

Jackson Wyoming Mayor and Town Council
150 E. Pearl Avenue
Jackson, WY 83001

December 14, 2019

Dear Mayor and Town Council,

The intent of this letter is to:

1. Express our support for Snow King's current proposals to the master plan having a clear path to move forward
2. Express our support of a SKRMA fee(s) that go to directly support winter operations annually
3. Express our support for the new gondola as well as solutions to maintain access to the elevation of "Slow Trail" and the tops of the "Cougar" ("lane 4") and "Lower Elk" ("lane 7") runs

COMMUNITY CHARACTER

As I draft this letter, I am watching approximately 200 U19 athletes from around the country and around the world [compete at Snow King](#) for the first of 9 out of 10 days of racing between now and December 23, 2019. In addition to these two races, we will host an entry level "Club Series" race, another Intermountain Division 3-day qualifier, four "Margarita Cup" races for local adults, daily training for 220 local athletes and a Master's program to boot. And this is a light year for us compared to the last few.

The field of the current FIS race includes 12 JHSC athletes that will be in this race series: Spencer Wright, Lucas Stock, Bridger Harrison, Oliver Parazette, Grant Hagen, Martin Wilcox, Sophia Tozzi, Paige Doyle, Morgan Kilmain, Camille Jackson, Izzy Davis and Carey Ritter. Our program's kids listed here represent a mix of athletes that have been in the Club since they could walk/ski, third generation Jackson families, "post graduate" athletes that have come here from other programs in the region for the quality of coaching and training, and two international athletes.

In addition to the Club's winter activities at Snow King Mountain, we are partners and neighbors of Jackson Youth Hockey, the Skating Club of Jackson Hole, the Girls Scouts of America, Coombs Outdoors, the Jackson Hole High School Ski Team, and the many locals that consider Snow King their "town hill." Snow King's location in the heart of town, and central to all local schools, makes it an accessible hub for kids and adults representing every aspect of the community of Jackson, WY.

Nothing, especially skiing and winter activities, better represents the community character of Jackson, WY. The vast majority of winter activities that take place on Snow King are non-controversial and indisputable: they are mostly "human" powered outdoor recreation, they represent every age group cradle-to-grave, they are repeatable and have existed for over 80 years, they generate significant revenues for the local economy at the slowest times for town, and they are at their core about personal and local community development if not the pursuit of excellence on an international scale.

All of these activates (especially high-quality training, racing, and winter operations) hangs in the balance of your deliberations and decisions about the proposed amendments to the master plan.





A CLEAR PATH FORWARD

It is imperative (and it is time) that clear decisions and agreements get executed so that Snow King can move forward with proposed plans. There is no doubt that the status quo is unsustainable economically (and has been for much of Snow King's history especially in winter) and that investment and development is necessary to keep these activities vibrant and feasible for this community.

SUSTAINABILITY AND QUALITY

Sustainability needs to be achieved not only economically, but with regards to the rich traditions at Snow King that need to be sustained. In order to sustain our efforts as a Ski and Snowboard Club and Jackson's oldest nonprofit we need to continue partnering with an economically viable, safe, modern, and improved Snow King. The "world-class" venue that Snow King represents and supports in the execution of our mission is absolutely vital to serve this community not just passively, but at the highest level possible. The future of what the Club, this town, Snow King, may achieve for the next generation and the next generation of student-athletes is wholly dependent on the viability and the quality of venue and infrastructure at Snow King.

The Club's current and future strategies, and recent advancements, are not feasible with a Snow King that is limping along in the winter.

IMPROVING ECONOMIC BENEFIT AND CONTRIBUTION

The Club's "Building Our Base" campaign in partnership with the Town of Jackson, Snow King Mountain, and others generated over \$3M in infrastructure and improvements. One of the primary intentions of this campaign and project was to help contribute/generate (via "lane fees") as much as \$200,000 in revenues (JHSC to SKM) by providing "early season" training to JHSC programs and teams from around the country and the world. While the campaign and project were certainly a success from the standpoint of an improved venue, the projected revenues have fallen far short due almost entirely to uncooperative temperatures in the November. This has stung for Snow King's winter operations.

That said, the improvements still have us training earlier and hosting some of the first races in the west year after year. Despite this loss of projected revenue, Snow King Mountain has continued to operate with the Club in good faith to open as early as is practically and economically feasible (at a more significant loss) in order to host high-level races throughout December and open training as early as possible.

A three-year average of revenues generated by JHSC directly to Snow King Mountain (consisting of lane rentals, pass sales, lift tickets for visiting athletes and teams attending JHSC races, and major events such as USCSA Nationals) is over \$200,000 annually (the total economic benefit to the local economy generated by the Club's activities and events is estimated at close to \$3,000,000 annually). The revenue generated for SKM is estimated to be 25%-30% of Snow King Mountain's total winter revenue. Keep in mind that this is generated by the activities of a nonprofit organization dedicated to "inspire and develop student athletes" which:

- Has only 42% of revenues coming from program fees





- Attracts and retains a national if not international-caliber event and program staff
- Hosts these events at a break even or a loss
- Provides over \$100,000 in need-based scholarships annually to household incomes that average \$70,000
- Is the primary operational partner of Snow King for all training and competitions in the winter

The point here is that the Club cannot do much more, and the need for resources to maintain these activities is only increasing. The Club will always and forever be a major economic contributor to the Snow King and Jackson economy. Improvements in infrastructure and a better Snow King economy will benefit the Club and the community in helping to sustain and improve winter operations. The health of winter operations and economy of Snow King Mountain, balanced with providing a public benefit has been a conundrum, if not a catch 22 for decades, and it is not getting easier to solve. The Club will always do its part...but we cannot do it alone or without the economic picture changing significantly.

IMPROVED ECONOMICS AND FEES

The Club has consistently voiced strong support for the proposed improvements to the Snow King master plan. We strongly support that proposals now clearly include the collection of a fee within the SKRMA resort district. This assures the Club and the community at large that with improved economic benefits to Snow King and the resort district, there will be a simultaneous “community benefit.”

We would like to voice strong support for this mechanism and ask that there is some very clear definition and obligation that these fees directly support winter operations. That has been one of the bigger economic challenges expressed by all parties over the years, so these funds (or a portion thereof) should go to directly support this challenge and one of the most significant benefits to the Club and the local and visiting public. We would also be in strong support of a more representative board or body, made up of Club and/or other local stakeholders, having some input as to how these funds are distributed.

GONDOLA AND LIFTS

We have been careful to stay out of the direct planning of the Mountain’s improvements and plans as that has seemed to muddy already murky waters. Frankly, with how many entities and stakeholders are involved, we have felt that any further controversy and confusion about where things ultimately go gives fuel to those who intend to drag out this process at the expense of clear plans to move forward.

That said, the removal of the summit lift and the installation of a gondola is a necessary improvement for how the base area functions in the winter. It also has the potential to actually change the economic forecast for Snow King Mountain above and beyond a chairlift. This will “open up” the base area and the possibly of expanding the Club’s facilities. While this major improvement outweighs most of our concerns, the removal of both the Summit lift and the Cougar lift is not ideal for the Club and the ability to access the traditional/existing training and race lanes.

In order to mitigate these concerns, we have discussed a surface lift or other lift on the far skiers left of “Exhibition.” The bottom of this lift would be just above the tubing hill which would land it on ToJ land,





and the top of this lift would go to an elevation that would provide access to the top of the primary training and race lanes accessed by “Slow Trail.” As this is in Snow King’s “Proposed Snow Making” coverage, and is out of the way of other operations necessary to get the rest of the venue open, this would also provide a more viable early season training venue, and a more feasible staged opening plan for early training.

While this surface or other lift in this location would mitigate the loss of the Cougar lift, it would not be ideal for race or training operations. Snow King has clearly stated that they have adjusted the placement of the gondola based on significant public feedback, and we believe they have been very responsive in that manner. Any proposals that have involved Phil Baux park and the Town of Jackson’s land is understandably controversial. In their final proposals, Snow King has clearly stated that they are not assuming or dictating, on the Town’s or Parks and Recreation’s behalf, the final design of the Phil Baux park.

We strongly support the current placement of the gondola, and ask for approval to move forward. We also ask that approvals for this plan include allowances for additional placements of a surface lift or potential relocation of the Cougar lift to still provide access to the primary race and training lanes.

In conclusion, there is a lot at stake here for the Club, the community, and especially for the viability of high-quality winter operations. We strongly support your approval of these plans, and a clear path that moves us all toward a brighter future for all involved.

Thanks for your work and consideration,

Brian Krill – Executive Director

Tyler Barker – President, former JHSC Freeride Parent

Nancy Leon – Vice President

Allison Colgin – Secretary, former JHSC Alpine Parent

Shaun Andrikopolus – Treasurer, former JHSC Freeride Parent

Jim Coleman – Board Member, former JHSC Alpine Parent

Dan Fleck – Board Member, JHSC Alumni, JHSC Alpine Parent

Rose Strand – Board Member, JHSC Alpine Parent

Scott Horn – Board Member

Scott O’Brien – Board Member, JHSC Nordic Parent

Shannon Owens – Board Member, JHSC Alumni, JHSC Alpine Parent

Johnny Tozzi – Board Member, JHSC Alpine Parent

Mike Hammer – Emeritus Board Member, former JHSC Alpine Parent

