

Masthope



Mountain Community

Strategic Plan

A Vision for the Future

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Masthope Mountain Community Property Council
Strategic Planning Committee Members

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A Brief History of the Masthope Mountain Community

Covenants for Masthope Rapids were filed by Karl Hope in 1974 and development of the Community began. The first meeting of the Masthope POC took place on March 23, 1977. Covenants for the Falling Waters at Masthope were filed by Karl Hope in 1978. The central water and sewer systems were started in 1979 ending the use of sewage holding tanks.

Karl Hope passed in 1980 and his passing started more than a decade of developer changes that threatened the long-term survival of Masthope as a Planned Community. Finally, in 1989 the POC was recognized by the developer as the Property Owners Association for Masthope and the POC started to manage the administration of the Protective Covenants/Deed Restrictions.

By July 1990 the POC had gained control, but not ownership, of everything in Masthope. Included were the control of funds and a lease for a POC Office. After three long years of negotiations, the POC purchased all the amenities in Masthope, including the crown jewel, the Ski Mountain. The next seven years were still difficult, but Masthope truly turned the corner in 2000 and started moving in a positive direction. The outlook for the future of Masthope has gotten brighter each year since the community turned that corner.

Along the way the Lodge burned down on March 31, 2005. Through the skilled management of our Board of Directors and management team, the lodge that Property Owners enjoy today opened less than nine months after the fire, an almost impossible task.

The Masthope Community we know and enjoy today is a direct result of the hard work and dedication of our past and current Board of Directors, management teams, staff, committee members and volunteers. Their perseverance has made Masthope the jewel of the Poconos.

The Function of a Strategic Plan

A strategic plan is more than simply a *wish list*. But it is equally not a prescription of what the Community must do or a fixed timetable of dates, events and funding. Those are the responsibility of the entities that make definitive plans for the Community – the professional management, the appropriate committees, the governing Board of Directors and ultimately the Members. What the Strategic Plan attempts to do is to provide a process, by defining those items and goals to which the Association should devote serious consideration in order to fulfill its mission and to set out both the assets the Association can utilize and the challenges it will face as it conducts that consideration. In other words, it's objective is to facilitate decisions, not prejudge them.

The plan should become a working document to guide the Association. Recommended actions will ultimately be expanded and criteria to measure the accomplishment level of the goals will be developed.

The goal of the Strategic Plan is to provide a roadmap to the future that permits the Association to be more proactive and more efficient. The Strategic Plan will chart the course for Masthope, reflecting the needs, desires and aspirations of the Masthope Property Owners and guests so necessary to the future success of the Community.

Masthope's Core Beliefs

It is important that a strategic plan is based on a value system and that the supporting planning process is sustainable. The Community's Mission and Vision statements capture the values important to our Property Owners and are shown below. The planning process is designed to provide sustainability to the Strategic Plan.

Mission Statement

Masthope Mountain Community is a private four season, family-oriented recreational community. We are dedicated to maintaining our current wide range of high-quality amenities and responsible planning for those future amenities which will enhance our property values and overall quality of life on the mountain. We are committed to protecting the natural beauty of our mountain and pledge to carefully manage its finances and operations, so we may deliver the highest level of services to our Property Owners and their families. We embrace the diversity and contributions of all our Members and will treat the safety and welfare of our Property Owners as a priority.

Our Values

Accountability/Ethical Behavior. As staff members, managers, committee members and Board members, we are responsible to the Association's membership for all our actions. We are guided by standards of honesty, objectivity and integrity. We conduct Association business and make decisions consistently in the best interest of our Property Owners.

Excellence. We provide Members with high quality services and are responsive to their needs. We treat Members and guests with respect, dignity, courtesy and in a professional manner.

Financial Responsibility. We are good stewards of the financial resources entrusted to the Association by its Membership. We constantly seek to find better, more efficient and cost-effective ways to conduct our business, so lifestyle and property values are enhanced.

Leadership. We strongly encourage our Members to participate and have a voice in the life of their Association and the larger Community. The Association plays a proactive role in determining the future of the Masthope Community and the larger Community outside of Masthope. We work in partnership and collaboration with other groups to shape and guide this future.

Secure Environment. We are driven to protect and enhance the natural environment that makes Masthope such a special place. Living in balanced harmony with wildlife enriches Members' quality of life.

Our Vision

The Masthope Community was created as a haven for its Property Owners. Our Community is second to none in our purpose to offer an extraordinary array of experiences, in our commitment to the highest level of services and in our willingness to recognize our staff as one of the most valuable assets within the Community. Our allegiance to those basic elements will ensure long term success for our staff, our Property Owners and the Community as a whole.

Masthope's Long Range Facilities Planning

From the earliest days of development, it has been Masthope's infrastructure, facilities and amenities that have been a major factor in attracting new property owners. Over the years, the further development, enhancement and management of these facilities has added an additional component to the "draw". If the community is going to continue to attract families to Masthope, it is imperative that teenagers and pre-teens find it highly desirable to spend their vacation and leisure time at Masthope. In order to meet the recreational, social and essential service needs of the Members, the Association needs to continue to focus on the Long-Range Facilities Plan Goal, as well as other goals identified in the Strategic Plan. The Long-Range Facilities Master Plan is attached to this plan as "Appendix B".

Recommended Action

- **Top of the Mountain.** There are an extensive number of facilities at and around the Ski Lodge. A Master Plan needs to be considered for this area in order to determine how the ultimate build out should take place at that location.
- **Pool Facility.** Consider expansion of seating areas. Investigate a larger/expanded pool or an additional pool and water related facilities for this location.
- **Shale Pit.** This area needs to be cleaned and not used for discarded equipment. Thoughtful consideration should be given as to how the Community can best utilize this resource in the future.
- **Equestrian Trail System.** Expansion and improvements to the equestrian trail system.
- **Lake.** Land acquisition for greater lake access along with additional parking.
- **POC Office.** An expansion of the office needs to be considered.
- **ATVs, UTVs and Golf Carts.** With the number of all-terrain vehicles, utility terrain vehicles and golf carts being utilized in Masthope, the Community needs to consider the development of a training facility and course for these vehicles.
- **Attracting Teens.** The community needs to seek teen input through a survey and/or Teen Advisory Committee.

Note: While *the Long-Range Facilities Master Plan* has quite a number of enhancement items listed, above are the eight areas identified as needing special attention.

Masthope's Long Range Facilities Planning

Accomplishments

We are proud to say that the accomplishments achieved over the past few years are the result of the hard work, dedication and commitment of our entire community. The support of our committee members, management team, board of directors, volunteers and property owners continue to make Masthope one of the most sought-after communities in northeast Pennsylvania. We look forward to adding to our lists of accomplishments in the future.

As a result of the 2016 Strategic Planning Community Survey, a new 9-hole miniature golf course, one of the most popular new amenities requested, was constructed in the Spring of 2017. This new amenity was extremely well received by our Property Owners and their guests, serving people of all ages.

The top of the mountain continues to develop. A recent acquisition of property adjacent to the ski slopes allowed for the relocation and expansion of our tubing runs, as well as expanding our beginner learning terrain with a surface lift and slope. Our snow making capabilities have also been improved. Additional changes are in the planning stages.

Over the past few years, a significant effort has been dedicated to the improvement of our equestrian trails. Our trails are now wider, better graded and safer. This will be an area that will continue to be monitored and where appropriate, improved.

Our Property Owners Council office space was in need of expansion. While the footprint of the office has not changed, the reallocation of space, both upstairs and downstairs has resulted in better space utilization resulting in a more comfortable workspace and better functionality.

In 2016, Masthope introduced our first ever ATV training area and safety class. The course is located on property and the training classes are extended to both Masthope residents and our neighboring communities.

Our lake activities also benefited by the addition of stand-up paddle boards and kayaks. The addition of a kayak launch pad, as well as kayak racks, have also added to the safety and convenience of these activities.

While we have been unable to acquire additional property at the Lake, the Community was able to carve out parking spaces for the boat trailers, which was taking significant parking spaces from automobile parking. The trailer parking area was paved in 2017 creating a safer parking area for all.

Additional chairs and lounges have been added to the pool area.

Financial Considerations

The key to a successful community is the ability and commitment to making sound financial decisions which will keep the community on a strong financial footing while not placing financial stress on our Property Owners.

Recommended Action

- The Association needs to budget the funds required to have a Reserve Study developed by a specialist in that field.
- Once a Reserve Study is developed for Masthope, a plan will need to be developed on how to fund the Reserves going forward.
- Develop a five-year operating and capital budget.
- The Association's use of technology (software in particular) needs to be studied and updated in order to create efficiencies and improve service levels offered Property Owners.
- Search for new ways to generate revenue for the Property Owners Council.

Accomplishments

While the Community did not contract with a Reserve Study Specialist, our Management team along with our Board of Directors, has developed our reserve study. Each of our major assets has been reviewed and evaluated. An estimated life expectancy is assigned and a savings schedule for replacement developed.

Supporting our Reserve Study is a program to fund the replacement of these assets. Each year the Community funds our Major Asset Replacement (MAR) Fund. This, in conjunction with our Restricted Capital Account (RCA), will add to our preparedness to replace those big-ticket items the Community is sure to need in the future.

Amenities Available to the Public

Several Masthope amenities are available to the public and provide a source of income to the Community. It would serve us well to develop a plan to better promote these amenities.

Masthope has four unique amenities that have a business component. These amenities are Ski Big Bear, The Summit Bar and Restaurant, The Tiki Bar and the Masthope Market Place. Masthope should continue to maximize the business component of these amenities in order to financially benefit the Association. The balance of the amenities should remain for the use by Property Owners only.

Recommended Action

- Develop a plan and program to target other Planned Communities within 15 miles of Masthope, informing them that they can take advantage of these amenities to meet their social, recreational and essential service needs.
- Develop a marketing plan to attract our own members to these facilities. Expand the use of Constant Contact, our Weekly Shout-outs, our cable TV station, etc.
- Explore options to enhance off-season use of the ski area with particular emphasis on the Spring and Fall seasons.

Accomplishments

The Summit Bar and Restaurant has responded to requests to serve breakfast/brunch on select weekends. The response has been excellent. We should now consider this offering throughout the year, except in ski season.

Our Tiki Bar and patio seating area received a major expansion and design make-over in 2017. Our seating capacity has substantially increased, and the overall ascetics have been greatly improved.

The Market Place is now offering customers the opportunity to text their orders in advance of pick up. This service has reduced lines, waiting times and pressure on the staff.

Relationship with Neighboring Communities

Developing and strengthening the Masthope's relationship with neighboring planned communities provides multiple opportunities. A united front when negotiating with the Township provides strength and leverage. Sharing ideas, success stories and challenges can reduce work and costs on projects. Communities can also benefit from a security perspective, as many times these types of issues overlap communities. A better relationship with neighboring communities also opens the door for promoting the Masthope amenities that are available for use by the public.

Recommended Action

- Invite Managers and Board Members from other Planned Communities within 15 miles of Masthope to an introductory luncheon. This could expand to regular meetings to share ideas, challenges and solutions and would serve as a means of introducing the Summit Bar and Restaurant to neighboring communities, who might not be familiar with them.
- Consider offering promotions as a means of encouraging outside usage of those amenities available for use by the public.
- Target advertisements of the Summit Bar and Restaurant, as well as our other open-to-the-public amenities to our neighboring communities.

Accomplishments

The Summit Bar and Restaurant offers the Fawn Lake Community members a discount one night a week.

Prior to the opening of Ski Big Bear, neighboring community directors and managers are invited to the Summit for an annual luncheon.

Land/Property Inventory and Use

The Association holds title to a substantial amount of unimproved property within the Masthope Community. It is important to the long-term planning process to develop a comprehensive inventory of that property and to assess the potential use for that property.

Although the Association has limited financial resources for the purchase of additional land, it is possible that there will be opportunities to acquire properties that would enhance the amenities, protect the Association's environment or offer additional benefits to our Property Owners. The Association should be aware of and responsibly consider any such opportunities.

Recommended Action

- Develop a comprehensive inventory of all unimproved properties owned by the Association.
- Assess the potential future use of these properties in five categories:
 1. Required in the future for potential expansion of current amenities
 2. Required in the future for potential addition of amenities
 3. Required in the future as open space
 4. Required in the future as buffer land
 5. Make available for sale to current Property Owners and/or the public.
- Monitor closely the condition, use and availability of properties nearby or bordering Masthope and evaluate the cost, financing and potential benefits of acquiring them.

Accomplishments

Masthope now has a complete list of our owned properties.

Over the past few years, our Board of Directors along with Management and the Membership has approved and acquired a number of properties within the Community. Acquisitions include property adjacent to the ski slopes and at the entrance to the Community. Additional properties are being sought after which may be adjacent to other amenities.

Masthope often offers Property Owners an opportunity to purchase lots adjacent to their lots through our Adjacent Lot Program.

Community Governance and Management

In order to continue to be successful as a Planned Community, Masthope must have a Board of Directors and Committee system led by competent and caring volunteer Property Owners and a Management Team up to the challenging task of operating the Community.

Recommended Action

- Continue to ensure that the Manager/Management Team are capable of successfully managing the Community in the short and long term. Ensure that there will be a strong Management presence during each of the four seasons, particularly during the summer and winter seasons.
- Reach out to the Membership and seek input as to whether Members would be willing to act as a consultant, professional ear, trainer, etc. Request them to define their areas of expertise. Develop a database of this information for future reference.
- Place additional importance on Committees and make them more effective by communicating clearly the responsibilities and mission of each Committee. Provide all Committees with easy access to the information they need to accomplish their tasks. Increase the level of communication, interaction and involvement between the Committees and Board of Directors. View Committees as partners with the Board.
- Establish the Strategic Planning Committee as a standing committee. Develop a mission for the Committee including list of tasks and deadlines for completion
- Develop a Board of Directors Manual
- Establish a Board of Directors Orientation Program for all Board Members at the start of their tenure.

Accomplishments

The Strategic Planning Committee is now a *Standing Committee*.

As part of the 2016 Strategic Planning Committee Survey, members were asked to list any specific skills they may have and if they were interested in volunteering for Masthope projects, events or committees. This information is now on-file.

A Board of Directors Orientation Program draft has been completed and under review by the SPC

The Board of Directors has completed their Standard Operating Procedures, as did the Appeals Committee and our Budget Committee.

Westcolang Lake

Westcolang Lake is an amenity which provides Masthope a variety of summer activities including swimming, boating, fishing and more. With this comes a level of risks which is challenging to manage. Some of those challenges include the growing number of motorized watercraft, the increase in Masthope Property Owners, guests and renters utilizing the lake, the overall health of the lake, uncontrolled vegetation growth and more. Compounding the challenges is the fact that Westcolang Lake is shared by two other entities: Fawn Lake and the Village community.

Masthope needs to take the lead to drive the establishment of a legal and recognized governing structure for the ownership and use of Westcolang Lake, which would include a uniform set of rules and regulations dealing with lake safety as well as a means of enforcement.

Recommended Action

Budget money to support this goal

Retain an attorney, if necessary, to drive the process

Commission a title search to determine the actual ownership of Westcolang Lake

Approach Fawn Lake to get their buy-in to the process

Approach the property owners that live in the village area to get representatives of their group to participate in the process

Attempt to establish a governing structure for the ownership and operation of Westcolang Lake

Develop means of enforcing a uniform set of rules and regulations dealing with lake safety

Develop a long term plan to deal with the milfoil threat to our lake

Accomplishments

The Westcolang Lake Association consists of representatives of Masthope, Fawn Lake and the Village and meet on a regular basis to discuss a wide array of lake issues.

Fawn Lake is looking to Masthope to take the lead on numerous issues.

A title search was performed on the lake, determining ownership and control.

Lawful vegetation control is now performed on a regular / as-needed basis.

Appendix A

Masthope Strategic Planning Process

When creating a Strategic Plan, one of the first things needed was an understanding of our community's strengths and weaknesses. To do this, the Strategic Planning Committee members utilized a SWOT analysis. This analytical process required the committee members to identify the **Strengths**, **Weaknesses**, **Opportunities** and **Threats** associated with each major *recommended action*. It was interesting to find that some of our greatest strengths also brought some of our biggest challenges. Below we list some of those amenities and strengths that make Masthope such a special community.

Strengths

Amenity Package (Property Owners Only)

- Court Sports
- Fitness Center
- Lake
- Lodge
- Playgrounds
- River and River Park
- Horse Stables
- Mini Golf
- Dog Park
- Bocce Court
- Shuffle Board Court
- Pool
- Game / Arcade Room
- Perrier Course

Amenity Package (Business Component/Available to Public)

- Masthope Marketplace
- Ski Big Bear Ski Area
- Summit Bar and Restaurant
- Tiki Bar

Assets

- Proactive Board
- Property Owners
- Environmental and Architectural Controls
- Generator at Lodge/Red Cross Shelter
- Lots Owned by Association
- Maintenance Department
- In-house Security Department
- Pristine and uncrowned areas
- Utility Owned Sewer/ Water (versus individual systems)
- Location
- Green Space
- Management Team
- Stable Real Estate Values
- Recreation Activities Program
- Community Waste Removal
- Active Committee System
- Reasonable real estate taxes

Challenges

Access Control Points at Amenities

Amenity ID Program

ATV, UTV and Golf Cart Usage

Cash Controls

Committees (need more property owners involved and better guidance from the Board)

Communication (while improvements have been made, more is still need improvement)

Meeting the Needs of Full Time and Part Time Residents

Better Balance and Management needed of Wildlife (deer, bear, etc.)

Drainage System (Control flooding and road deterioration from storm waters)

Economy (sharp declines may have an impact on property owner's ability to pay dues)

Lake (overall health and ability to accommodate increased watercraft and visitors)

Location of Compactor (current location is convenient but not attractive)

Location of Maintenance Facility (relocation would free up valuable amenity space)

Multiple Sets of Covenants (changing views as to how many sets of Covenants we have)

Rental Program (Rules and benefits for Renters not the same as for Property Owners)

Restaurant Approach Lighting (pathways need improved lighting)

Restaurant Operation (hiring, training and retaining qualified staff is often challenging)

Restaurant Parking (considered by some to be too far from Restaurant)

Rumor Mill

Staffing (often competing with neighboring communities for skilled, qualified staff)

Township and State Control of Access Roads (Road conditions poor but out of our control)

Transition if Current Management Team Leaves (No formal contingency plan in place)

Appendix B

Masthope Long Range Facilities Master Plan

Amenities with a Business Component (open to the public)

- Explore options for closer parking for the restaurant
- Consider developing a pick-up area for takeout for the restaurant
- Install better lighting for paths to restaurant
- Consider developing a covered walkway from parking to restaurant
- Consider developing an overall plan for the Top of the Mountain Amenity Area

Lake

- Acquire additional land
- Consider developing additional beach and lake access
- Consider developing additional parking (listed under “Accomplishments” – page 6)
- Consider reconfiguring the boat ramp area to maximize space (listed under “Accomplishments” – page 6)

Security

- Consider the installation of security cameras at all amenity areas
- Consider the installation of security cameras at all entrances to the Community

Pool Complex

- Consider expansion of seating areas (listed under “Accomplishments” – page 6)
- Investigate larger/expanded pool or an additional pool and water related facilities for this location

Maintenance

- Consider relocation of all but ski area maintenance to provide additional amenities at the top of the mountain.
- Consider relocating the compactor

Administration

- Consider increasing the size of the POC Office (listed under “Accomplishments” – p. 6)
- Improve access control at all amenities
- Explore improvements in the Community’s use of technology, particularly software.

New/improved Recreation

- Consider a large outdoor pavilion that can be flooded for ice skating in the winter

General

- Improve community drainage system
- Improve equestrian trail system (listed under “Accomplishments” – page 6)
- Consider cross country skiing and snow shoe trails
- Develop an extensive contingency plan should current Management team not be able to continue in their current role

Other Considerations

- Batting cages
- Additional outdoor tennis courts
- Additional outdoor basketball courts
- Handball Racquetball courts
- Laser Tag Equipment
- Zip Line
- Ropes Course
- Paintball Facility
- Skateboard Park
- Climbing Wall
- Storage for watercraft, trailers, etc.