



November Meeting Minutes

Council Members Present: Jack Buckley, Ann Canedy, Esq., Jeffrey Collins, Dicken Crane, Vivian Ortiz, Susan Smiley, Nate Walton, Jennifer N.S. Wilson, Esq.

Council Members Not Present: Melissa Harper, Dennis Smith

DCR Staff Attendees: Lisa Barstow, Paul Cavanagh, Melissa McCarthy, Nick Connors, Stephanie Cooper, Jennifer Howard, Jen Soper, Allyson Trahan, George Trubiano

Public Attendees as Registered:

Christy	Sarah Freeman	Suzanne Gall Marsh
Bill Boles	AlexiConnie	Laura Jasinski
Chuck Anastas	Laurel Facey	Miriam Kurland
Glen Ayers	Darcy	Tribalscribal
Michael Nichols	Lynne Man	Canopy.bart@gmail.com
	Alison McRae	

Call to Meeting – Chairman Nate Walton

Chairman Walton opened the meeting with greetings and instructions for virtual meeting format. He pointed out the work of the Special Commission and its upcoming December meeting. Chairman Walton spoke of the improvements the council has made that were recognized by the Commission and noted the DCR leadership transition. He welcomed Acting Commissioner Stephanie Cooper to provide the DCR Report.

DCR Report – Stephanie Cooper, Acting Commissioner

Acting Commissioner Cooper thanked the council and its chair for a warm welcome and updates on the exciting work the council is doing, which she stated as all very positive. She thanked Jim Montgomery for his service to DCR and wished him well. Acting Commissioner Cooper shared her 20 years of background in public service—with the City of New York and 15 years with various Commonwealth Environmental agencies including the DCR. She said she is thrilled to be serving in this transitional role, highlighting:

- Spent the last six years at the Department of Environmental Protection, most recently served as Deputy Commissioner of Policy and Planning, overseeing DEP's regulatory and policy agenda for air, waste and water resources.
- At EEA oversaw the land protection programs - Established a land stewardship program, grant program to incentivize partnerships to preserve large landscapes, investments in urban parks, and creating the Greening the Gateway Cities tree planting program.
- Began her career in MA at DCR. Her first job was in operations analysis, helping establish the building blocks of DCR's organization in the early years of the agency, working on asset management, establishing maintenance schedules, fleet program etc. She also served as chief of staff for six years; creating programs to get kids outdoors, exploring the values forests provide and helping to organize the first statewide volunteer day.

Acting Commissioner Cooper highlighted her passion for DCR and believes its mission is more relevant today than ever. She is now focused on supporting the women and men of DCR through this transitional period to fulfill our mission. She has been heartened to reconnect with past colleagues and expressed an exhaustive list of agency positions across the board to which she is committed to supporting that undergird the strength of the agency and its resources.

Additionally, Ms. Cooper said she plans to reach out to the council members to learn from their perspective and engage with the public. She acknowledged the positive budget priorities the council has put together and she has reviewed them, noting the connection of the council's stated priorities to those echoed by the Special Commission namely, Partnerships, Marketing/Branding/Communications and the RMP process.

Reporting on winter recreation, Acting Commissioner Cooper said youth and scholastic hockey season is kicking into full swing at DCR owned rinks, and we are nearing the home stretch on major improvements in Saugus at Kasabuski Rink. She added that Nordic and Downhill ski areas are transitioning into artificial snowmaking.

Edgewater Drive

Design and Engineering is working closely with our consultant. We are currently working on the existing conditions assessment and this past weekend we had our first on-site community engagement event.

Budget

Ms. Cooper noted her conversations with Deputy Commissioner Nick Connors and Director of Administration and Finance George Trubiano about the efforts of the Finance Subcommittee and will continue to debrief on that internally. She said she looks forward to hearing more during personal conversations with Councilors Buckley and Crane and creating the best feedback loop.

RMP Update

Acting Commissioner Cooper said several RMPs are under internal review – notably Myles Standish, aiming for public meeting, which we anticipate occurring in the first quarter of calendar year 2022. A review of South Coast and Blackstone Valley RMPs will take place over the next month, along with planned seasonal staffing transitions beginning.

~ Q&A ~

Councilor Ortiz thanked the acting commissioner, said she lives in Mattapan and was so happy to be at the Edgewater planning meeting Saturday and happy to hear the way DCR will be communicating with the community. She especially was pleased to see Stella Lensing there, who was integral to the basis of the trail.

Councilor Buckley commented he is so pleased to have “Stephanie” in this job and that it always was a pleasure to work with her in state government. Councilor Buckley said his comment is not directed to her but he expressed disappointment/concern that the state legislature would not adequately fund state parks with the Federal COVID/ARPA money. Ms. Cooper said she is following the situation.

Chairman Walton thanked the Acting Commissioner for her time.

Regular Business I

Approval of Minutes – October 15, 2021 Meeting

Councilor Ortiz introduced a friendly amendment to correct a date on the October 15, 2021 minutes where it should have referenced September 9, 2021 minutes.

Chairman Walton entertained a motion to approve the minutes, with the friendly amendment. Councilor Buckley motioned to approve the minutes, which were seconded by Councilor Smiley. Chairman Walton called the roll on the adoption of the minutes, as indicated for virtual meetings:

Councilor Buckley – Yes
Councilor Walton – Yes
Councilor Ortiz – Abstain
Councilor Collins – Yes
Councilor Crane – Yes
Councilor Canedy – Abstain
Councilor Smiley – Abstain
Councilor Wilson – Yes

The October 15, 2021 minutes were adopted as noted.

Public Comment – [Guidelines](#) are available on the DCR Stewardship Council website.

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

- Lynne Man
- Catherine LeBlanc
- Glen Ayers
- Bill Boles
- Sarah Freeman
- Miriam Kurland

Special Business I

[Northfield Land Issue Presentation](#) and Vote – *Melissa McCarthy, Assistant General Counsel, DCR*

~ Q&A ~

Councilor Wilson asked if there has been any payment or compensation or any opposition to the taking. Ms. McCarthy and Ms. Soper said there has been no opposition. The land is a gift for no consideration that was intended to be part of the original acquisition.

Councilor Smiley asked if it will be an Article 97 issue and if it will remain all access. Ms. Soper said it is not Article 97 and recreation currently permitted on the rest of the acreage will be permitted here.

Chairman Walton shared the vote document on the screen and entertained a motion to approve the friendly taking. Councilors Buckley and Collins motioned and seconded, respectively. Chairman Walton called the roll, as indicated for virtual meetings:

Councilor Smiley – Yes
Councilor Walton – Yes
Councilor Ortiz – Yes
Councilor Collins – Yes
Councilor Crane – Yes
Councilor Canedy – Yes
Councilor Wilson – Yes
Councilor Buckley – Yes

The motion was adopted.

Special Business II

Election of Officers Nominating Process

Chairman Walton reviewed last month's approved protocols for election of council officers in December. He noted his desire to serve one term and have regular elections thereafter to illicit fresh ideas and stated the importance of holding regular elections especially as that has not been customary. The next action needed is to select two councilors to serve on the nominating committee. Councilors Buckley and Wilson volunteered first, with Councilors Collins and Crane also availing themselves to serve. In the interest of keeping the rules simple, it was agreed that Councilors Buckley and Wilson would serve. There were no further questions or comments.

Regular Business II

Committee Meeting Breakouts and Updates

Finance Committee

Chair Buckley reported on the committee's three discussion points: parking meters, ARPA/COVID money and budget priorities schedule for next fiscal year. On the last point, Mr. Buckley suggested the council host a, "Budget Forum" [in May—posted in April] to solicit public input—recognizing this meeting would need a "hearing officer." Comments would be integrated into the Finance Committee's budget action item schedule, resulting in a formal council vote on council budget priorities each July with monthly action items including legislative monitoring of progress. Mr. Buckley stated that issues related to parking meter revenue pointed to problems with the retained revenue model, saying it a "waste of productive time for DCR staff." He underscored his hope the legislature acts wisely on ARPA money for this, "generational opportunity."

Stakeholders Committee

Councilor Ortiz reported for the group, noting that she and Councilor Smiley represented the group and had new guest attendees. Ms. Ortiz shared about the online request form for Friends Groups to present to the council and offered guests a general overview of the committee. Guests asked about responsiveness to trail maintenance and current logging and forest issues legislation. Councilor Smiley suggested the committee get in touch with Acting Commissioner Cooper to alert her about the Stakeholders Committee and the statewide interest in a Friends Network meeting.

Policy and Operations Committee

Councilor Wilson reported for the group and noted with apology to guests attending that they could submit any issues to Lisa Barstow, as they ran out of meeting time before their comments could be heard. The Policy Committee wondered if the full council, or Chairman on behalf of the

council, could advocate for more money for parks via APRA money. Ms. Wilson added we are 30 to 60-days away from a decision on e-bike regulations but the council will be informed and have opportunity for Q&A. She thanked Paul Cavanagh for his continued RMP work and shared that personnel changes will delay an RMP review and approval into in early 2022. A public meeting will initiate that process. Ms. Wilson added that the Special Commission looked favorably on the changes to the Stewardship Council enabling legislation proposed by the council and the policy committee plans to work with the finance committee to interweave the RMP processes into the budget calendar to form a cohesive document.

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Discussion ensued on ways the council could advocate with the legislature for APRA money for state parks. Councilor Wilson motioned that the council express through its chair and vice chair with urgency that we embrace the Governor's proposal on ARPA resources for the DCR and give the chair and vice chair the authority to do so in the form they set fit. The motion was seconded by Councilor Buckley. Chairman Walton called the roll, as indicated for virtual meetings:

Councilor Wilson – Yes
Chairman Walton – Yes
Councilor Ortiz – Yes
Councilor Smiley – Yes
Councilor Buckley – Yes
Councilor Collins – Yes
Councilor Canedy – Yes
Councilor Crane – Yes

The motion was adopted.

Adjournment

Chairman Walton said he would keep the council informed and looked forward to seeing them next month—adjourning until December 9, 2021.

*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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