

## Carrabassett Valley

# Selectmen still enthusiastic about gondola

By David Hart  
Irregular Staff

CARRABASSETT VALLEY — Town officials continue to look into the feasibility of purchasing a \$10 million town-owned signature gondola lift for Sugarloaf.

Originally proposed by resident Seth Wescott, the concept has been enthusiastically accepted by town officials providing it meets three primary objectives for the needs of the parties involved. Sugarloaf and Boyne officials, as well as representatives of CNL who own Sugarloaf assets, are also enthusiastic about the concept.

According to town manager Dave Cota, who has been posting information on the town's Web site for public review, the "cost of money" and/or economic incentive programs have to be favorable. Secondly, Boyne/Sugarloaf has to be comfortable that it can afford the annual debt service payments and pay for the additional operating costs. Lastly, the town has to be comfortable that it has adequate financial security/guarantees in place, Cota explained.

New information was expected last week including more accurate gondola costs which Sugarloaf representatives are looking into.

According to the update, there are two companies that manufacture the types of gondola lifts which will meet their needs: Doppelmayer/C-TEC which is an Austrian company with manufacturing plants in Quebec and Salt Lake and Poma/Leitner which is French with a U.S.

plant in Colorado.

Prices vary according to the make, model and options that are selected such as "detached" versus "fixed grip pulse," etc., Cota explained.

Although the concept is complicated, officials hope to continue to fact-find and if favorable outcomes occur, place the proposal before the town voters in the March 2010 Annual Town Meeting.

Optimistically, members say, the gondola could be installed and operational by Christmas of 2010.

"CNL which owns the Sugarloaf Assets is a Real Estate Investment Trust. Boyne has a long-term lease to operate Sugarloaf. As a REIT, CNL may have some limitations involving land transactions that may or may not be prohibitive in structuring a proposed deal. Both CNL and Boyne are supportive of this project," Cota said.

If CNL can not sell the land below the proposed gondola, an easement of some sort may need to be established.

Cota continues to look at municipal financing options, and a new fact-finding group was established to look into the overall feasibility.

Included in this group are: two of the town's selectmen, Lloyd Cuttler and John Beaupre; along with Town Manager Dave Cota; two Carrabassett citizens, Don Fowler and Bob Briggs; as well as John Diller and Richard Wilkinson from Sugarloaf; and Bob Turner from Boyne.

In other November news, selectmen continued to look at operational endeavors regarding the new library which is expected to be completed soon. "It is estimated that the new building will be ready for occupancy by the end of December," Cota said in a Nov. 23 agenda.

Updates were also provided for trail improvements at the Outdoor Center. Town voters agreed to expend monies for a forest management plan to develop trails and continue improvements. Part of the planning includes the development of a world-class Nordic race loop located on the golf course.

Credit cards are now accepted at the town office. The selectmen agreed to use MuniPay as their vehicle to accept credit cards in person at the town office or over the phone. The service should be an added value to non-residents in particular.

In an earlier meeting, members of the board of selectmen talked about options to enhance cellular phone service in the Valley. Repeaters and WiFi expanders were discussed as options. Locations and placement for these items were also discussed. Cota said that he's had several discussions with US Cellular which is working to improve coverage in the area. He mentioned that Kingfield might be a potential site for enhanced transmission equipment. This will not only help the Kingfield area, it may also help with drivers along Route 27 in Carrabassett.

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