**Department of Conservation and Recreation Stewardship Council Meeting Via Videoconference April 14th, 2022, 9am to 11am**

**Council Members Present:** Chairman Jack Buckley, Ann Canedy, Esq. Jeffrey Collins, Dicken Crane, Melissa Harper, Vivian Ortiz, Susan Smiley, Dennis Smith, Jennifer N.S. Wilson, Esq.

**DCR Staff Attendees:** Nick Connors, Acting Commissioner Stephanie Cooper, Dan Cushing, Rachael Lee, Marcy Marchello, Jennifer Norwood, Kristen Rhodes, Stefan Skalinski

**Public Attendees:** Glen Ayers, Sarah Freeman, Suzanne Gall Marsh (known public attendees, there were more I do not have the names)

**Call to Meeting-Chairman Jack Buckley**

Chairman Buckley called the meeting to order. He made the following comments:

* Chairman Buckley would like DCR to do a presentation on the Ranger Program for next meeting. The presentation should address costs, staffing responsibilities, geographic distribution and how rangers fit into the overall DCR profile. He has been asked about the rangers by several groups.
* Chairman Buckley received an invitation for the Friends group to attend their meeting on April 27 @ 7 pm. Their guest will be the Chief of Interpretative Services. This is an opportunity for councilors and others to learn about interpretative services.
* Chairman Buckley asked how comfortable councilors are to having in person meetings.
* Chairman Buckley announced there will be no Policy Committee break out meeting but councilors were welcomed to join other committee meetings. He would like committees to think what about what issues they would like to deal with and what the schedule would be for those activities.
* Chairman Buckley thanked DCR for partnering with the Stewardship Council on the Strategic Readiness Project. It will be important for the Council to get a sense of the priorities going forward.
* Lastly, Chairman Buckley wanted to bring the Council’s attention his recent conversations with staff about the lack of capacity that exists to carry out the Stewardship Council’s various functions and responsibilities and potentially to expand our activities going forward. This lack of capacity has been a challenge to the Council and volunteers. He has preliminary conversations with the Foundation and spoken to the Acting Commissioner. Nick and staff have done a yeoman’s job in the interim.
* starts the meeting by requesting DCR put together a presentation on the Ranger Program for the next meeting. He said that Nick Connors had some options for an in person meeting next month. There is no policy subcommittee meeting this month. Jennifer Norwood will be joining the Stakeholders subcommittee. Chairman Buckley thanked Acting Commissioner Stephanie Cooper for the Strategic Readiness meeting.

The issue of a lack of capacity was brought up. Maybe a foundation could help the Council and help it expand with activities. Chairman Jack Buckley spoke with the Acting Commissioner Stephanie Cooper about expanding capacity.

**Regular Business I**

**DCR Report-Stephanie Cooper, Acting Commissioner**

Acting Commissioner Stephanie Cooper acknowleged Chairman Jack Buckley’s comments about lack of capacity. She said that it is not about staff here and staff that isn’t here. They are working on the hiring process and will think about the resources for the Council. She understands the importance of having a foundation.

Acting Commissioner Stephanie Cooper said the House Ways and Means FY23 Budget has come out. She addressed some of the increases in the budget.

There is a lot going on. Staff is getting ready for the upcoming summer season. The agency is pushing the need for lifeguards. There is signing bonuses and increased wages this year for DCR lifeguards. DCR is still openly recruiting for lifeguards and seasonal positions. Sara White held training for staff on climate overview. The overview let staff look at the different effects climate change has on the agency.

During April Vacation the Interpretive team is planning many events. The agency has hired Kate Preissler as new Director for the West Region. The Acting Commissioner Stephanie Cooper thanked the Central Regions Director Jennifer Stowe, who was covering while the position was open. April 23rd is Park Serve Day. There are over twenty projects across the state. Recently the Esplanade Association honored Jennifer Norwood.

*Response to Public Comments*

* The Acting Commissioner Stephanie Cooper thanked Larry Tucker from the snowmobile Association for his input last meeting
* The Route 16 safety coalition looking to make larger changes for safety improvements in Somerville.
* Thanked Sara Freeman for her interest and patience on the Arborway project. The Acting Commissioner wanted to update the website that the project is still ongoing.
* Mentioned Glenn Ayers and his dedication to the RMPS and landscape projects.
* The Myles Standish RMP’s comment period was extended to allow Army Corp. Of Engineers to comment.
* Edgewater projects comment was extended in February. Now the agency is looking to scheduling another Public Meeting in May.

*Q&A*

Ann Canedy commended the Acting Commissioner for responding to Public Comments.

Jennifer Wilson wanted to comment on the RMP process. She said that one of the few legislative duties of the Council is processing RMPs. In her three years on the Council, she has never seen one. She said that DCR changed the process and now there are many twists and turns. If the process is done well, it should be foundational. Right now, overall, we are not producing outcomes and there is a backlog. She is looking to have two dedicated days a year to look at RMPs. Collectively we can all do better.

Chairman Jack Buckley was concerned about a public entity failing to comment during the comment period and that the agency gave an extension. They should have commented in time, projects like this should move forward. Do we accommodate everyone who misses the comment period. He asked the Acting Commissioner Stephanie Cooper if we expect for the Myles Standish RMP to move forward in May.

The Acting Commissioner Stephanie Cooper said that yes, the Myles Standish RMP will be processed by May. She also said that she appreciates the sentiments and the frustration. Where we do have RMPs the are helpful in all the ways that Jennifer Wilson pointed to. She is hopeful in the new format staff has put together.

Chairman Jack Buckley said that RMPs are important interface between public, friend's groups, and DCR. They are important and need to get down.

Vivian Ortiz echoed what Ann Canedy said about responding to the public. She also said that she is happy to see staff getting trained on Climate issues. It is important that DCR staff has knowledge on topics about climate change and can rely on it to the Public.

*Presentation on Stewardship Council Updates (add link)-*presented by Acting Commissioner Stephanie Cooper

*Q&A*

Dicken Crane said at the Strategic Readiness meeting breakout rooms. He heard about outreach from DCR to the public and did not see it on the slides. The Acting Commissioner Stephanie Cooper highlighted what we need to do more of or differently to fully accomplish the mission.

Chairman Jack Buckley asked how much the consultants are using the Special Commission report. The Acting Commissioner Stephanie Cooper said they do use it and we have provided them data for the Special Commission.

He also had editorial comments. He said that Health on the slide should be called Public Health. Also, the box on Protection. He is concerned on that; it should really be called management. DCR controls a dynamic landscape that should be managed not protects. That Managed/conservation would be a better term. The Acting Commissioner Stephanie Cooper said that the feedback was helpful. She noted the themes the consultants are picking up; they aren’t necessarily the principles. The principles would not be a stand-alone word

Jeffery Collins agreed with Jacks comments. He thinks it is important to value the land people do not visit. He wants equitable access to land that is used but to value the land people are not using. The Acting Commissioner Stephanie Cooper agreed that it is important.

**Special Business I**

*Presentation on DCRs Universal Access Program (add link) -*Presented by Kristen Rhodes, Marcy Marchello, Rachael Lee

Q&A

Chairman Jack Buckley commented how successful the program is. He said that it is tailored made for partners, like the Bruins Foundation. Marcy Marchello do not do any fundraising. The money is in the budget and came from grants in past years. Jennifer Norwood said DCR agrees with what you are saying. We are limited to fundraising with corporations and ask for money.

Vivian Ortiz thought this was amazing. She works with Massachusetts Safe Rides to School Program\*and teach kids bike safety. Would love to connect on with staff. She also had a question on hosting a paddling event for the Neponset Greenway Council. They wanted to know how to access resources for that event. She also highlighted we need to be pushing this on social media.

Jennifer Wilson said it ties in with the Strategic Readiness Program. Think about not just your park but different parks. Think of all the different people who uses the parks. The agency should advertise to everyone. It shows it takes a lot of resources to run correctly.

Susan Smiley thanked staff for the presentation. She was happy that winter activities were highlighted in the presentation. She was hoping to get a link or someway to keep in touch with the program.

Dicken Crane asked if there was a way to make the legislature aware of these programs. Based on the comments from the Strategic Readiness Program meeting, more people need to be aware of what DCR does. DCR needs more support from the legislature.

Chairman Jack Buckley said there should be a Universal Access Day at the State House. Also wants to make a distinction that he was talking about partnering with foundations and not fundraising from corporations.

The Acting Commissioner Staphanie Cooper thanked staff for putting together the presentation. She wanted to say this is one of the programs in the Strategic Readiness Program that we think we are doing a good job. We asked the consultant to look at how the Universal Access Program compares to what other states are doing. The property's assessments that the program makes is something Paul and the RMP program consultant.

**Regular Business II**

Approval of Minutes

Susan Smiley motioned to approve the meeting minutes from December, January, and February. There were seconds. There was a Roll Call vote unanimously approving the motion.

Susan Smiley motioned to delay the approval of the March minutes to the next meeting. The motion was approved.

**Future Meeting Options**

The Council was looking to have their in-person meetings again. Vivian Ortiz recommended that they have a hybrid model. Nick Connors said that it would have to be a hybrid model.

Nick Connors gave some locations. He suggested the best location would be the Fish and Wildlife in Westborough. DCR locations concerned would be Mount Augustas Hall in West Boylston, the Heritage Sites in Fall River and Lawarence. Working on what the hybrid model will look like.

Chairman Jack Buckley asked if there was a hybrid meeting could a Councilor participate remotely. Nick Connors said to their understanding they would.

Chairman Jack Buckley said that Fish and Wildlife in Westborough would be best location. Has the best space and technology.

Dennis Smith motioned to have the May meeting at Fish and Wildlife in Westborough. The motion was seconded. The motion was approved.

Melissa Harper said the hybrid model would be what would use in the future. She also wanted to know if there would be one Boston location in the rotation. Nick Connors said they were looking at 100 Cambridge St. and 251 Causeway St. He said he could also use the Transportation Building.

**Public Comments**

*Public Comment – Guidelines are available on the DCR Stewardship Council website*

Chairman Buckley invited members of the public for comment, which was offered by the following:

* Suzanne Gall Marsh
* Sarah Freeman
* Glen Ayers

*Committee Business*

The Council broke out into committee sessions.

*Policy Committee*

The Policy Committee did not meet.

*Finance Committee*

The committee talked about the increase in the budget for DCR, as well as the removal of retained revenue. Chairman Jack Buckley and Dicken Crane decided to have a listening session on the evening of May 17th. It would be on the budget process.

  *Stakeholders Committee*

Jennifer Norwood has agreed to attend the monthly meetings. She gave a quick update on the MOU process. The group she is working with on one of the MOUs gave a bunch of edits and it had to go back to legal. She wanted to rethink the process and reach out to small friend groups to move some MOUs. Councilors will identify smaller friend's groups to connect Jennifer Norwood with.

**Closing Remarks**

Chairman Jack Buckley said going forward the model Nate created on subcommittees was a good model. Some issues require more time, like the Strategic Readiness and RMP review. Need more time to talk with Acting Commissioner Stephanie Cooper about the RMP Process.

Chairman Jack Buckley is optimistic about the future and the role the Council will play in the transition of Administration.

Melissa Harper said one way to cut done time is to have materials ahead of time. Would be good to have time to review the RMP process.

**Adjournment**

Chairman Buckley motioned to adjourn the meeting. There were seconds. There was a Roll Call vote unanimously approving the motion.

 The Council was adjourned and will be adjourned until the May meeting.