
- We believe our plan matches the new vision for the region that LUPC has been working on since the Plum Creek permits were withdrawn.
- It's the right place for this type and size of development in a way that will benefit downtown Greenville.
- Our plan is also in-line with the Roger Brooks Strategic Action Plan that the town commissioned in 2017.
- This plan was developed to create an 8-10 month economy, increase the regional population, and put Moosehead Lake on the map as a great place to visit, live, work and raise a family, while maintaining the natural and cultural character of the Moosehead Lake Region.

Thank you.