



February Meeting Minutes

Council Members Present: Jack Buckley, Ann Canedy, Esq., Jeffrey Collins, Dicken Crane, Melissa Harper, David Murphy, Vivian Ortiz, Dennis Smith, Nate Walton, Jennifer N.S. Wilson, Esq. [Susan Smiley—newly named to the council, yet to be sworn in—was present]

Council Members Not Present: n/a

Member Materials: n/a

DCR Attendees: Lisa Barstow, Paul Cavanagh, Nick Connors, Rishi Reddi (EEA), Matthew Villamaino

Public Attendees as Registered:

Branner Stewart
Chris Redfern
Chuck Anastas
Erica Holm
Ellen Aron
Jeanne Kelley

Glen Ayers
Judy Jacobs
Julieannrapoport
NEMBAbill - Bill Boles
Sarah Freeman
Becky

Bob Weggel
Doug
John Mahoney
Kathryn Craddock McKee
Laurel Facey
Mary McCarthy

Call to Meeting - Chairman Nate Walton

Chairman Walton opened the meeting, offered an overview of the Zoom format. He noted the appointment of a new member, Susan Smiley, who was yet to be sworn in to her seat but would be joining the Council from Worcester County.

He introduced DCR Deputy Commissioner for Policy, Public Affairs and Administration Nick Connors to deliver the DCR Report.

DCR Report - Nick Connors, Commissioner

Deputy Commissioner Connors offered insight into some recurring themes of the council. First, he discussed access to DCR parks by the public. Distance is one way to measure access so he asked our GIS team to map how close residents live to a DCR park. [This is the easiest way to measure that captures all DCR properties but recognize not every DCR property is a park.]

- Statewide: 49.4% of the population is within one mile of a DCR property.
- Outside 495: (former DEM) 37% of the population is within one mile of a DCR property.
- Inside 495: (former MDC) 59% of the population is within one mile of a DCR property.

Additionally:

- 70% of Environmental Justice communities/residents are within one mile of a DCR property.

Mr. Connors said we see this as very good news and hopes to have a map at a future meeting to illustrate this. He said we are always looking to expand access to open space and this is a measure DCR can use as we consider acquisitions, especially in urban spaces statewide, noting this is a priority of the Commissioner and Secretary Theoharides.

Responding to questions by councilors who have asked about best practices on EV adoption, sustainability, electrification and DCR's practices, Mr. Connors shared DCR's goals working with DOER/EEA on its "Leading by Example" program. He said next year, 2022, is the first opportunity to replace passenger vehicles going out of service with electric vehicles (EVs). Part of this effort involves expanding our infrastructure of charging stations, working across state government and eventually offering charging stations for public use. He laid out a framework for further EV replacement as these become available. Finally, he said Operations has purchased electric Kubotas for Foss Park in Somerville and the newly renovated park in Worcester.

Q&A

Councilor Crane asked how driving miles, thus energy consumption, can be reduced to cover the short distance to parks. Mr. Connors said uncovering this data is new inside DCR. The high visitation we saw during COVID-19, last spring, created a consciousness by the public of what parks are near to them. Mr. Connors shared DCR's "Find Your Park" app as one effort to engage the public on park proximity and intoned about efforts DCR could undertake on a regional media campaign to tell the story of parks nearby.

Councilor Ortiz is excited that DCR will be able to provide information on how close a person is to a park and include directions for all modes of transportation. She suggested working with the MBTA or Friends groups to identify bike parking locations. Mr. Connors noted Friends groups would be critically important in pitching a local press angle.

Councilor Collins suggested DCR look at bus routes' access to parks and go upstream to look at populations that way.

Councilor Buckley asked if DCR was going to put these numbers out—to tell people how close parks are to them? And he asked if DCR works with the T/MassDOT as to whether their routes take into consideration where parks are. He also asked about the focus of DCR's social media now?

Mr. Connors said our social media focus is moving to digital integration with public meetings. Twitter is used for advisories and focused on park openings/closings and capacity issues. Instagram is focussed on user engagement. On the park proximity numbers, Mr. Connors said the plan is to share that information with Secretary

Theoharides and create potential tie-ins with other efforts like Earth Week and Park Serve Week.

Councilor Wilson thanked DCR for its packaging of family friendly self-guided things to do during February school vacation at parks. She said she was impressed at the totality of things to do, such as the hikes and scavenger hunts. She encouraged other councilors to be ambassadors to share that information as she did on her local [town] Facebook page, which reaches 10,000 people. She suggested tying that into how close a park is to you as a combined message.

Mr. Connors recognized the Visitor Services staff who put that together. Their programs have been shut down due to COVID but they have done terrific a job pivoting to virtual programs for libraries, classrooms, Girls Scouts and programs like First Week Hikes and Park Serve Week—doing something safe and local. Mr. Connors noted that he and Julie Martin will meet with the Commissioner on our capability to do content for classrooms that ties into MA Curriculum Standards.

Councilor Smith commended Mr. Connors on the EV efforts and suggested clean energy as a future meeting topic. Mr. Connors said once we can meet in person, he hopes to have the council come to North Point, recognized a LEED Gold Certified building.

Regular Business II – *Due to a last-minute conflict, Regular Business II was taken up before Regular Business I, as stated in the [February 11, 2021 Agenda](#).*

[Environmental Justice Update at the Executive Office of Energy and Environmental Affairs \(EEA\)](#)

Rishi Reddi, Director of Environmental Justice

Q&A

Vice Chair Harper asked Ms. Reddi if there is a dashboard or metrics used to measure success. Ms. Reddi spoke of built-in timetables and assessments to which Councilor Buckley asked if there were practical applications. She responded that one such application is their public grievance process which has many paths to participation.

Councilor Ortiz asked about skepticism by residents of Environmental Justice (EJ) communities about the government coming into their neighborhoods telling them what they (the government) would be doing. She cited the use of culturally-sensitive signage as a positive means of communicating. Ms. Reddi said they recognize there is no “cookie-cutter” way to make this work across all communities and acknowledged that in order to make substantive policy actions work it must be done with community involvement.

Discussion ensued on EEA’s EJ work with MassDOT, the benefit of unifying EJ language across federal and state governments and sharing this information with municipalities and land trusts, which is underway.

[Status Report from Friends of Middlesex Fells](#)

Chris Redfern, Executive Director, Friends of the Middlesex Fells Reservation (FOTF)

Q&A

Councilor Canedy noted, in response to an issue raised during the presentation about oversight of the Resource Management Plan (RMP), that the council has had conversations with DCR's Paul Cavanagh who has hired staff and has committed to regular updates to the council.

Councilor Buckley asked about the source of Friends of the Fells funding, which Mr. Redfern replied was mostly from its 500 regular members/donors and, together with grant and corporate funding, is between \$300,000 to \$400,000 annually. Councilor Crane suggested FOTF is among the highest quality DCR partners and could be a model to other Friends groups. Discussion ensued about upcoming plans for an online Friends group gathering in March coordinated by DCR's Jenny Norwood and a fall Friends conference, hopefully in person.

Councilor Wilson asked how to bring along "passionate, non-compliant" users of state parks, which is a universal problem across DCR mixed use parks—speaking of those who don't collect their pet waste and other violations of "leave no trace" standards. Mr. Redfern recommends bringing in experts to get users to police themselves by building a culture of compliance.

Regular Business I

Approval of Minutes – January 14, 2021 Meeting

Chairman Walton raised the issue of the adoption of the January 14, 2021 minutes. Councilor Smith motioned to adopt the minutes and Councilor Buckley seconded the motion. Chairman Walton offered a roll call on the adoption of the minutes, as indicated for virtual meetings:

- Councilor Collins - Yes
- Councilor Smith – Yes
- Councilor Buckley – Yes
- Secretary Canedy – Yes
- Councilor Wilson - Yes
- Vice Chair Harper – Yes
- Councilor Murphy - Abstain
- Councilor Ortiz – Yes
- Councilor Crane – Yes
- Councilor Reynolds – Yes
- Councilor Walton – Yes

The January 14, 2021 minutes were adopted.

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:

- Kathryn McKee

- John T. Mahoney
- Glen Ayers
- Bill Boles

Regular Business III

Committee Meeting Breakouts and Recap

Stakeholders Committee

The report was delivered by Vice Chair Harper. She reported that the MOU for the Friends groups is drafted and Jenny Norwood is working on a virtual Friends gathering to educate Friends groups about the new MOU, and we await a timeline and process for that meeting. Ms. Harper said the committee sent a draft to Deputy Commissioner Connors formalizing a process for presentations to the council, to ensure equity in who we see. A final version will be put before the full council for approval. She said a few items were put on the agenda as a result of today's presentation (FOTF) related to how we understand capacity issues with partnerships, i.e. could this committee support increasing and improving capacity and, working with Policy and Operations Committee, could Friends groups play a role in RMP progress monitoring to relieve some burden from DCR staff. She noted these will be taken back to the committee for further discussion.

Finance Committee

The report was delivered by Committee Chair Murphy. The group discussed the excellent presentation on retained revenue but expressed concern about reliance on retained revenue instead of more reliable operational funding. The committee asked Chairman Walton to request a presentation by Commissioner Montgomery at the next available opportunity on DCR's operating budget priorities for the upcoming year so the council can support the budget process. The committee implores DCR to expand efforts to market its properties—to increase stewardship by constituencies who then petition legislators to support increased funding for the state park system. Doug Pizzi of Mass Conservation Voters joined the committee meeting and shared that he wrote a blog piece on the budget process.

Policy and Operations Committee

The report was delivered by Committee Chair Wilson. She reported that Ann, Jeff, and Nick Connors met with Paul Cavanagh for an update on the RMP process. Paul has hired two planners to assist him and the new process has been rolled out to all DCR departments, where staff is ready to participate. Ms. Wilson noted two RMPs are due in the fourth quarter. Updates will likely come from Paul to Nick to the council through DCR Updates. She concluded that staying attentive to plans once implemented will be the topic of future meetings.

Adjournment

Chairman Walton commended all the members and committee leaders on the great work being done and noted he will follow up with DCR staff on the action items discussed. He adjourned the meeting at 11:30 a.m.

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