



Meeting Minutes

**Stewardship Councilors in Attendance:** Chairman Whitney Hatch, Elisa Campbell, Heather Clish, Wayne Klockner, Walter Bickford, Michele Hanss, Antonia Pollak

**DCR Staff in Attendance:** Commissioner Roy, Joe Rotondo, Stephen Doody, Dave Celino, Kevin O'Shea, Jonathan Yeo, Anne Carroll, Rebecca Quinones, Lauren Monahan, Andy Backman, Nick Connors

**Public Attendees:** None

**Attachments:** RMPs Currently Underway, Stewardship Council Meeting Locations 2016, Councilor Park Visits Summary, Legislative Amendment Draft, Fire Management Presentation, Invasive Species Management Presentation

Chairman Hatch called the meeting to order at 12:03 p.m.

- Chairman Hatch welcomed the Council and reviewed the agenda.

Commissioner's Report – Commissioner Roy

*Commissioner Roy informed the Council on/of the following matters:*

- Reviewed three goals and five priorities, once finalized will be published and expressed to staff.
  1. Collaboration internally and externally.
  2. Enhance culture of service, meaning interaction with users but also within our organization.
  3. Increasing support for the agency – via both taxpayers and partnerships. Also means that we should look at our deferred maintenance issue. We also need to do a better job of collecting metrics and showing the public what we do with the little we have to make a better case for ourselves.

Priorities -

1. Access, meaning enhancing participation – universal access and getting more people outdoors.
2. Education – Creating opportunities for learning at DCR facilities in addition to using the outdoors to learn about ourselves.
3. Efficiency – Resource conservation, waste reduction, energy efficiency.
4. Enjoyment
5. Safety and Security – Security of people and events, as well as water and dam safety.

#### Updates:

- 25<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of First Day Hikes – 2800 participants across 11 parks
- DCR is now responsible for snow making and grooming of trails at Leo J. Martin.
- Met with Watershed Protection at Wachusett, suggested John Augustus hall as a potential location for COOP if Causeway St. was unavailable.
- Relocating our emergency response operation to a location outside the floodplain.
- Partnerships and bolstering our Friends groups is a big initiative.
- Plan on launching an organized and coordinated invasive species campaign.
- Gave \$750,000 of state money to partnership grants – much of which went to Mystic and Charles River regarding aquatic invasives.
- Reg. Reform –
  - o 5 listening sessions in October which were sparsely attended. Public requested better enforcement of ATV's on watershed land, but were appreciative of aquatic nuisance control.
  - o Comments on deer hunt: 1 in favor and 11 opposed. We will have a public hearing where opposition can be heard in preparation for next year.
    - It would be interesting to compare the Crane's Beach deer hunt to the Blue Hills deer hunt.
  - o Next steps: Putting some packages together – Forester licensing would like to extend to 3 years. Commissioner Roy asked Council if there are any regulations they would like to see.

#### Councilor Comments:

- Only addition to list of goals would be the vulnerability of resources due to climate change, which could be categorized under safety.
- Collaboration with FWE is of great importance.
- Staffing at state parks is still of major concern.
  - Commissioner Roy agreed, noting the amount of territory that is staffed by such few people – it is a safety issue.
- Displaying park management and park service to the public is integral in garnishing support. White Mountain Visitor uses certain tools to gather data on users. *Metrics and gathering data to be discussed further in the future.*
- It was suggested that the Stewardship Council help Commissioner Roy review and measure progress in the coming months and years.

#### Committee Updates

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

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

- Paul Jahnige who is trails director will be attending meeting on Feb 3<sup>rd</sup> at Purgatory Chasm to review trails draft plan for October Mountain. Public meeting sometime after that.
- Norm Orrall has submitted recommendation for backfill of resource management position. I am fearful the recent 9c cuts may have eliminated this possibility.
  - o Commissioner: The only 9c cuts were a trimming back of our budget for fuel.

**Finance Committee, Chairwoman Heather Clish:**

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

- Distributed draft of Council's Letter to Chairs of Ways and Means Committee regarding the Stewardship Council's priorities. With ERIP, 77 positions were lost and our request would get us halfway back.
- We would like to request that DCR could retain 50% of what we collect above the cap. But we do understand from finance staff that may not be a whole lot.
- We requested \$250,000 for gap analysis to take a look at what is the new baseline of what's needed.
- Motion to give Heather Clish and Whitney Hatch editorial privileges of the letter. Comments should be submitted by the end of next week. *Motion by Councilor Klockner, Councilor Campbell seconded. All in favor.*

**Special Business**

***Fire Management Update, Dave Celino, Chief Fire Warden***

**Councilor Comments:**

- Is it true that in four hours the whole island of Nantucket could go up in flames because they don't have the ability to harness the support network that they need?
  - Yes, the time frame is definitely possible. DCR is one of the founding members of Northeast Fire Protection Commission, meaning that under mutual aid agreements Canadian planes could arrive within 90 minutes.
- The fire crew that goes out west – is that largely covered by federal money?
  - Most of it is. Town firefighters become federally employed and state employees are reimbursed.
- There is a rumor that UMass is interested in selling their part of Mt. Toby. We have a tower and a road.
  - That is a key tower but we will look into that.
- If we are one of the only tower programs in the country, where are the others?
  - New Jersey and New Hampshire still do, some moved to aviation but some wish they never gave up the towers.

***Budget Overview, Commissioner Roy***

- Things are looking flat from FY16 to FY17. The state budget is in tough shape with revenue, but looks like level funding (including collective bargaining agreements). That is challenging because of ERIP in FY16. Of the positions that were lost we have only brought back a handful. We hope to fill some of those between now and end of FY16 but we are constrained.
- Retained revenue rate increases from the previous administration were helpful. There were proposed additional reductions in FY17, but state determined that we could close

the gap. So retained revenue is now part of business as usual to meet our budget numbers, which is challenging. The idea that it would provide additional funding for FY17 has not panned out.

- The governor has supported a move towards spending 1% of state budget to environmental agencies.
- In some ways FY17 is an opportunity to establish the metrics we need. We are hopeful that this is a transitional year and that FY18 and beyond will be a return to funding levels.

**Councilor Comments:**

- Retained revenue is largely because of fee increases. Potential for retained revenue doesn't go on forever. Important for governor to know that sources are finite.
- Staffing to collect revenue isn't helpful either, especially if no one is coming in.
  - Yes, but it can be helpful in interacting with visitors.
- Is flat funding including the current year's earmarks?
  - Pre-earmark flatness, I am sure we will get earmarks. Looking at budget stripping out all of the earmarks. The public should know how much is really going to our core mission versus all the other things. Commissioner's focus is on two things: fairness and core mission. We have to get leases and permits up to market so revenue can be used for all park purposes.

***Aquatic Invasive Species, Anne Carroll and Jonathan Yeo, Water Supply Protection***

**Councilor Comments:**

- How has purple loosestrife been treated?
  - We used the weevil beetle, but it wasn't a huge success.
- Are the volunteers community-sourced?
  - Many volunteers are from our friends groups and lake and pond associations. Watershed associations have been great partners.
- Do you feel like you are staying ahead of the game?
  - Depends on the species – we have had huge successes with water chestnut but maintaining that is key. Regarding zebra mussels, we are winning too.
  - Other states have a dedicated funding source through boat registration etc. We can stay ahead of certain things. Last summer Chronicle did a program on lakes and ponds focusing on the Lake Cochituate success story.
- What is the overlap with Fish and Wildlife?
  - Fish and Wildlife is part of the initial group that formed the plan in 2000 and they helped us with the regulations. Environmental impact statement for different techniques was made with Fish and Wildlife. Largely, it is collaborative.

***Invasive Species on DCR Lands, Rebecca Quinones, Inland Ecologist***

### **Councilor Comments:**

- Suggests putting a summit together to organize a plan of action, with MACC, etc.
  - Commissioner: We have a lot of activities within DCR which could be better coordinated if we are all working together.
- Do we have good state regulations on what nurseries can sell?
  - Yes, Mass Invasive Plant Advisory Group was working with nursing industry to get as many on the no-sell list as they could. But, the list is ten years old, definitely worth revisiting. Interstate transfer of firewood should be regulated as well.
  - Commissioner: We may consider in joining the rest of New England in regulating this.
- Jonathan Yeo presented a video of new machine removing an invasive species called autumn olive.
- Some forests have a lot of invasive species and others have none. Highlighting these hotspots may be a way of educating people around the state. The diffuseness of the problem makes our desired outcome challenging.
- New England Wildflower society is trying to take a survey of where we are losing our plants. We could tie in nonprofits and educational institutions into this summit.
- Council to gather thoughts on the Commissioner's plan for a coordinated effort and come back with ideas. The Council can reach out to partners.

### **Other Business**

Council members reviewed legislative amendments.

- Deletion of mandatory Fish and Wildlife meeting is good.
- What about infringement of developments on or near park land? We should be concerned about loss of open space due to encroachment from developers, etc. Does this need a legislative response or administrative response? There is a state law that requires us to review anything within 100 yards of state park.
- Commissioner: When things come before us, we try to participate. Getting involved in all things would be difficult. We have to make sure we know about these developments – looks like a staffing and administrative issue. I could see that smaller developments that wouldn't be under MEPA may fall through the cracks.
- Councilor Clish has invoked that state law in the past regarding the construction of a billboard. It raises an interesting question and it's more a matter of process. She will determine where it is in the state law and we will revisit at next meeting.
- Even if we put it in legislative amendment we can't enforce or regulate it. Permission to move forward with legislative amendments?  
*Councilor Campbell moves support for legislation, Councilor Pollak seconds that. All in favor.*

**Approval of Minutes**

- None, no quorum for December meeting.

**New Business**

- No new business

**Public Comment**

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

**Closing Comment**

**Meeting Schedule**

Next meeting will be held on Friday February 5<sup>th</sup> from at noon at Blackstone River and Canal Heritage State Park.

*Chairman Hatch adjourned the meeting at 2:39 p.m.*