



Meeting Minutes

Stewardship Councilors in Attendance: *Chairman, Henry Lee, Julian Agyeman, Elisa Campbell, Michael Dutton, Frank Frey, Laura Johnson, John Natoli and Daniel Wolf* **Excused:** Richard Cross, Christina Crowley, Whitney Hatch, James Van Dyke

DCR Staff in Attendance: *Commissioner Rick Sullivan, Lisa Bishop, Dave Celino, Stuart Conner, Stephanie Cooper, Jim Comeau, Conrad Crawford, Jeff Daley, Gary Davis, Renee Dufour, Priscilla Geigis, Vanessa Johnson, Joe Rotondo, Brian Shanahan, Patti Vantine, and Suzanne Wilson*

Public Attendees: Bill Boles, Friends of Wompatuck/NEMBA – Al Lima, Citizen

Chairman Henry Lee called the meeting to order at 1:13 p.m.

- Chairman Lee rearranged the agenda and introduced Brian Shanahan, Southeast Regional Director, to present the overview of the region.

Southeast Region Background – Brian Shanahan, Southeast Regional Director

Brian Shanahan presented to the Council the background of the Southeast Region.

- The Southeast Region is comprised of 45,206 acres that include six indoor skating rinks, six state parks, three major monuments, four beaches, one major bicycle trail, one Estuarine Research Reserve, three State Reservations, seven State Forests, one Heritage Park, three urban swimming pools, 19 Forest Fire Towers, one Historic Schooner, and one Splash Pad.
- The infrastructure consists of 1,185 camping sites, 108 miles of paved road, ten boat ramps, 337 miles of unpaved road, 152 miles of trails, 416,774 square feet of buildings, 188 buildings, nine swimming areas, 178 vehicles and major pieces of equipment.
- The Southeast region consists of the Cape Cod and South Coast District.

Commissioner's Report - Commissioner Rick Sullivan

Commissioner Sullivan informed the Council on/of the following matters:

- Lakes and Ponds Program began enforcement of the new zebra mussel and boat wash program in the Berkshires. We have opened a boat wash station in the town of Stockbridge to handle the Berkshire lakes. Boats to be used in Quabbin are being washed in Orange or Athol. We have had positive response for this effort at the Quabbin from the fisherman, boat owners and the Lake Owners Association.
- We have restricted access to Walden Pond due to this season's heavy spring rains, which have caused water levels to rise several feet above normal, covering beach areas and trails. Flooded trails, including sections of the popular Pond Path that circles the pond, will be closed to protect natural resources and public safety, and signage will alert park visitors to the restrictions and alternative paths. Press, Friends Groups, and neighbors have been supportive of this development.
- Our official start of the season has begun; it is anticipated that this year will be very active due to people staying close to home and the State of New York closing 44 of their state parks. This is great for our tourism; however it will increase the pressure on our park staff.
- Our pool schedule will be a nine week season; we worked closely with the cities and towns to align the scheduling with their school calendar. Pools will open one week after school dismissal and close one week prior to the return of school. We did change some management protocols by sending employees home on rainy days and other staffing levels. This will not change public safety and it will help the flexibility to have a longer season.
- Following up on an inquiry from Councilor Elisa Campbell regarding Broadband Technology, an e-mail was sent explaining DCR's role and the grant application with MTC in terms of broadband. Commissioner Sullivan will be happy to answer any questions concerning this issue after the meeting.

- Invitations to public events, unfortunately, are not scheduled until a day or two before an event from the Governor/Secretary's office; therefore it is difficult to forward these invitations sooner to the Council. We will make every effort to have the Council receive an invitation as soon as it is official.
- The Governor and the Secretary will be attending the Lynn/Nahant Ward Bathhouse and Nahant Causeway Ribbon Cutting on Monday, June 7 at 12:15 p.m. Apologies for the short notice, however the Council is invited to attend. There is much excitement about this project; it represents a \$20m investment in the Causeway and a \$600k investment in the bathhouse. A public meeting was held June 2nd and was very well attended; the town hall was at capacity.
- The Commissioner thanked Dave Celino, Chief of Fire Services, and his staff for the endless hours of work they have performed over the past months for the removal of trees, responding to ice storms, flooding, wind storms and fire event emergencies. DCR responds quickly and professionally and it does not go unnoticed.
- In response to press regarding "casinos" in Fall River's bio-reserve land, it is true that DCR does have a partnership and deeds have transferred. This information is public record and it will be a legislative process.
- In regards to the Middlesex Fells, the following is a brief overview of how we historically got to this point.
 - Issues surrounding the Middlesex Fells began over a year ago when NEMBA came forward and suggested having a Park Serve Project where they would use a trail that had not been previously designated for use of mountain biking, in addition, they would do trail work in the Dark Hollow section.
 - As with all projects, DCR began a public process with all the stakeholders to discuss opinions and how we could accomplish the best management of the natural resources. DCR did hold many public meetings, some with attendance exceeding 200 citizens.
 - DCR will put together an action plan, possibly a demonstration project, and we will move forward continuing to engage our partners and stakeholders. As we are well aware, a full blown RMP is a relatively slow process. Therefore, we will be looking at a model and a new approach for this process, possibly assigning outside contracting, to help speed up the process. Any work on an RMP is the role of this Stewardship body and committee.
 - In the meantime, DCR promises to have more enforcement by adding two additional rangers this season that will focus on this issue. This will create public trust that DCR can enforce its rules.
 - Spider trails need to be addressed, in addition to the Dark Hollow trail.
 - We are exploring the creation of "off leash" dog areas; this is a work in progress that will require much more public discussions.
 - Permitting issues need to be addressed as well as a master plan for the area. This will follow the template of the Blue Hills and Horseneck Beach. Joe Orfant indicated this will be an eight month process.
 - Chairman Henry Lee inquired about the number of public comments that have been received regarding this issue. The RMP will be available for circulation on March, 2011 and acted upon at the April Stewardship meeting. Chairman Henry Lee opened the Board for any comments. After a lengthy conversation and questions, Commissioner Sullivan informed the Council of the following:
 - Presently the largest issue is to come to an agreement as to what happens to any kind of change to a trail. The draft trail work took two miles of trail off-line – these are trails that are already there, however not designated. If we work closely with those trails that are off-line, work with signage, prove that we can execute enforcement and create a better environment; hopefully we can demonstrate what people find acceptable. The plan is to engage in enforcement, not by means of writing tickets, but to make the public aware that the rangers will approach them and ask them to leave and go to the appropriate location. This enforcement is not only for the Fells, it is for all the parks. The RMP for the Fells was 50% complete, however the change is to take these spider trails off-line and create the opportunity in the Dark Hollow area, it was apparent that much more planning was needed. Feasibility studies for any capital project are paid out of the capital budget.

Committee Updates

Finance Committee

Budget Update – Patti Vantine, Director of Administration and Finance

Patti Vantine informed the Council on/of the following matters:

- The senate budget has been forwarded to A and F through the Secretary's office with amendments to the budget; however it did not go any further.
- The bottom numbers for FY'11 have not changed and we are still waiting for the final number.
- Voluntary retirement rolls forward into FY'11, that will help our budget, however they cannot be back-filled.
- As of today, revenue numbers have not been posted, they will be sent to you under separate cover. However a report was received for mid-month May, it highlights "while cautioning that it was impossible to attribute how much collection activity this spring is affected by an extended filing tax deadline, receipts over the first half of the month totaled \$820m, +\$211m from the same period a year ago. The benchmark for May called for \$1.38b in taxes, or an increase of \$101m over May, 2009."
- April has had the largest job growth in 17 years; hoping it translates into a State upswing.
- There has been 54 voluntary retirements that represent 1,400 years of service.
 - Commissioner Sullivan informed the Council that even though we have wide spread support from our legislators, and it is important with what we do, our agency is not too small to experience more budget cuts. In response to the potential impacts of reduction in expected contingent funds from the federal government for Medicare, Commissioner Sullivan explained to the Council that DCR's share of this reduction of the state budget will be more than \$2m and will have severe impacts.

Comments from Chairman, Henry Lee

The following are excerpts from Chairman Lee's memo to the Council:

- We face a challenging year ahead with the implementation of the Forest Vision report, a new accelerated RMP process (hopefully), the continued fiscal constraints facing DCR, and a statutory mandate that remains unclear. In the coming months, I would like to lay out a schedule for addressing these issues, so that both the committees and the DCR staff have the ability to prepare us for meaningful discussions at our meetings.
- Given the workload, it is increasingly important that we share the burden. Councilor Laura Johnson agreed to chair the Planning and Policy Committee, Councilor Whitney Hatch agreed to continue and chair the Finance Committee, and Councilor Michael Dutton agreed to chair a newly created committee on the future role of the Stewardship Council.
 - Let me say a few words about the committee on the future of the Stewardship Council. When the legislation was passed establishing this body, there was not much clarity on the role of the Council. There is no single section in the legislation in which this role is clearly described. Instead the law is marbled with an uncoordinated set of responsibilities with some emphasis on a RMP process that would review all DCR properties in a short amount of time. Today the RMP process has sputtered and the agency's budget has plummeted. Thus it is worth asking the question, if the Commonwealth was starting from scratch, what role should a Council such as ours play? If we can get an agreement on this question, I am prepared to try and convince the executive and legislative branches to put this new role into legislation.
- Since much of the work will be done in committees, it is important that all members be part of one of our committees. I am requesting that a list be submitted at our July meeting.
- I am also concerned about the fiscal problems facing DCR, which may not be a short-run phenomenon. I am hiring a research assistant this summer on Harvard's dime to look at how this problem is being handled by other states and by the National Park Service. My hope is that I can ask the three committee heads to help me structure a discussion of this topic at one of our fall meetings.

Policy and Planning Committee

Resource Management Planning – Councilor Laura Johnson

- Councilor Laura Johnson thanked the Council for the honor to serve as Chair on the Policy and Planning Committee.

- The Policy and Planning Committee has not recently met and welcomes any new Councilors who would like to join the committee. There is a robust agenda; among other things: the discussion concerning RMP's in specific and general, the Forest Vision follow-up work and other issues that we need to engage upon.
- OHV legislation went through the Senate and is now in the House Ways and Means. It will be helpful for the Councilors to let their Representatives know that they are in support of this bill, and Chairman Lee will write a letter to the Chairman of House Ways and Means, Charlie Murphy, indicating the support from the Stewardship Council.
 - A copy of "Beacon Hill Weekly Roundup – 6/2" action alert letter from Mass Audubon was distributed.

Special Business

Eminent Domain Taking of Mattapan Square Acquisition – Jim Comeau, Land Protection Planner

- Jim Comeau proposed to the Council that DCR intends to acquire by eminent domain, preferably through a consensual taking, a parcel of land in the City of Boston, supposedly owned by Suffolk & Norfolk, LLC, and described as follows: The real property with a street address of 1674-1680 Blue Hill Avenue in the City of Boston, being all of the land described in a deed, dated February 19, 2009, from 1674 Watergate, LLC to Suffolk & Norfolk, LLC, and recorded in the Suffolk District Registry of Deeds in Book 44566, Page 329 (the "Property").
- Once protected and restored, the property will act as gateway to the Neponset River Reservation for an under-served urban population.
- DCR asked those Councilors who approve of the friendly taking to vote by roll call and sign the approval document.
 - Roll call motion of each present Councilor to approve the acquisition to acquire eminent domain of the real property with a street address of 1674-1680 Blue Hill Avenue in the City of Boston, being all of the land described in a deed, dated February 19, 2009, from 1674 Watergate, LLC to Suffolk & Norfolk, LLC, and recorded in the Suffolk District Registry of Deeds in Book 44566, Page 329 (the "Property"); The Stewardship Council hereby concurs in and approves of the Department's taking of the Property by eminent domain upon terms and conditions deemed acceptable to the Commissioner. All in favor, motion carried.

Controlled Burns - David Celino, Chief Fire Warden

Dave Celino presented to the Council Forest Fire Control and Forestry Hazard Fuels Management 2010.

- Dave Celino explained to the Council that the Bureau of Forest Fire Control is very excited about the long awaited Hazardous Fuels Mitigation and a Prescribed Fire Program. This program has been funded through the ARRA grants; \$1.974m as a Partnership with The Nature Conservancy for the duration of two years.
- The Mass Hazardous Fuels Mitigation and Ecosystem Restoration Project will consist of Wildland Fire Training, prescribed fire plans of DCR and Partnership lands, will provide six firewise community programs, provide 20 fire prevention programs (Smoke the Bear), 400 acres of prescribed fire treatment and 600 acres of mechanical fuels treatment.
- The objectives for the Hazard Fuels Management Plan are the Hazard Fuels Reduction, the Ecosystem Restoration and Fire Training.
 - With the exclusion of fire from the environment, vegetation/fuels have reached very high to extreme levels.
 - Realizing the importance and need for fuel reduction, DCR has taken a pro-active approach to this very important issue.
 - Prescribed fire, mechanized mowing, and removal of dead and dying vegetation are just a few methods DCR has used to mitigate this problem.
- Accomplishments to date include 13 public education programs that consist of Firefighter training, fire prevention and firewise and urban interface programs. Other accomplishments include the Hazard Fuel Mitigation Projects that consists of 155 acres burned on State lands and 173 acres burned on Partnership lands.

Approval of Minutes

- Motion by Councilor Elisa Campbell, seconded by Councilor Frank Frey to accept the May, 2010 minutes. All in favor, motion carried.

New Business

- No New Business

Public Comment

The following constituents expressed their opinions/issues/matters to the Council:

Bill Boles, Friends of Wompatuck/NEMBA

- Mr. Boles addressed the remarks to the ongoing process in the Middlesex Fells stating that NEMBA supports DCR's efforts and they recognize and appreciate the tremendous amount of effort that has been put into this process. NEMBA also agrees that DCR should move forward with simple changes and fixes that can be done before a full RMP is written. They support the quick completion of the RMP for the Middlesex Fells; however they are disappointed over the continued delay tactics of some groups that only seem to serve to allow conditions in the Fells to worsen.
- Mr. Boles asked if there has there been any progress with the opening of the Rail Trail at Wompatuck State Park.
 - Commissioner Sullivan informed the Council that DCR is seeking funds to possibly fence and sign around the buildings to deter safety hazards. A safety issue is the only reason why the trail is not open.

Closing Comment

- No Closing Comments

Meeting Schedule

- Next meeting will be held Thursday, July 1 at Regional Headquarters in Pittsfield. (Regional Meeting)

Motion to adjourn by Councilor Julian Agyeman, seconded by Councilor John Natoli at 3:00 p.m. All in favor, motion carried.