



**Department of Conservation and Recreation  
Stewardship Council Meeting**  
Roxbury Heritage State Park | Boston  
February 7, 2020 | 10:30 a.m. to 1 p.m.

## **February Meeting Minutes**

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

Council Members Not Present: Ann B. Canedy, Esq., David Murphy

DCR/EEA Attendees: Lisa Barstow, Ryan Hutton, Leonard Lee, Jennifer Norwood, Joe Rotondo

Public Attendees (from sign-in sheet): Sarah Freeman, Arborway Coalition; Jessica Mink, Neponset River Greenway Council; Galen Mook, MassBike; Jennifer Jones, Southwest Corridor Park Conservancy; Celeste Walker, Friends of Allandale; Eliza Parad, Boston Cyclists Union; Ben Wetherill, West Roxbury Bikes; Julia O'Brien (former MDC staff); Chuck Anastas, Mass. Conservation Voters

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### **Call to Meeting – Chairman Nate Walton**

Chairman Walton expressed congratulations to newly appointed Commissioner Jim Montgomery. He shared background on how council meeting structure has changed over the past year with the hope of improving the efficiency and transparency of the council. Monthly meetings would include breakout sessions for each of the three committees and once per quarter, the Council would forgo committee breakouts to focus on extended time of interaction with DCR Senior Staff.

The flow of the meetings has been such that it's possible to include a 40-minute committee breakout at every meeting and a presentation at every meeting. Thus, two meetings with external stakeholders would be followed by one meeting with DCR Senior Staff.

Chairman Walton introduced Jennifer Norwood to deliver the Commissioner's Report in Commissioner Montgomery's absence.

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### **Commissioner's Report – Director of External Affairs and Partnerships, Jennifer Norwood**

The report is attached hereto and made a part hereof.

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### **Special Business – Presentation by Stacy Thompson, Executive Director | LivableStreets Alliance**

Chairman Walton underscored his strong belief in the council providing a forum for stakeholders and members of the public to engage with the DCR. Inviting LivableStreets to speak was intended to continue the dialogue expressed at last July's meeting.

The presentation attached hereto and made a part hereof.

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### *Council follow up questions to presenters*

Councilor Reynolds asked why the Arborway is such a topic of conversation. Ms. Thompson said there are speeding issues and lane drop issues; education and enforcement are important. Councilor Wilson said there is ongoing tension on Parkways with people who drive them often and not often.

Councilor Ortiz said she tends to avoid the Arborway on her bike, she finds it terrifying due to people speeding on a crowded road.

Councilor Buckley noted enforcement issue: he said it's not just an urban problem, "As a suburban runner, people don't stop at crosswalks." Councilor Reynolds agreed that even with a baby carriage, drivers don't stop at crosswalks.

Ms. Thompson said states presently cannot use automated enforcement, use of cameras for speeding and running red lights. LivableStreets is working on a bill in MA to have municipalities opt-in to cameras/automated enforcement.

Councilor Smith shared his experience as a Select Board member in Middleborough. With the support of the chief of police, the town instituted strict enforcement. It was an income booster and improved traffic behavior.

Vice Chair Harper asked how spots would get prioritized. Ms. Thompson said legacy data, crash data, creating a corridor approach to slow traffic down and adding a bike infrastructure and a crash approach, to target spots that need improvement.

Councilor Wilson asked how a program like Vision 0 anticipates self-driving technology. Ms. Thompson said the City of Boston pilot program with NuTonomy (autonomous driving software company) is writing code based on state law, safe passing distance and other factors. Councilor Reynolds said speeding and traffic light violations have to be observed by an officer. He noted that people have concerns about being on camera and that type of data collection.

Discussion ensued about cities that have tried cameras and what has gone well and not so well.

Vice Chair Harper raised the issue in the Governor's budget about moving certain DCR parkways to MassDOT. She queried Ms. Thompson on what is driving that and if other agencies do it better. Ms. Thompson said she has had better luck with MassDOT on the Longfellow Bridge. She referenced MassDOT's new engineering guidelines and that anytime a road is reconstructed it has to focus on walking, biking and driving. Mr. Buckley asked Ms. Thompson how she would characterize DCR's standards. She noted a differential between what is on paper and what is implemented and

cast doubt on DCR having adequate resources to design and implement to the highest standard. Ms. Norwood noted that DCR has a public meeting process, we hear every perspective, and we implement in concert with overall wants and needs and noted the original intention for parkways was to be a park with a road through it used for carriages strolls and jaunts. However, they've become major roadways.

Vice Chair Harper asked if DCR supports the move to MassDOT or feels like it needs to maintain control to protect the park side. Ms. Norwood said park advocates had questioned that, but as our legal team reads the legislation, after the transfer the original use would be maintained. So DCR sees the roads as remaining parkways.

Mr. Reynolds noted that [as a state agency] DCR has a public comment period. I come from the private sector and in the end, we have to pick the solution we think is best. He added, "We want to be thought leaders and help make DCR decisions, be more active in driving the planning process. I'm hearing too much ambiguity."

Mr. Buckley suggested it may be appropriate to further clarify our role with the Commissioner and how we respond to the public when they come to us. Councilor Reynolds said he thinks the council's role should be instructive to the Commissioner.

Ms. Thompson said her priority is safety; regardless of what mode comes out on top. Councilor Ortiz said she is concerned that if the roads go to MassDOT, then we lose them. Councilor Wilson suggested that the council should come to this with open minds, recognize they are not powerless and consider the number of ways they can think about their role statutorily and what it can evolve to, which may involve legislators to weigh in on safety.

Councilor Smith distilled the conversation to two items to consider for the next meeting: 1) Roadways/Parkways and 2) What we perceive to be the council's role in directing DCR's priorities. Councilor Reynolds said we may have some potential enhancements and revisions to the [enabling] legislation in the Policy Committee meeting. Mr. Buckley said, "We should let the Commissioner know in advance so we can have a substantive discussion."

Chairman Walton said debating the enabling legislation and our Oversight Document will be agenda items this year.

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## **Regular Business**

Councilor Smith moved to approve the January 10, 2020 minutes. Councilor Reynolds made note of minor edits and Chairman Walton seconded the motion to approve the minutes with the aforesaid edits, all in favor, the motion passed.

Councilor Buckley distributed copies of the Massachusetts Fish and Wildlife magazine pointing to a carbon sequestration article.

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## Public Comment

Jessica Mink, Neponset River Greenway Council, noted the transfer of certain parkways to MassDOT ends at the roadway and the remainder of park land is DCR's. She said they are running into climate resiliency issues along their trail and underscored that her group cares a lot about Morrissey Blvd. She added the goal of the Neponset River Greenway trail is to provide a corridor for people to have an off the road means into the city and to the beaches, and she wants to make sure the planning keeps going through the three-year process for this "showplace."

Galen Mook, MassBikes, made several points and raised a question. He encouraged DCR/the council to think about Vision 0 as a policy for DCR—and to hold to statistical accountability. He asked if DCR has engineering policies that mirror MassDOT. He suggested following City of Boston Complete Streets Design Guidelines and noted that a municipality can get MassDOT funding if they follow Complete Streets Guidelines and suggested this could be a similar model for DCR. He requested that the "Urban Parks and Pathways Committee" be reformed. Mr. Mook told the group he wants to mitigate conflict, be more transparent, and he's asking the Secretary for help. He also referenced the never-released parkways study and wants to see it. He said he doesn't know if his group's comments are considered or implemented and said DCR provides only one-way communication about the Arborway. He said the group wants to be a resource for Vision 0 and mentioned if parkways move to MassDOT, we lose the park designation and the ability to advocate on I-90 river-front improvement.

Chairman Walton noted that the Boston delegation has been in active conversation about the parkway transfer issue. The combination of a new commissioner and an expanding council will all progress to take shape this year.

Councilor Buckley asked Mr. Mook how e-bikes fit into Vision 0. He said their group's focus is on speed, not pedal assist, which tops out at 35 mph and manual bikes can go faster.

Jennifer Jones of the Southwest Corridor Park Conservancy said the corridor is a completed bike path and greenway but is 35 years old and needs work. She said they had a proposal to stripe the bike path and improve the safety where it crosses Boston streets, but nothing has been done in three years. One of the hold ups may be that we want the rumble stripes replaced in cobblestone.

Sarah Freeman of the Arborway Coalition responded to Councilor Reynolds' question about the Arborway coming up by noting various concerns such as lane drops, crossovers, and speeding. To Ms. Norwood's point, Ms. Freeman said there are locals who don't want the road to change and she just wants it better without causing harm.

Jessica Mink said a potential transfer from DCR would be curb-to-curb and the things that park advocates want are with DCR.

Celeste Walker of the Friends of Allandale suggested that a third option is for the City of Cambridge to assume Historic Parkways not, MassDOT or DCR.

Eliza Parad of the Boston Cyclists Union underscored points covered by Ms. Thompson's presentation and said it would be helpful for DCR designers to adopt the Complete Streets Design as a formula to stand behind. She noted the City of Boston's crash data put the following roads as top for crashes: Storrow Drive, Arborway to VFW Parkway, Jamaicaaway to West Roxbury Parkway, Park Drive/Fenway/Riverway.

Ben Wetherill of West Roxbury Bikes reiterated that DCR is an organization that promotes recreation and bicycling is the largest recreational activity. As such DCR should make safer cycling on parkways a priority.

Julia O'Brien introduced herself as having worked for the MDC. She came to speak out against moving the parkways to MassDOT saying it would be unfortunate despite noting she believes DCR could do a better job. She acknowledged that most transportation money goes to MassDOT and suggested DCR could temporarily transfer a parkway to MassDOT for construction/reconstruction and then have the parkway revert back to DCR.

Chairman Walton, seeing no further comments from the public, moved the meeting into committee sessions.



## **Post Committee Meeting Reports**

Councilor Wilson made a general comment regarding the committee process about being careful not to set a precedent or give the public false expectations about their participation in committee meetings. Discussion ensued about inviting public engagement, considering all opinions but making it known that not all opinions may be equal.

### *Policy and Operations Committee*

Councilor Reynolds reported for the committee that they are focused on changes to the enabling legislation and will for the next meeting bring a list of items for the full council to consider what is practical and appropriate. Vice Chair Harper asked when the committee prepares those changes to the legislation, to please do so in the, "Track Changes" mode so all can see where changes have been placed. Additionally, Councilor Reynolds asked for a report on 2E [councilor] expenses for the last two years for policy committee consideration. (Lisa Barstow has provided that information). Short discussion ensued about ways to purchase a snack or lunch as the meetings run right through lunch.

### *Finance Committee*

Councilor Buckley reported for the committee, first discussing their meeting with Secretary Theoharides, joined by Commissioner Montgomery. During that meeting, Chairman Walton invited the Secretary to an upcoming Stewardship Council meeting. Councilor Buckley suggested thought be given that meeting's location and inviting advocates to attend. Members let the Secretary know the council is here for a purpose and to please use us. Chairman Walton added it was a good meeting to establish trust and to meet her team. Councilor Buckley addressed expanding the role of the council to deal with the budget, noting the council's statutory role in approving the DCR budget. Councilor Reynolds suggested looking at that as they review the enabling legislation. Councilor Buckley discussed his meeting with the Outdoor Recreation Council. He was dismayed that in the \$18B transportation bill there was no reference to parkways.

### *Stakeholder Committee*

Councilor Ortiz reported for the committee on discussions to make communication from DCR to stakeholders more transparent and integrating within Stewardship Council meetings a mechanism for them to make specific what they need from DCR during a public comment period. A meeting with Jennifer Norwood and Commissioner Montgomery is requested to determine gaps in stakeholder communication toward resolution. Councilor Ortiz noted sending out a survey of

stakeholders may not be something we can deliver on, but creating more transparency is. Vice Chair Harper suggested the question be posed, “What pieces of information are you missing or not able to find,” to help Ms. Norwood and Commissioner Montgomery focus attention. Ms. Ortiz noted that there may not be a Friends Network gathering in 2020—assessment will take place whether there is sufficient value for DCR to take that on.

Chairman Walton expressed a desire to develop guidelines for the public during public comment period to help gain more control over the process in general, i.e. focus comments on three core items. Councilor Wilson questioned whether there was something the council could do to prepare ourselves for the next meeting on Forestry. Chairman Walton said he could circulate the Forest Future Visioning Process summary document he created. Councilor Buckley distributed copies of the MassWildlife Magazine with an article on carbon sequestration. He also noted that he met with his legislator and she did not know what the Stewardship Council was. Thusly, Councilor Buckley suggested putting something together for legislators.

Chairman Walton introduced a motion to adjourn which was seconded and unanimously accepted.



The next meeting of the DCR Stewardship Council will be held at Holyoke Heritage State Park, March 5, 2020 at 10:30 a.m.