



## July Meeting Minutes

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

**Council Members Not Present:** Ann Canedy, Esq., Dennis Smith

**Member Materials:** n/a

**DCR Staff Attendees:** Lisa Barstow, Paul Cavanagh, Nick Connors, Patrice Kish, Max Tassinari, George Trubiano, Matt Villamaino

### Public Attendees as Registered:

Joe Dorant	ssmalley	Elisa Campbell
Sarah Freeman	Bill Boles	Suzanne Gall Marsh
Michael Nichols	Allison T	Julia Damiano
Doreen Frigo	Glen Ayers	Buzz Constable
Chuck Anastas	Mike Toomey	Lee Toma
		Catz LeBlanc

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### Call to Meeting – Chairman Nate Walton

Chairman Walton opened the meeting with greetings and participation instructions including a brief update on the last meeting of the DCR Special Commission. He noted that May marked two years since he became the Council’s chairman, and expressed his belief that the Council should hold regular leadership elections to ensure fresh perspectives and ideas. Mr. Walton said he plans to continue as chair at least through the conclusion of the Special Commission, and to schedule elections shortly thereafter.

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### DCR Report – Nick Connors, Deputy Commissioner for Conservation and Resource Stewardship

Deputy Commissioner Connors thanked Deputy Commissioner Priscilla Geigis for filling in for him last month, delivering the DCR Report and taking questions. Mr. Connors noted he expects Commissioner Montgomery to be present next month as today he was with the Governor and Lt. Governor on the Cape announcing recipients of recreational trails grants.

He noted the agency is in full summer swing, and we have returned to some familiar, beloved activities such as the Esplanade Association hosting the Boston Landmarks Orchestra at the Hatch Shell.

Mr. Connors followed up on some simmering topics. No legislation or decision on E-bikes has been made, and we await release and review of Federal information from the Volpe Center (per NPS) before making a decision. We anticipate final regulations to be released in September.

DCR engaged in a review of open water swimming that, out of an abundance of caution, resulted in greater restrictions, which had an acute impact at Walden Pond. These rules were revisited and modified in a manner allowing lifeguards to focus on buoyed areas and created designated times for open water swimmers—also asking them to wear flotation devices.

Mr. Connors mentioned DCR has provided salary increases and bonuses, as well as trainings to incentivize recruitment and retention of lifeguards, which is an acute problem nationally. He welcomes the council's ideas and input. We have increased our Learn to Swim program, partnering with non-profits and regional swimming school franchises and engage with folks year-round to create greater water confidence for the summer season.

Jack Buckley and Nate Walton have worked closely with the Finance team to put together a plan for the council's involvement in the budget and today's presentations include a high-level look at the current budget by the Finance team and from Patrice Kish, a programmatic look at capital budget plans for the years ahead.

Mr. Connors said we are continuing to move forward on Edgewater, with a consultant on board and plans for next spring putting shovels in the ground.

~ Q&A ~

Councilor Ortiz asked if there are a lot of folks in the water at Walden during the designated times. Mr. Connors said mornings are typically busy but changing work habits have shifted daytime schedules. Our goal remains visitor education, a focus for lifeguards within designated areas and engaging with stakeholders. Walden is most well-known for open water swimming but there are other parks that we are looking at opening more open water swimming opportunity.

Councilor Wilson asked if there would be an external process before promulgation of recommendations from the Volpe Report and if these changes would be dramatic or minor. Mr. Connors said he would not characterize the changes as dramatic.

Councilor Buckley asked for an update on Edgewater and the RFI on the Esplanade. Mr. Connors restated the plan is shovels in the ground in Spring 2022 and said there is a draft RFI from the Esplanade Association he hopes to share soon.

Councilor Smiley asked how the \$1.2 million additional budget allocation investment impacts DCR. Mr. Trubiano said for salaries and operational needs, noting DCR was level funded for two years. Mr. Connors said he will work to get a more specific answer.

Vice Chair Harper recommended that when the regulations for E-Bikes are released that DCR share the history that there was a formal public process in 2019 – given the time gap and COVID issues, many who are invested in the issue may not recall that part of the process.

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## **Regular Business I**

### *Approval of Minutes – June 10, 2021 Meeting*

Chairman Walton asked for suggestions or edits. Seeing none he asked for a motion to approve the minutes, which was seconded. Chairman Walton called the roll on the adoption of the minutes, as indicated for virtual meetings:

Councilor Ortiz – Yes  
Councilor Walton – Yes  
Councilor Wilson – Yes  
Councilor Harper – Yes  
Councilor Collins – Yes  
Councilor Crane – Yes  
Councilor Smiley – Yes  
Councilor Buckley – Yes

The June 10, 2021 minutes were adopted.

### *Review and Approval of Guest Presenter Form*

Vice Chair Harper shared that the intention of the form is to build equity and transparency in the process to create opportunities to present before the council, to align presentations with topics on which the council is focused and be informed by DCR Friends and partners regarding ongoing projects.

Councilor Ortiz thanked Vice Chair Harper and the DCR team and asked where forms “go” once submitted. Ms. Harper explained to Ms. Barstow who will consolidate and share with the Stakeholders committee.

Councilor Crane asked if the Stakeholders committee decides on who will present and/or bring the information to the full council to review. Ms. Harper recommended the Stakeholders committee prioritize the requests and not take time away from the full council agenda. Councilor Crane asked if the total list would be available to the entire council. Ms. Harper said the Stakeholders committee can maintain/share a rolling list so submissions can be reviewed and re-reviewed. She also noted we have no expectation yet on the volume we may receive—and will iterate as we move along.

Councilor Collins thanked Ms. Harper and the others. He opined on a better way to phrase the field “nominated by” to read “proposed speaker” for clarification. Ms. Harper said we can add “proposed speaker” field [relevant for those not self-nominating].

Councilor Wilson offered praise for the form/project and agreed with Ms. Harper’s statement saying this isn’t a free-for-all; it is about access and planning and balancing what we do and information we need to know—and this will be a work in progress. She concluded by motioning to approve the form and process. Councilor Smiley seconded the motion.

Chairman Walton called the roll as indicated for virtual meetings on the adoption of the motion:

Councilor Wilson – Yes  
Councilor Walton – Yes  
Councilor Smiley – Yes  
Councilor Buckley – Yes  
Councilor Harper – Yes  
Councilor Collins – Yes  
Councilor Crane – Yes  
Councilor Ortiz – Yes

The motion is 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
- Joe Durant
- Sarah Freeman
- Doreen Frigo
- Jake Rosenberg, MD, PhD.

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## **Regular Business II**

*[Capital Budget Presentation](#) – Patrice Kish, Chief, Design and Engineering*

~ Q&A ~

Councilor Buckley asked for the “deferred maintenance list” to understand the magnitude of what we do vs. what has to be done each year. Ms. Kish and Mr. Connors said they can provide that information. Councilor Buckley questioned if the ARPA money and the \$100 million the Governor has proposed to DCR is going to create a capacity issue? He notes these dollars create an enormous amount of engineering contracts that falls on DCR. Ms. Kish said certainly within some programs we have the capacity to take on those additional dollars, in others we have to take a look at that.

Councilor Wilson noted that in discussions on how we implement and progress on RMPs, there should be a way to flag which projects answer a strategic flag of RMPs. She suggests keeping this in thought and revisiting it to align with goals from the bottom up and top down.

Dep. Commissioner Connors said that the way Commissioner and Dep. Commissioner Geigis wanted to reform and refocus RMPs was to better inform decisions, to be less academic and more of a map for future spending and activities.

Vice Chair Harper asked what informs what gets funded and what gets postponed. Ms. Kish replied that we are using our goals as a means to inform our decisions such as investment in EJ communities, as well as public health and safety and environmental and regulatory compliance. Ms. Kish said work with the capital finance team to put together the submission to be reviewed by Commissioner and senior staff. Once that is approved, then it goes up to EEA for additional review. Finally, it goes to the Executive Office of Administration and Finance.

[FY 22 Budget Presentation](#) – Max Tassinari, CFO and Finance Team, FY22 Budget Presentation

### *Stewardship Council FY 23 Priority Discussion*

Councilor Buckley set a framework to discuss priorities rather than specific line items or dollars:

1. Increase the agency's capacity to work with other partners
2. Fully fund and staff the Resource Management Program
3. Support a new line item for digital marketing.

~ Q&A ~

Councilor Collins fully supports these policy recommendations. He questioned the motivation behind digital marketing. Is it attracting more people or leveraging awareness for increased support of the parks. Discussion ensued about how to focus marketing efforts, but increased awareness of the importance of parks is the foundation.

Councilor Wilson said she is not sure she would call these priorities, but they should be additive not zero-sum. She suggested we should leverage opportunities to make more money but does worry that a big panoramic advertising effort would need to deliver the experience promised once visitors arrive and could we support that.

Councilor Crane said more money for DCR has long been needed and that is a political decision. To the degree that the public influences politics, there's an opportunity for DCR to influence the public, along with interactions with Friends groups and other partners. That's a big part of the "marketing." RMPs is outside of direct influence of the public but that is a responsibility for the future as we face climate change and a whole lot of change. RMPs are a way to get a handle on that and make good decisions now. Finally, these are the Stewardship Council priorities, not DCR.

Vice Chair Harper said she would advocate for greater investment in digital assets for more consistent, timely communication for reasons of transparency, plus more engagement with stakeholders. She said we have to advocate for increases in deferred maintenance for public

safety reasons. Tragedies happen because of disrepair, and we don't end up in a situation because of lack of maintenance.

Councilor Wilson and Crane agreed with adding a line stating we remain concerned about deferred maintenance.

Councilor Buckley moves to accept the FY 23 Budget Priority Document subject to edits discussed. Chairman Walton seconds the motion and calls the roll as indicated for virtual meetings:

Councilor Ortiz – Yes  
Councilor Walton – Yes  
Councilor Wilson – Yes  
Councilor Buckley – Yes  
Councilor Crane – Yes  
Councilor Harper – Yes  
Councilor Collins – Yes  
Councilor Smiley – Yes

All in favor, the motion carries.

Chairman Walton thanked Jack and others for the great work done over two years to create greater transparency.

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## **Adjournment**

Chairman Walton wish everyone a great summer.

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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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