



April Meeting Minutes

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

Council Members Not Present: All present

Member Materials: DCR Stewardship Council Statement 4-10-20; DCR SC Statement Tracked Changes; Enabling Legislation Review 4-10-20; DCR Stewardship Council Guidelines 3-23-20; Stewardship Council Meeting Minutes 2-07-20.

DCR Attendees: Lisa Barstow, Deputy Commissioner Nick Connors

Public Attendees as Registered:

207-338-607X	Boles, Bill	damianoj@husky.neu
860-748-774X	Burson, Alison	Freeman, Sarah
Anastas, Chuck	Chapman, Ted	Garvey, Jack
Arnstein, Ellen	Charles River Conservancy	Krause, Ken
Ayers, Glen	Christoffersen, Amber	Nolan, Herbert
Beatty, Kelly	Conine, Alexi	Walker, Celeste
Becky	Cuipylo, Donna	

Call to Meeting - Chairman Nate Walton

Chairman Walton called the meeting to order at 9:03 a.m., this being the first videoconference of the DCR Stewardship Council. The Council believes it is important that we still hold meetings and is hopeful this format will provide a greater opportunity for both councilors and the public to participate. He outlined the meeting framework including when public comment was accepted.

Chairman Walton thanked the Administration, Secretary Theoharides and Chairman Montgomery for their leadership during this health emergency while dealing with a surge of visitorship at parks. He introduced Deputy Commissioner Nick Connors who recently rejoined DCR.

DCR Report – Nick Connors, Deputy Commissioner for Policy, Public Affairs and Administration

Deputy Commissioner Connors provided an overview of his background at DCR, leading External Affairs and Partnerships before assuming leadership roles at the Department of Energy Resources as Chief of Staff and Program Director. Mr. Connors was asked to rejoin DCR effective March 16, 2020.

He provided an update on the steps taken to navigate the emergency remote work situation for DCR staff who can work at home and dealing with challenges of historic visitor levels while maintaining social distancing—as state parks increasingly have become a key outlet for residents’ to maintain their physical and mental well-being.

He noted the extraordinary work of Operations in managing this emergency in between what would be the winter and summer seasonal employee shift. Mr. Connors thanked the Massachusetts Environmental Police for their efforts in helping open seasonal parks early to alleviate stress on over-attended parks and to help close parking lots at such locations to make them pedestrian-only destinations.

Councilor Murphy asked Dep. Commissioner Connors about the decision to close parking at Wollaston Beach, noting it had a ripple effect with cars parking on the side streets. Mr. Connors noted that DCR makes these decisions in connection with municipalities who can make other determinations.

Councilor Buckley noted this crisis has demonstrated the importance of state parks, noting rise in visitors who had never been to a state park. Dep. Commissioner Connors noted finding the silver lining is to remain engaged with these communities and building ownership.

Before moving to the External Stakeholder Presentation, Chairman Walton introduced new council member Dicken Crane who told the group he owns and manages a tree farm in Windsor, MA, has livestock and is involved with composting, sugarbush operations, CSA farmers markets and his family owns protected land—family business is Crane & Co. The council welcomed Mr. Crane.

Citing the council’s recent decision to incorporate stakeholder presentations into meetings to foster communication and enhance public-private partnerships, Chairman Walton introduced Herbert Nolan, Executive Director of the Solomon Foundation.

Special Business – External Stakeholder Presentation by Herbert Nolan, Executive Director | Solomon Foundation

Mr. Nolan welcomed back Mr. Connors to DCR and underscored that his organization’s mission to open park spaces and greenways was never more prescient than now as we face the COVID-19 emergency. With a background as a landscape architect, Mr. Nolan said

the foundation provided money and leadership to projects in the greater Boston area since its founding in 2005. He spoke of the firm's ability to do planning, design, test ideas and then scale them up to a shovel-ready point in ways public agencies could not. They do this by leveraging millions of dollars raised through their private partners and by working collaboratively, recognizing that partnerships of all types bring innovation and engagement that lay foundations for success. Mr. Nolan referred to the advantage they bring as, "doubling the DCR staff and professional time."

Mr. Nolan introduced representatives of two partner organizations: Amber Christoffersen of the Mystic River Watershed Alliance and Ted Chapman at the Riverside Greenway Project. Both groups spoke of their work with DCR—Amber on the Clippership Connector Project on the Mystic River and Ted on the Greenway along the Charles, where Mr. Nolan notes the Mass. Turnpike project had buried a mile and a half of the Charles River.

Unraveling complex, multi-jurisdictional projects is where partnerships can help build grassroots support for progress. Groups like the Solomon Foundation also can take hits and risks that state agencies cannot.

Mr. Nolan closed by saying DCR has too much to do and the Solomon Foundation can help deliver projects to DCR's door.

Regular Business

Approval of Minutes

Chairman Walton called the roll to approve the February 7, 2020 minutes:

- Councilor Reynolds - yes
- Councilor Smith - yes
- Councilor Murphy - yes
- Councilor Buckley - yes
- Councilor Wilson - yes
- Councilor Harper - yes
- Councilor Ortiz - yes
- Chairman Walton - yes
- Not having been a member of the council on that date, Dicken Crane abstained.

The minutes were adopted.

Enabling Legislation Review

Councilor Reynolds opened discussion on a marked-up version by the Policy Committee of the enabling legislation creating the Stewardship Council. He cited an overarching need for, "consensus on our role" with notable questions such as whether the Department should be under the "control" or "oversight" of the council.

Councilor Wilson suggested that while the draft addresses many possible changes, one question for the council is, “how extensive do we want to be,” i.e. not recommending the council pursue all of these changes but move forward with a few where there is wide agreement.

Chairman Walton added that many changes are administrative and a, “light lift.” He suggested the council tackle these as a body before addressing the fundamental question of, “What is the council?”

Councilor Reynolds proposed, for example, agreement on staggered terms but building fresh ideas on how to stagger them.

Councilor Smith said having this discussion on Zoom (videoconference), rather than in person, is difficult and suggested the council agree in principal on the importance of staggering so we don’t lose the whole council at once but defer the details for an in-person meeting. Mr. Smith also noted that because this will go through the legislature, they will have ideas we haven’t considered or may not want. He notes some of the language refers to the merging of the MDC and the DEM and is essentially moot.

Chairman Walton stated that the council would not be voting on this today but having a discussion on the draft.

Public Comment

Kelly Beatty raised concerns about a roadway lighting project at the intersections of Routes 93 and 24 in the Blue Hills potentially disturbing the [nocturnal] environment of the reservation.

Bill Boles echoed comments thanking DCR staff for keeping parks open during the COVID-19 emergency. He encouraged riding bikes to parks and said while parks are busy, social distancing is possible on trails.

Sarah Freeman asked if the Council knew how DCR was dealing with the issue of pedestrian/traffic safety along the Arborway. Deputy Commissioner Connors answered by saying DCR is working with outside consultants to be prepared when normal traffic patterns return.

Glen Ayers raised concerns about public comment period on [forest management practices] timber sales. Has overall concerns with DCR process and procedures for forest management.

Ken Krause thanked the council for its presentation on partnerships and encouraged continued partnerships.

Celeste Walker asked what progress has been made in implementing the projects funded in the 2018 Environmental Bond Bill.

Susan Masino cited the importance of protecting full-native biodiversity and concerns about migration trends – relative to DCR forest management practices.

Gia asked when Mr. Ayers can expect a substantial response and noted frustration with the last meeting cancellation. Councilor Reynolds said he would do some follow up on Mr. Ayres matter.

Miriam Kurland said she hears many comments but does not see the comments being taken. She noted appreciation of Susan Masino's comments and wants to keep forests wild and natural.

Chairman Walton said public comments are taken seriously by the council and that they may inform the council's deliberations. However, he noted that the council is an oversight body and does not have policymaking authority. Given this, members of the public should not expect that comments at Council meetings will result in a specific action in response. He also suggested that members of the public also reach out directly to elected/appointed officials regarding policy concerns.

Chairman Walton asked if there was further comment and seeing none, motioned to adjourn, the motion was seconded, all in favor, the meeting was adjourned.

The next meeting of the DCR Stewardship Council is scheduled for May 14, 2020, location and time T/B/D.

Please check the DCR Stewardship Council webpage for updates:

<https://www.mass.gov/service-details/dcr-stewardship-council>