# April 5, 2024 Meeting Minutes

Committee Members Present: Susan Smiley, Vivian Ortiz, Melissa Harper, Dennis Smith

Other Councilors Present**:** Jack Buckley

DCR Staff Attendees: Matthew Perry, A.J. Tourigny

## Call to Order – Committee Chair Susan Smiley

Chair Smiley welcomed the attendees, took attendance of Councilors, and went over the meeting agenda.

## Approval of Minutes

Councilor Harper moved to approve the Committee’s December meeting minutes.

Councilor Smiley seconded.

The March minutes were approved with Councilor Smith abstaining.

## Requests to Present

Mr. Perry presented two groups that had submitted applications to present at upcoming Stewardship Council meetings. The groups were the Massachusetts Horticultural Society (Mass Hort), which is based at DCR property Elm Bank Reservation, and Save the Harbor, Save the Bay, which focuses on coastal beaches in the Greater Boston area.

Mr. Perry reported that Mass Hort was prepared to present at next week’s meeting of the full council.

Councilor Buckley spoke about his meeting with James Hearsum, Executive Director of Mass Hort, and how the proposed presentation came about.

Chair Smiley said that she wanted to make sure that this would be a positive presentation about the group’s relationship with DCR.

Councilor Buckley said that it would be and that Mr. Hearsum is excited to expand the partnership between the two groups.

Mass Hort was approved by the committee to present at the next council meeting.

Save the Harbor, Save the Bay was approved to present at an upcoming council meeting.

Mr. Perry will invite Save the Harbor, Save the Bay to present at the September council meeting taking place in Swampscott, overlooking King’s Beach.

Mr. Perry said that there was one more presentation that can be reviewed at the next Stakeholder Committee meeting, as well as one from a citizens group concerning the closure of Memorial Drive that doesn’t meet the standards of what a presentation should be.

Councilor Smith said that they should plan a presentation from DCR staff on parkways and roadways since that is an issue that keeps coming up.

Councilor Buckley said that he asked the Commissioner at the last meeting for a presentation on plowing and road safety.

Councilor Ortiz said that she is concerned about eBikes and what the policy related to them is.

Chair Smiley agreed, saying that there needs to be education on eBikes.

Mr. Perry shared the DCR website that outlines eBike usage on DCR trails.

Mr. Tourigny said that in the regulations, different classification of eBikes are listed and only one of the classifications can be used on the trail.

Councilor Ortiz said that there needs to be signage about this on the trails.

Chair Smiley asked if there can be a presentation on bike safety and eBikes at the May meeting. She noted that the meeting will be taking place next to a bike trail and attendees will be invited to take a ride with the council after the meeting.

Councilor Buckley said they can ask for information on regulations and plans for signage.

Councilor Ortiz suggested that MassBike could also give a presentation.

Councilor Buckley asked if they have ever presented to the council before.

Councilor Ortiz said yes, both formally and informally.

Chair Smiley suggested that they hear from DCR first on its policies and then can hear from MassBike at a later meeting.

## Stakeholders Listening Session

Mr. Tourigny gave an update to the committee on partnerships and legislative positions. He said that he and Deputy Commissioner Crowley were working on hiring five positions across the state and a Director of Partnerships. Of the five regional positions, four were interviewed, and they were in the process of posting the director of partnerships position. Since then, the Governor has put a hiring freeze in place until the end of the fiscal year, and they are now working to see if they are able to hire anyone based on where they were in the process, and anything else that can be done moving forward.

Chair Smiley said that the committee should plan to host another listening session for this summer.

Mr. Tourigny agreed and said that they would like to do it sometime after July 4 and that he is working with Deputy Commissioner Crowley to get some dates for the committee.

Chair Smiley said that the freeze will probably delay the face-to-face meeting, but that she doesn’t want to put it off for too long.

Mr. Tourigny agreed and said that if they have another listening session, hopefully they will have a director of partnerships on board after to hold a face-to-face meeting with.

Chair Smiley said that the fiscal year ends in June and suggested that the meeting be held in August.

Councilor Harper agreed with August and said it may be redundant if it is held sooner.

Councilor Smith asked if they had gotten back to those who made comments to thank them and respond to their concerns. He said they want to make sure they give DCR staff enough time to respond so they don’t hear the same things again at the next session.

Chair Smiley said that they sent a thank you note to all who spoke, and said that if the next session is held in August, that will give the agency enough time to respond.

Mr. Tourigny said that they’ve had a lot of conversations with the people who spoke, and while it wasn’t everyone, it was those who talked about current projects.

Councilor Buckley said that they don’t need to solve everything, just acknowledge.

Councilor Harper said that she broke down the issues that were talked about. First, the long-term issues are an opportunity for the committee and the agency to work together. Second, issues specific to projects that aren’t under the purview of the committee but need a response from DCR need to be acknowledged.

Mr. Tourigny said that he will look at dates in August to present to the committee.

## Other Business

Mr. Perry told the committee about Park Serve Day coming up on April 20. He said it is a great collaboration between friends and partner groups and the agency to cleanup parks for Earth Day.

Chair Smiley asked if the committee can get more information on the day.

Mr. Perry said that he will get the information to the committee.

## Adjournment

Chair Smiley thank everyone for their attendance.

The meeting was adjourned.

*Please check the DCR Stewardship Council webpage for notice of upcoming meetings.* [*https://www.mass.gov/service-details/dcr-stewardship-council*](https://www.mass.gov/service-details/dcr-stewardship-council)