



## April Meeting Minutes

**Council Members Present:** Jack Buckley, Ann Canedy, Esq., Jeffrey Collins, Dicken Crane, Melissa Harper, Susan Smiley, Dennis Smith, Nate Walton, Jennifer N.S. Wilson, Esq.

**Council Members Not Present:** Vivian Ortiz, David Murphy

**Member Materials:** n/a

**DCR Staff Attendees:** Lisa Barstow, Nick Connors, Ally Trahan, Max Tassinari, George Trubiano

### Public Attendees as Registered:

Lizzie Roche  
Branner Stewart  
Julieann Rapaport  
Erica Holm  
Suzanne Gall Marsh  
Chuck Anastas

Bill Boles  
H. Parker James  
Chris Redfern  
Judy Jacobs  
Ellen Aron  
Julia Damiano

Rod Motamendi  
Celeste Walker  
John  
Sarah Freeman  
Glen Ayers  
Joann Robinson

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### Call to Meeting – Chairman Nate Walton

Chairman Walton opened the meeting, offered an overview of the virtual format and noted the meeting is recorded. He reported Councilor Buckley formally assumed the role of chair of Finance Committee. Chairman Walton provided an update on the meeting of the DCR Special Commission, which will examine the structure and operations of the agency to improve overall agency operations. He noted that he will keep the council abreast of updates to our enabling legislation.

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

Deputy Commissioner Connors noted that DCR's shift to spring and summer has begun with golf commencing at Leo J. Martin and Ponkapoag courses and noting an end to hockey season at DCR rinks, having extended the season to accommodate users.

Operations is busy readying fields, beaches and pools and DCR's commitment to Environmental Justice communities advances with reopenings to turf fields at Foss Park in Somerville and Lake Park in Worcester, which will wear better and extend the season of play.

Deputy Commissioner Connors reported on ways DCR is better serving visitors. In May, the heavily visited Halibut Point State Park in Rockport is moving to real time park closure reporting via capacity notifications on social media. This is a major shift forward in improving visitor communication where park closures due to capacity are commonplace.

Interpretive Services has successfully introduced online Storywalks and community support, such as from Friends of the Fells has been key in spreading the word. To improve the welcome and orientation experience, especially for new visitors who are new to state park "rules of the road," this year IS will introduce outdoor information tables to provide that information where Visitor Centers remain closed due to COVID-19. Looking ahead, IS is developing an online pilot education series, "Parks as Classrooms" for teachers. To begin, ten sites will be featured with the hope to expand. This is a way to spread great stories about our parks geographically across the state.

Mr. Connors reported on agreements from April through November with municipal partners to close segments of parkways to create urban parks on weekends for recreational use. He noted we are hiring lifeguards, and investing in the beautification and renovation of the parking lot at Halibut Point to complement the new Visitor Center. While the parking lot is closed, DCR is working with local officials to shuttle visitors from nearby parking areas.

As has been stated, Mr. Connors reported he will provide an update on RMPs to the council from Paul Cavanagh every couple of months. Mr. Cavanagh is finalizing one legacy plan on Myles Standish State Park. Mr. Connors also noted DCR awaits an update for the approval of e-bikes in state parks from EEA and the Governor's Office following a public process from 2019, delays due to COVID-19.

~ Q&A ~

Councilor Buckley asked for an update on the Edgewater neighborhood. Deputy Commissioner Connors reported that DCR has worked with the neighborhood and Herb Nolan's organization to bring in a designer this fiscal year—to determine what entrances to open up is a generally agreed upon community process. A scope of project has been determined with Mr. Nolan.

Councilor Buckley asked for an update on the property on the Esplanade (former Lee Pool). Mr. Connors said a Request for Information has been issued to be sure we have engaged the

full community. Legislation submitted by Sen. DiDomenico includes language for a long-term agreement [for partner/s] to build whatever they would like on the property. There has been significant discussion over the years on what DCR wants vs. what the Esplanade Association wants. There is still significant discussion underway.

Councilor Buckley raised the issue of the value of the virtual meeting component. Councilor Wilson said the policy committee is reviewing that issue on their agenda and she noted we are still operating under emergency powers of the Governor, and there are various proposals out there. Chairman Walton said that should be a priority and thanked the policy committee for taking that on.

Councilor Crane asked a question about the rehiring of seasonal employees and whether they return to the same position. Mr. Connors said long-term seasonals have two, two-week breaks in the fall and spring.

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## **Regular Business I**

### *Approval of Minutes – March 11, 2021 Meeting*

Chairman Walton entertained a motion to adopt the March 11, 2021 minutes. Councilor Collins offered a friendly amendment to revise the verbiage of the Mass Audubon section, changing museum funding to wildlife sanctuary. Chairman Walton offered a roll call on the adoption of the minutes, as indicated for virtual meetings:

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

The March 11, 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:

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- Sarah Freeman
- Bill Boles
- Glen Ayers

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## Regular Business II

[Presentation on Operating Budget](#) - Max Tassinari, Chief Financial Officer

~ Q&A ~

Conversation ensued by members on the need to plan well in advance of Governor's budget to engage on DCR budget, on raising additional funds through fees and spending out of the Retained Revenue account and the desire [by the council] for DCR to be fully supported through the general fund.

Other questions were raised about management and maintenance of DCR buildings and dams; looking at EJ communities overall funding, COVID-19 capacity limits impacting revenue particularly in campgrounds, transferring State House Rangers to State Police—an issue the legislature has not taken up—and how DCR monitors revenue through line-item deposits into state system. Director of Administration and Finance George Trubiano answered questions about how DCR sets budgets, forecasts and monitors spending.

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## Regular Business III

~ Committee Meeting Breakouts and Recap ~

### *Finance Committee Recap*

Committee Chairman Buckley shared on behalf of the group. He thanked DCR Finance staff for presentations and helping to get on a routine budget schedule. The committee has a June meeting to discuss recommendations for the FY23 budget, starting with the maintenance budget. He proposes in July the council take a formal budget vote making SC approval part of the budget schedule in compliance with the law.

### *Policy and Operations Committee Recap*

Committee Chair Wilson shared on behalf of the group. She said the committee will stay abreast of the work of special commission and where the council wants to express an opinion, we want to do that. On the RMP, Ms. Wilson said the committee will bring regularity and procedure to reporting. She said there is a desire by the council to advocate for a hybrid meeting structure under the Open Meeting Law. Recognizing it may set precedents on other DCR public meetings, the committee will continue to explore that and report back.

## *Stakeholders Committee Recap*

Councilor Harper shared on behalf of the group. A technology update was provided on the request process for Friends groups to present to the council, and we hope to have an update on the process by next month's meeting. We took feedback from Friends Network meeting and a roadmap going forward. Ms. Harper will share her notes with the council and DCR. Regarding the MOU, she noted the committee will monitor the roll out to be sure it goes smoothly.

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## **Adjournment**

Chairman Walton thanked everyone for a productive meeting and adjourned and the conclusion of committee reports.

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*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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