# Policy Committee Meeting Minutes

Committee Members Present: Jennifer Wilson, Jeff Collins, Ann Canedy, Phil Doherty

Other Councilors Present: Jack Buckley

DCR Staff Attendees: Matthew Perry

**Public Attendees as Registered:** Jun Lee

## Call to Order and Welcome – Committee Chair Jennifer Wilson

Chair Wilson welcomed the attendees and went over the meeting agenda.

## Approval of Minutes

Councilor Canedy moved to accept the July 10, 2023 meeting minutes.

Councilor Collins seconded the motion.

## Roll Call on Minutes Approval

Councilor Canedy: Yes

Councilor Collins: Yes

Councilor Wilson: Yes

Councilor Doherty: Yes

The minutes were approved.

## Strategic Oversight Plan

Chair Wilson said that several comments were received during the 30-day comment period for the Strategic Oversight Plan. She noted that the comments were substantive, and that the committee has the option of extending the comment period if they would like or respond to the comments that were received.

Councilor Canedy said that she thinks the committee should move on with the comments received.

Chair Wilson stated that she wishes they could have sent something out over the DCR Update email about the comment period.

Councilor Collins asked if the comment period followed the same standards as the others done by DCR.

Mr. Perry responded yes.

Councilor Canedy asked if comments on the plan should be accepted the next council meeting.

Chair Wilson noted that with RMPs, there are public meetings were feedback is gathered.

Councilor Buckley said that the budget listening session that the finance committee holds could be done for the Strategic Oversight Plan as well. He added that he thinks people were given enough time to respond and that several major organizations were willing to submit comments, saying he doesn’t think it makes much sense to try to collect more comments by extending the period.

Councilor Canedy asked if when the plan is presented, is there an opportunity for people to comment if they wanted to.

Chair Wilson said they might consider a specific stand-alone meeting in the future, but added that if they were creating rules or policy, it would be different but this is an aspirational document for the council.

The committee agreed that they would officially close the public comment period.

Chair Wilson asked how comments will be addressed and revisions will be presented to the council and the public. She said that comments were shared with Councilor Susan Smiley, chair of the Stakeholders Committee, since many of the comments dealt with that committee’s work. She asked if all comments should be sent to the entire council, or if a summary letter should be written about what the comments were and how the committee responded.

Councilor Canedy said both should be done, with the full comments provided to the councilors and a summary letter written for the public.

Councilor Buckley said he thought that the most relevant comments dealt with the Stakeholders Committee.

Chair Wilson said that she appreciated the comments about changing and staggering the councilor terms.

The committee decided that Mr. Perry will circulate the comments to the whole council before the September 14 meeting.

Chair Wilson said that she would put together a summary and will parse out proposals to address some of the comments. She asked if the committee thought it would be reasonable to ask the Stakeholders Committee to review and address some of the comments.

Councilor Buckley suggested that they have a meeting to discuss with the Stakeholders Committee.

Chair Wilson said she will plan to have a short summary and revisions ready before the next committee meeting.

Councilor Buckley asked if the council will vote on the revisions.

Chair Wilson said yes. She said they will give an update on the comments at the meeting on September 14 to the entire committee and will present the plan for approval at the October meeting. She noted that they didn’t get any comments saying that they were going in the wrong direction so the changes will just be fine tuning.

## Resource Management Plans (RMPs)

Chair Wilson asked Mr. Perry if he had an update from Paul Cavanagh, Resource Management Planner at DCR, on the current status of RMPs.

Mr. Perry said that he spoke with Mr. Cavanagh before the August 2, 2023, South Coast RMP Public Meeting, and that he attended a staff meeting related to the Blackstone RMPs. He said that he will reach out to Mr. Cavanagh for a more thorough update.

Councilor Collins, who attended the public comment meeting, said that the RMPs have a lot of information in them and that it is hard for people to absorb all of it and react. He said that it was a solid presentation as always from Mr. Cavanagh.

Councilor Canedy asked if they were moving in the right direction with plans as far as how they are put together.

Councilor Collins said yes, adding that some prats of the plans refer out to other information that is assumed knowledge of the reader. He said he is not as familiar with the South Coast properties and is looking forward to going through the process with property he is more familiar with.

Councilor Buckley said that he thought that those who attended the meeting responded positively, and that the new abbreviated plans help to keep the process moving. He thought that there might be criticism that the plans aren’t detailed enough but said that the comments given did not do that.

Councilor Canedy asked if Forest Management came up as a topic at the meeting.

Councilor Collins said no, but that may have to do with the region that the plans are for.

Councilor Buckley added that fires are a concern in the southeast region so management of forests makes sense to people there.

Chair Wilson said that this should go to the council for approval now that the public meeting has been held. She said that the committee will follow up with Mr. Cavanagh and target a council meeting for the discussion of the Southcoast RMPs.

Councilor Collins said that a note he made to follow up with Mr. Cavanagh was a comment made about the parking lot at the Acushnet Cedar Swamp being closed due to illicit use. He said he would like to know what the capacity or process for policing those uses instead of reducing access to the lot is.

Councilor Buckley said that this is one way that the plans can highlight the need for additional resources. He said that the plan shouldn’t suggest closing the parking lots but can be a place to point out problems and to create a blueprint about what can be done to solve them.

Chair Wilson agreed, saying it was a good point about how does DCR have enough resources to safely oversee what is being provided to the public and to ensure safety. She also noted about the need to engage youth with better activities, citing the DCR Summer Nights program, and how all of these things are interconnected and need more resources.

Councilor Collins brought up the commentary about the preservation of cultural assets and how that can sometimes be in conflict with ecological restoration. He said that certain infrastructure or specific views that are currently available may be at odds with restoration and that maybe the council could receive a presentation on this from DCR.

Chair Wilson suggested that Mr. Cavanagh come to the policy committee meeting before the Southcoast RMPs are considered to answer questions like this.

Councilor Buckley said that Mr. Cavanagh has a lot to balance with RMPs and that the draft plans are a result of that.

Chair Wilson said that that is fair, and that it is not his job to be setting policy on issues.

The committee will work to get the Southcoast RMPs on their calendar and to add their approval to the master calendar.

## Councilor Comments

Councilor Buckley stated that it seems the issue with forestry in the state has shifted to the secretary’s office and asked if the council’s stance is that the ball is now in someone else’s court.

Councilor Canedy asked if the issue should be.

Councilor Collins said that the issue has been elevated and that it is good to take a comprehensive look at it. He said that they are planning public presentations and that the Stewardship Council should attend and that the issue can be a future agenda item with someone from the Secretary’s office presenting on it.

Councilor Buckley said that they should have the Stewardship Council be a venue for feedback.

Councilor Collins suggested holding another joint Stewardship Council/Fish and Wildlife Board meeting to discuss the issue more.

Councilor Buckley said that December 7, 2023, is the day that has been identified for the release of the new forestry management guidelines and that a joint meeting near that date.

Chair Wilson said that they don’t want something to come out on December 7 without being engaged in the process.

Councilor Buckley said that the goal was to use the council as a way to vet the process. He said that he will check in with those engaged to see what the schedule is and when and where the council can be used.

Chair Wilson pointed out that some of the comments received for the oversight plan had to do with forestry, and that the committee could respond that the oversight plan is not the place to address this issue.

Councilor Buckley agreed with Chair Wilson and said that there are supposed to be public meetings held.

Mr. Perry put an invite to a forum being held on September 12 into the chat.

Councilor Collins said he would like to continue the discussion about the proposed Natural Resources Committee. He said he would reconnect with Councilor Dicken Crane to look at the language they have for the committee and that he will have a concrete proposal at the next committee meeting.

Councilor Buckley asked about the progress on the appointment of a new councilor.

Councilor Collins said that he submitted the letter of nomination to Mr. Perry and Commissioner Arrigo.

Mr. Perry said that the letter was advanced to the Secretary’s office and that he will check in on the nominations to see where they are.

## Public Comment

Chair Wilson asked Jun Lee from the Emerald Necklace Conservancy if he had any public comments to make. She thanked him for the comments submitted by the Conservancy about the Strategic Oversight Plan.

Mr. Lee thanked Chair Wilson and said he was glad the letter was received. He said that for Bike Week, the Conservancy works with the DCR Special Commission Working Group and that he will work with Mr. Perry to invite the councilors to it. He said the group works together to find strategies instead of working in silos.

Councilor Buckley said that he attended one of those meetings a while ago and that it was very interesting and helpful.

## Adjournment

Councilor Canedy made a motion to adjourn.

Councilor Collins seconded.

Chair Wilson thanked everyone for their attendance and adjourned the meeting.

*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)