



**Meeting Minutes**

**Stewardship Councilors in Attendance:** Chairman Whitney Hatch, Elisa Campbell, Heather Clish, Wayne Klockner, Walter Bickford, Michele Hanss, James Van Dyke, Dennis Smith

**DCR Staff in Attendance:** Priscilla Geigis, Joe Rotondo, Stephen Doody, Kevin O'Shea, Amanda Lewis, Lauren Monahan, Andy Backman

**Public Attendees:** Bill Boles, NEMBA; a member from Coldbrook Snowmobile Club

**Attachments:** RMPs Currently Underway, Recreational Trails Program Presentation, November 2015 and January 2016 minutes, Council Visits Observations

**Chairman Hatch called the meeting to order at 12:10 p.m.**

- Chairman Hatch welcomed the Council and reviewed the agenda.

**Commissioner's Report – Priscilla Geigis**

*Priscilla Geigis informed the Council on/of the following matters:*

- Rink RFPs would be closing shortly.
- DCR is working to become long-term partners with Walden Woods.
- In addition to improvements at the Cass Complex, DCR has named Evan Hines as the new Director.
- Myles Standish and Harold Parker State Forests are celebrating centennials this year.
- David Mugar and Angelo Tilas both retiring after this year's July 4<sup>th</sup> celebration, DCR is working to ensure a smooth transition.
- Commissioner Roy has met with several groups hoping to increase partnerships including: the Esplanade Association, Landmarks Orchestra, State Police, the Charles River Watershed Association, and Michael Creasey of Boston NPS.
- Commissioner Roy visited the Sudbury Reservoir to discuss the land management plan with legislators and residents.
- Supervisor's Academy is planned for April 11<sup>th</sup> and 12<sup>th</sup> and afterwards a video will be put together which can hopefully be shown at a future Stewardship Council meeting.
- Morrissey Boulevard public meeting was held recently.
- DCR has awarded several Urban and Challenge Forestry grants.
- COOP exercise is planned for April 5<sup>th</sup> in which we will simulate how the agency will run if our main office is deemed unsuitable for work.
- We continue to make great progress hiring and training lifeguards for the summer.
- Priscilla Geigis recently met with Wentworth students who are helping design a new cabin for our campground program.

- Priscilla Geigis is continuing to work on the Parks Mather toolkit for national parks across the country.
- Parkserve Day April 30<sup>th</sup> and a number of clean-up events will be taking place across the state at our parks.
- DCR will present our Outdoor Kitchen program at the Boston Public Market on April 21<sup>st</sup> and we continue to look for other forums for this presentation.

**Councilor Comments:**

- Can we receive an update on eminent domain proceeding of Otis State Forest?
  - o DCR is committed to defending the protections given to state land in Article 97.
- Council applauds Commissioner Roy to proactively reach out to partners to set up meetings and start discussions.
- Community Rowing is very pleased with the Charles River dredging project.

**Committee Updates**

***Policy and Planning Committee, Chairwoman Elisa Campbell***

*Chairwoman Campbell informed the Council on/of the following matters:*

- *Continuing to talk about ways to continue RMPs even with staff shortages. Looking forward to meeting with Commissioner Roy at next month's Policy Committee meeting to discuss.*
- *DCR oftentimes doesn't have the appropriate resources to meet legal mandates.*

***Finance Committee, Councilor Heather Clish:***

*Chairwoman Clish informed the Council on/of the following matters:*

- *Budget to be released from house next Wednesday. We are ready to offer amendments which are due at noon on Friday.*
- *After spring break legislators will come back and debate the budget.*
  - o *Sean Pierce has sent our follow up letters regarding the Curatorship legislation as the process has progressed.*

**Special Business**

***Amanda Lewis, Recreational Trails Program***

- Do you coordinate some of these trails with regional planning commissions?
  - o This type of coordination occurs before RTP comes into play. But we do have members of planning commissions on our Commonwealth Connections and Trails Coalition.
- Do you get directly involved with conflicts between different types of trail users?
  - o In reviewing applications, the board asks for letters of support from the community, so it does become part of the application and review process.
- What percentage of federal funding would the DCR receive in the past?
  - o DCR used to receive 50%, and the other half would go into pool of un-obligated funds. Some of these un-obligated funds are lapsing funds, so RTP has currently been receiving these extra funds in addition to what they are appropriated annually.

- Could the Commissioner discuss this with MassDOT?
  - o Yes, they have regular meetings as well.
  - o Massachusetts is one of the few states that has funding administered by transportation agency.
- Is there a distribution plan throughout the state?
  - o MARTAB and DCR reviews grants, scoring them based on set criteria. Then there is a review meeting, in which we strive to see funding spread out geographically and demographically in coordination with those scores.
- How do funding DCR staff projects work?
  - o Individual DCR staff can submit a grant application, and in every state RTP is allowed to award funding to state projects.
- Do you have set objectives or themes in a conference?
  - o We have a very active trails community, but the goal is to get everyone together and to exchange best practices of stewardship, marketing, utilizing volunteers, etc. The conference provides training based on what the attendees want to learn.
- Maintenance may be a major problem on some trails. How RTP goes about upkeep and maintenance?
  - o The number of maintenance projects submitted and chosen varies from year to year. It is on the community level that they can apply for a maintenance project if deemed necessary.
- How much money was available last year?
  - o \$1.3 million last year and \$1.1 million this year. RTP also had more applications last year.
- How much funding tends to go to DCR projects?
  - o Approximately 10%. DCR manages several ATV use trails, and because motorized trails are a less competitive category, we tend to award these to DCR. A higher percentage is awarded to friends groups trying to do work on DCR lands.
- Perhaps park superintendents are discouraged in submitting applications?
  - o They should be encouraged, the trouble is time, computers etc. Volunteers or friends groups are helpful in this.

### **Other Business**

#### **Follow-up to invasives discussion -**

- Following the Gardner meeting, the Nature Conservancy held a conference in which DCR staff was present. The hope is that this meeting will continue annually. Looking forward to continued conversation with Commissioner Roy.

#### **Councilor Parks**

- Council reviewed Chairman Hatch's draft of observations.
- Councilor Hatch and Hanss will narrow down the list and come back to the group with a narrower list so the conversation can proceed.
- It's clear the major solutions to these problems involve financial resources.
- However, there may be some management issues that can be addressed by senior staff. Looking forward to a meeting with the Commissioner in the future to discuss solutions.

- How is the stop-gap analysis coming? We would set up basic performance standards at different classifications of parks and conduct an analysis depicting the necessary financial and human resources to meet this basic standard. This would show how DCR's budget is under-funded.
  - o Chairman Hatch will follow-up on this. We would need funding to bring in outside consultants to do the study, as the DCR shouldn't be the center of the study but should be one of several participants.
- Do other states have operating standards?
  - o Connecticut has the best example.
- The other thing we aren't capturing the passion of staff who are working the equivalent of several staffers. So when you lose a staff member, it is hard to accurately measure the loss.

### **Approval of Minutes**

- Motion by Councilor Campbell, seconded by Councilor Klockner and Councilor Clish to accept the November, 2015 and January 2016 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, NEMBA – Also a member of MARTAB

- Agrees that more money should be spent on maintenance, but we don't really get that many applications for maintenance projects.
- FASTACT – a state can opt-out of RTP program each year. Connecticut has opted out of the program. Rhode Island received the least amount of funding and Maine the most out of the New England states.
- Trail trainings, maintenance, on the ground training happens every year at the conferences.
- As an example of a friends group applying on behalf of a park, the Friends of Wompatuck has applied for funding and received it a number of times.
- Could DCR advocate for the \$5 million in the Environmental Bond bill that is sitting in limbo?

### **Closing Comment**

### **Meeting Schedule**

Next meeting will be held on Thursday, May 5<sup>th</sup> at Waquoit Bay Reserve.

*Chairman Hatch adjourned the meeting at 2:08 p.m.*