



May Meeting Minutes

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

Council Members Not Present: Dicken Crane

Member Materials: n/a

DCR Staff Attendees: Lisa Barstow, Christine Berry, Nick Connors, Jim Esposito, Arthur George, Susan Hamilton, Jennifer Howard, Evelyn Jimenez

Public Attendees as Registered:

Sarah Freeman
Branner Stewart
Buzz Constable
Celeste Walker

Chuck Anastas
Chris Redfern
Ellen Aron
Glen Ayers

Judy Lehrer Jacobs
Michael Nichols
Bill Boles
Suzanne Gall Marsh

Call to Meeting – Chairman Nate Walton

Chairman Walton opened the meeting,

Meeting is recorded. Update on the Special Commission, meeting included update on AMMP. Commission will hold public listening sessions at the Council's request. David Murphy resigned after four years and finance committee chair. News story on and comment staffer for saving ducklings from a sewer.

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

Deputy Commissioner Connors welcomed the group with good news that the Gronkowski Family Foundation will gift \$1.2 million to rebuild a state-of-the-art playground and structure near Leverett circle to serve the children of greater Boston. They will work with DCR Playground Planner Sandra Libby.

Mr. Connors noted our fields are packed, including the two newly refurbished turf fields in Environmental Justice communities— Foss Park, Somerville and Lake Park, Worcester. Both are permitted for a number of groups and also available for informal recreation. He invited councilors to take a look when in the area(s).

Looking to Memorial Day, he praised, “ingenious staff” who have worked throughout to provide restroom access and are now moving into a reopening of visitor centers across the system, moving us closer to “normal.” Mr. Connors noted that director of Aquatics Jim Esposito will update the council on efforts to recruit lifeguards and preparations for the season.

He offered an update on new hires in the RMP program and noted the retirement of DCR’s long-serving archeologist Ellen Berkland, but not without closing the loop on RMP information needed to conclude the Blackstone and South Coast RMPs. Mr. Connors provided an update on the Legacy RMPs and news on the launch of the 31-property Central Highlands District RMP.

Following up on items from last month, Mr. Connors clarified that the Special Commission while run by EEA, has continued to work and engage DCR to gather information and feedback. He highlighted an upcoming listening session to give interested constituents and stakeholders a chance to share thoughts and input.

Regarding e-bikes, Mr. Connors noted meetings are taking place with the Commissioner, Friends group representatives and legislators and reminded the council that the original draft regulation was shared over a public comment period with robust involvement, including public hearings in Holyoke and Boston. As it stands now the proposed regulation is in regulatory review prior to promulgation.

Mr. Connors said DCR is looking to the first quarter of the fiscal year to roll out the MOU process, getting past the busy summer season and allowing for additional feedback. He also said the guest presenter form is nearly ready and asked that everyone be cognizant of DCR feedback on timing. He thanked Vice Chair Harper and her team for working so hard.

~ Q&A ~

Councilor Buckley asked for an update on Edgewater project and the Esplanade pavilion (former Lee Pool). Mr. Connors said both Edgewater and Doyle Park have bids out for consultants and DCR has been in talks with Friends of Doyle Park and onsite with elected officials, noting Rep. Consalvo marked cleanup money in the budget. The project is still on track for construction in fall or spring FY22. Mr. Connors responded there is still a question on what model the community wants for the Esplanade pavilion project and DCR wants to open the conversation broadly as to best use for the entire community, having faced some scrutiny for not looking at further alternatives before establishing an agreement on Daly Field. We want broad input up front, Mr. Connors noted.

When asked if the Gronkowski playground met that criteria, it was noted that the Esplanade Association discovered there was an opportunity with the foundation; and this

project was an improvement of the same kind on the same location, unlike the other two examples.

Councilor Buckley asked the Chairman to invite the Esplanade Association to discuss this project. He also asked for the DCR General Counsel opinion on whether Revere (residential and public) parking meter fees constitute an Article 97 disposition.

Councilor Ortiz asked to be notified of activities in Suffolk County, such as a walk through of Doyle playground, so she can attend. She also provided an update of both the large-scale Earth Week clean up by the Neponset River Watershed Association, with DCR's help and NepRWA's partnership on the Earth Week cleanup and vegetation planting event with Commissioner Montgomery and Secretary Theoharides in Mattapan.

Councilor Smiley thanked DCR for all the work at Lake Park and asked for the information on e-bikes to be sent around.

Regular Business I

Approval of Minutes – April 8, 2021 Meeting

Councilor Smith moved to accept the minutes of the April 8, 2021 meeting and Councilor Smiley seconded. Chairman Walton called the roll on the adoption of the minutes, as indicated for virtual meetings:

Councilor Smiley – Yes
Councilor Walton – Yes
Councilor Buckley – Yes
Councilor Ortiz – Abstained
Councilor Smith – Yes
Councilor Collins – Yes
Councilor Harper – Yes
Councilor Canedy – Yes
Councilor Wilson – Yes

The April 8, 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:

- Chuck Anastas
- Glen Ayers
- Bill Boles
- Sarah Freeman

Regular Business II

[Presentation](#) – *Rowley Land Acquisition, Christine Berry*

~ Q&A ~

Councilor Canedy asked the cost, which was reported at \$20,000.

Councilor Buckley asked why this was not done in Executive Session. Ms. Berry said there is no sensitive information that needed to be shielded, and DCR had already done public notices. He also asked if this is an Article 97 disposition? Arthur George, counselor on the project, replied regarding the section of the law on urban and non-urban park areas constitute the designation.

Councilor Smiley asked if those trails will be open to all? Ms. Berry answered yes and there will be no interruption in the trail connection. She also asked the estimated cost of ownership annually. Ms. Berry replied it is a very small number of acres but having this whole area owned by DCR reduces management burdens of working around private property.

Councilor Collins said these types of inholdings are a smart approach and noted it looks like a good project.

[Presentation](#) – *DCR Aquatics Operations, Jim Esposito, Director of Aquatics and Evelyn Jimenez, Manager of Aquatics, West Region*

~ Q&A ~

Chairman Walton publicly thanked DCR lifeguards for their tremendous service to the Commonwealth.

Councilor Wilson asked if DCR keeps guards for multiple seasons. Mr. Esposito, replied, yes three-to-five years, with greatest retention at coastal beaches, i.e., Salisbury and Horseneck. Noting teachers stay up to ten years.

Councilor Collins asked how guards intersect with shorebird habitats and RMPs. Assistant Deputy Commissioner for State Parks Susan Hamilton replied that shorebird monitors and lifeguards all work together under the facility supervisor following approved beach management plans that cover certain activities around shorebird monitoring and everyone is well informed.

Mr. Esposito added that there are multiple trainings and facility orientations guards must undergo, including spending a day just acclimating to the facility.

Councilor Ortiz requested the presentation. [Note: All presentations are posted to the [Stewardship Council webpage](#).]

Regular Business III

Committee Meeting Breakouts and Recap

In returning from committee meetings, Chairman Walton asked council members if they had thoughts or questions about this month's new committee set up (interchanging members to gain perspective).

Councilor Collins said it was helpful to have others join and, "be a fly on the wall."

Councilor Wilson, noted looking forward to being back in person.

Councilor Smiley asked the purpose of the Special Commission. Chairman Walton said it was set up by legislation to cast a high-level, broad ranging look at the agency and possible ways to reorganize the agency. Branner Stewart, a UMass consultant on the project, added that the deliverable will be a report with recommendations to the Commission members.

Policy and Operations Committee Recap

Committee Chair Wilson shared on behalf of the group. They continue to monitor progress on RMPs, with the next update in June to the full council prior to that will be a simple dashboard. She anticipate tasks coming out of Special Commission and is putting together a draft letter about benefits and pitfalls on hybrid meetings for councils like ours.

Finance Committee Recap

Committee Chairman Buckley shared on behalf of the group. His goal is to get to a place where the Council is on the approval map for the budget. Councilor Harper added what we really want is to approve an operational list of priorities, so we have a better understanding of the budget. Mr. Buckley would like to get there by July. Deputy Commissioner Connors offered to assist with setting up a meeting with A&F and developing a template.

Adjournment

Chairman Walton thanked everyone for their participation.

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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