

Advocates Urge Action To Fill Vacant Adirondack Park Agency Board Seats

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Adirondack Park Agency sign in front of Ray Brook headquarters. Photo by Pat Bradley/WAMC

Earlier this month, the acting chair of the Adirondack Park Agency resigned. The move concerns advocates who say it's a symptom of a weakening board that leads the park's land use planning.

The [Adirondack Park Agency Board](#) consists of 11 members. Eight are appointed by the governor of New York and three by agency commissioners. Five live inside the park and three outside. The remaining three are agency designees.

In early May, Acting Chair Karen Feldman resigned. She became the board's leader in July 2018 but was serving on an expired term. Her departure leaves the agency with three agency representatives and five appointees. Three appointees are serving on expired terms and another ends on June 30th. Three seats are vacant.

Adirondack advocacy groups want Governor Andrew Cuomo to take action before the legislative session ends in mid-June and appoint commissioners or extend terms. Adirondack Wild: Friends of the Forest Preserve Managing Partner David Gibson writes the APA is rudderless. "This is a serious, serious situation. When you have someone like Karen Feldman who is making a great effort to sit down with all stakeholders and do her level best to maintain the independence of the APA as the long range planning body for the park and she has to resign that should be sending a signal to the Governor that this is serious."

Protect the Adirondacks Executive Director Peter Bauer says Gov. Cuomo needs to take management of the Park Agency more seriously. "This governor has simply not invested the leadership or the state budgets or a vision for how this agency should operate in the park."

Bauer says that's illustrated by the status of the board in the wake of Acting Chair Feldman's resignation. "There are now three vacancies. The last two chairs, the chair and the acting chair, have both resigned inside of a year and remaining board members are serving even though their terms have expired. So the governor has really failed in his management of the Adirondack Park Agency and it's high time that the Governor look seriously at the needs of the Adirondack Park Agency and starts to take management of the Adirondack Park much more seriously."

While the advocates are focused on the repercussions of Feldman's departure, the Adirondack Explorer reports she decided to resign because

although she was doing the chair's work she was not receiving the chair's salary. Again David Gibson: "The APA chair in my experience does a lot of outreach and a lot of work for the Park and for the agency. So she was appointed acting chair she should have received the chair's salary or the stipend that the chair has been receiving since the late 1980's."

Adirondack Park Local Government Review Board Executive Director Gerry Delaney isn't worried about the Adirondack Park Agency board, noting similar gaps have occurred in the past. "It's disappointing that Karen resigned. We would like to see the governor get some appointments done. I know there's been talk of it. And with these empty seats and the expired terms it really would benefit the Adirondacks to have that board a little bit closer to a full slate of appointees than it is today. I mean there's nothing controversial on the horizon that I'm aware of. But I would anticipate by the end of session that the governor is going to have nominations move forward if I was to guess."

Former acting chair Karen Feldman was not available for comment.