



January Meeting Minutes

Council Members Present: Jack Buckley, Ann Canedy, Esq., Jeffrey Collins, Dicken Crane, Melissa Harper, Vivian Ortiz, Alvin L. Reynolds, Esq., Dennis Smith, Nate Walton, Jennifer N.S. Wilson, Esq.

Council Members Not Present: David Murphy

Member Materials: n/a

DCR Attendees: Lisa Barstow; Nick Connors; Jim Montgomery, Commissioner; Max Tassinari; George Trubiano; Matt Villamaino

Public Attendees as Registered:

Andrew Schuyler	Erica Holm	NEMBAbill - Bill Boles
Bob Segel	Galaxy A20	Rod Montamendi
Branner Stewart	Glen Ayers	Sarah Freeman
Chris Redfern	Judy Jacobs	Whitney Hatch
Chuck Anastas	Julieannrapoport	18573500437

Call to Meeting – Chairman Nate Walton

Chairman Walton opened the meeting, offered an overview on the Zoom format. He welcomed new member Jeffrey Collins of the Mass Audubon Society who fills a council Environmental Seat.

In light of recent events at the Capitol, Mr. Walton thanked council members for the decency and civility in which they collaborate. He introduced Commissioner Jim Montgomery to deliver the DCR Report.

DCR Report – Jim Montgomery, Commissioner

Good morning and thank you everyone for joining us today. I'm thrilled to be back with you today and wanted to give you a quick update on the agency, our environmental justice efforts and address a couple of changes to the Council itself.

We are in the thick of our winter recreation season which has looked a bit different this year – but what hasn't?

The team across the state has done a fantastic job of working quickly and with agility as revisions to state or local COVID guidelines have dictated. And I would be remiss if I did not call that out for you all.

It's been a different year than I think we all would have planned for, however everyone has been wonderful in helping to support our users and guests.

In terms of recreation we have both Nordic skiing operations up and running with special care being given to compliance with local and state guidance for COVID. It's been fantastic to see folks out there enjoying themselves. Safely. And masked.

In addition, the agency-managed rinks have all opened but in close consultation with our municipal partners we have had to limit users to youth and scholastic teams. We have also unfortunately had to limit public skating at agency-managed rinks to only the outdoor rink at Kelly in Jamaica Plain.

Operationally we continue to adapt as we go. We have a well-developed snow and ice plan that has grown over the years and this year we have worked to mitigate risk around COVID by limiting contact among staff and instituting strict protocols and procedures. In addition, our labor yards have shifted to a platoon schedule that allows us to be better prepared should COVID exposure occur.

Finally, we are already keeping our eyes on what's next in the coming months with a focus on prepping camping season, which we hope to launch for reservations soon and for pools and waterfronts where we have continued our recruitment efforts and worked to better organize our staff to deliver the highest quality experience we can to our guests

ENVIRONMENTAL JUSTICE UPDATE

I know that the council has taken a keen interest in our efforts around environmental justice following the recent presentation from Vivien Morris and the Trust for Public Lands, and I wanted to speak a bit to that.

First, as Nick mentioned at the last meeting, we will have the Director, Environmental Justice from EEA joining us in February. Ms. Rishi Reddi will outline the efforts and priorities of the Secretariat and what they are seeking in terms of action from DCR and our sister agencies. I've had the pleasure of partnering with Rishi as she has stood up her team

and she spoke to my senior team just two weeks ago. I think you will really enjoy hearing from her, and she will be happy to answer a few questions.

Next, I wanted to speak to one of the projects that has been a driver of conversation here at Edgewater Drive in Mattapan. I was fortunate enough to meet with the leadership of our Design and Engineering team on site. In that meeting with Patrice Kish and Ginna Johnson we discussed in detail our options and walked along both sides of the wall to understand the impact this wall has had on the neighborhood. We have decided to prioritize this project and begin the process or re-engaging the community with an eye toward completing a design that would offer improved access from the neighborhood to the river, as well as a revitalized riverside trail, invasive plant removal and ecological restoration of the landscape. Working collaboratively, we will develop a plan that will invigorate and activate this stretch of the Neponset and provide a much-needed area of respite for the community. This is in the very early stages, but I expect my team to be contacting interested parties in the weeks ahead to move this project forward. In addition, we are planning to finalize design plans for Doyle Park (playground) as well, just down the road, to continue opening up the Neponset and its views.

While I am proud of our plans to move forward with those two projects, I also think it's vitally important that as we continue to think about EJ communities and our investments at large. As you are well aware, we have more than 475,000 acres across the Commonwealth in cities and towns throughout the state. We have made significant investments in improvements to pools, spray decks, playgrounds, hard courts, trails, hockey rinks and more in EJ communities. We have also refocused our efforts on land acquisition to seek out opportunities within these communities as well. A particular focus being on communities where heat islands dominate, and passive recreational opportunities are hard to find or unavailable. These are just some of the specific things we have prioritized in the last year plus. Looking forward-- as we develop our five-year capital plan we will apply criteria that promotes park equity and allows us to weigh investments in EJ-adjacent areas as well to provide opportunities for recreation and respite in close proximity to EJ populations.

We will continue to keep you updated every other month or so but I wanted just give you a taste of where we are today and where we are headed with regards to EJ.

SPECIAL COMMISSION UPDATE

As you all know there are a couple of moving pieces around the legislatively created special commission. The members of the commission are still being vetted and assembled through the work of EEA and the Governor's office.

In addition, for the last few months we have researchers from UMass joining us here today to continue to learn more about both DCR and the Stewardship Council.

The final moving piece is that from time to time these same researchers are scheduling interviews with staff, members of this Council and some of our outside partners.

This work will be continuing and I will make sure to include any relevant updates in future months but I wanted to level set for you all as I know some of you have had conversations with the team already.

COUNCIL UPDATE

I wanted to welcome the newest member to the council Jeff Collins. Jeff's day job is with Mass Audubon as the Director of Conservation Science and we are fortunate to have him joining us. I was fortunate enough to work closely with Jeff back at the beginning of our COVID response where he and I chaired a working group that established many of the protocols around outdoor recreation. Welcome Jeff! We look forward to working with you.

And before I wrap up I wanted to take a moment to thank Alvin for his service to the Commonwealth but more specifically his service here to the Council. As you all know, joining and serving here can be a lot of fun but it can also be a lot of work. Learning about the agency, getting up to speed, and finding opportunities to leverage your personal experiences to the benefit of the council takes time. Time away from work. Time away from family. Time away from any of the many competing priorities folks may have. Alvin – thank you. Thank you for being willing to share your time and experience with us and it has been a benefit to us at the agency and I am sure your colleagues would agree it has been a benefit to your colleagues on the Council as well.

As an expression of that thanks and the thanks of the Commonwealth, I do have this citation/proclamation from the Governor. If the council would indulge me I'd love to read it. We will mail this out to you.

Q&A

Councilor Buckley thanked the Commissioner for his focus on the Edgewater project. Commissioner Montgomery thanked the council bringing it to our attention, so I want to thank all of you. Councilor Ortiz expressed the importance to unite both sides of the river and is so happy this is finally going to happen.

Councilor Canedy asked why we can open one rink and not the others. The Commissioner said because it is an *outdoor* rink. Ms. Canedy also welcomed Jeff Collins and thanked Alvin Reynolds for his service and friendship.

Regular Business I

Approval of Minutes – December 10, 2020 Meeting

Chairman Walton asked if members had comments or revisions to the minutes. Seeing none, Councilor Smith motioned to adopt the minutes and Councilor Canedy seconded the motion. Chairman Walton offered a roll call on the adoption of the minutes, as indicated for virtual meetings:

- Councilor Collins - Abstained

- Councilor Smith – Yes
- Councilor Buckley – Yes
- Councilor Canedy – Yes
- Councilor Wilson - Abstained
- Vice Chair Harper - Yes
- Councilor Ortiz – Yes
- Councilor Crane – Yes
- Councilor Reynolds – Yes
- Councilor Walton – Yes

The December 10, 2020 minutes were adopted.

Before moving to fill the vacancy Alvin Reynolds leaves as Chair of the Policy and Operations Committee, Chairman Walton praised Mr. Reynolds for his significant contributions to the council, “Bringing focus and persistence to the council’s work ... and most importantly, becoming a friend to us all.” Chairman Walton deferred to Councilor Reynolds to lead the discussion on filling the chair role.

After consult with the other members, Councilor Reynolds recommends Councilor Wilson to serve as Chair of the Policy and Operations Committee, based on her experienced, diplomacy and skill as a thought leader. He opened the floor for discussion. Councilor Canedy, as a member of said committee, seconds the recommendation.

Chairman Walton noted that these committee roles are voluntary and relatively new. Seeing no comments or objections, the Chair waives the need for a vote. Adding to Mr. Reynolds comments, Mr. Walton said Councilor Wilson was an early leader to this Council as a whole and welcomed her, noting with congratulations she will do an excellent job.

Public Comment

Chairman Walton invited members of the public for comment, which was offered by the following: [[Public Comment Guidelines](#) are available on the DCR Stewardship Council website]

- Glen Ayers
- John Mahoney

Regular Business II

[Presentation on Retained Revenue](#) – Max Tassinari, Chief Financial Officer

Q&A

Councilors asked questions of Mr. Tassinari relative to the importance of retained revenue to DCR’s overall budget, how it was derived, if it achieves its intended purpose, whether it impacts DCR’s focus on the core mission, how it supports the entire agency, not just the park/place where it’s collected. Administration and Finance Director George Trubiano, Deputy Commissioner Nick Connors and Commissioner Jim Montgomery all contributed to the discussion.

Regular Business III

Committee Meeting Breakouts and Recap

Stakeholders Committee

The report was delivered by Committee Chair Ortiz. She invited Branner Stewart, who oversees the Special Commission, to give an update. Deputy Commissioner Nick Connors said the MOU draft has been finalized and she will follow up with the Committee. Vice Chair Harper is working on guidelines for the presentations made during the Stewardship Council meeting from partners and friends groups.

Finance Committee

The report was delivered by Councilor Buckley, who first thanked Councilor Reynolds for his service. They discussed today's presentation on retained revenue, adding that people were pleased and discussed what the future would hold. The committee is interested in future presentations about forest revenues and Operational and Capital budgets to better understand the maintenance backlog. Councilor Buckley would like to get to the Operational budget in the next two months.

Policy and Operations Committee

The report was delivered by Councilor Wilson. She reported the group has focused on transition under outgoing Council Chair Reynolds leadership. The committee had great accomplishments on enabling legislation proposed changes, will identify areas of advocacy as the work of the special commission becomes clearer, and will continue to have an active role in monitoring, scheduling and planning the resource management plan (RMP) approval process. Councilor Canedy has been in touch with Paul Cavanagh. There will be continued discussion on roadways. Councilor Wilson also gave special thanks to Councilor Reynolds.

Councilor Reynolds thanked the entire committee, "For being collaborative partners and being willing to listen to my ideas and initiatives, and that there was empathy and care and attention in what we did together."

Adjournment

Seeing no other questions, Chairman Walton adjourned the meeting at 11:26 a.m.

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