



February Meeting Minutes

Council Members Present: Ann Canedy, Heather Clish, Michele Hanss, Melissa Harper, David C. Murphy, Vivian Ortiz, Alvin L. Reynolds, Jr., Dennis Smith,

Council Members Not Present: Whitney Hatch, Nate Walton

DCR Attendees: Lisa Barstow, Stuart Connor, Stephen Doody, Priscilla Geigis, Nick Gove, Patrice Kish, Jim Montgomery, Karen Nober, Jennifer Norwood, Sean Pierce, Joe Rotondo, Leo Roy, Jennifer Stowe, Matt Villamaino

Public Attendees (and stated affiliation in chronological order): Deb Cary, MassAudubon; Doug Pizzi, Mass. Conservation Voters; Henry Woolsey, Mass. Conservation Voters; Bill Boles, New England Mountain Bike Association; John Dwinell; Joseph Kelley

Welcome and Call to Meeting

Acting Chairwoman Heather Clish called the meeting to order at 10:10 a.m. Noted that Chairman Whitney Hatch was away, and he asked her act in his stead.

Committee Updates

Policy Committee

No report

Budget Committee

Acting Chairwoman Clish provided an update on the House budget.

Discussion ensued about raising revenue at various DCR parking lots/spaces. Councilor Reynolds implored the members to consider the hardship this would place on students and those in poverty who now park for free in the Fenway [in Boston]. Discussion took place on market-based and surge pricing, automated machines vs. hiring staff, the pros and cons of contracting out parking lots, applying fees consistently and the need for DCR to raise parking revenue, as well as the value of a \$60 annual MassParks Pass.

Councilor Murphy pointed to improving revenue through LED street light conversion and Commissioner Roy explained that due to the challenges of DCR's budget set in "buckets," the agency would not realize the kind of benefit municipalities, for example, would.

Approval of Minutes

Acting Chairwoman Clish asked for a motion to approve the minutes of the January 2019 meeting. Councilor Smith so moved, the motion was seconded, all in favor, the motion carried.

Special Business-Overviews

Acting Chairwoman Clish introduced new member Ann Canedy of Barnstable who shared briefly on her background as a town councilor, with oversight of parks and recreation, experience in grant writing and member of the land acquisition committee.

Commissioner Roy introduced Central Region Director Jennifer Stowe, new Regional Interpretive Coordinator Matthew Villamaino and provided background on the architectural, cultural and industrial-inspired touches of the new Blackstone Heritage Corridor Visitor Center and Museum.

An "Introduction to DCR" video produced by partner organization, Education First, was shown. The video prompted Councilor Harper to ask about DCR's marketing communication to leverage DCR assets. A short discussion ensued about ways DCR has marketed itself over the years and things we could do better. Councilor Harper asked if anyone on staff is responsible for how to best market their property. Commissioner Roy said park managers. He added that we recently engaged a real estate company to help us evaluate our concession opportunities with an eye toward making them commercially viable.

Councilor Hanss asked if DCR would do an app for trails. Commissioner Roy said we have GPS data on our trails and there are some commercial applications already, like Strava. DCR has multiple data layers in our internal resource data maps. The Tririga asset management system will host this data.

Commissioner Roy opened the overview presentations with a snapshot of the agency as a whole, then introduced DCR General Council Karen Nober to review highlights of the Open Meeting Law. She distributed copies of the [Open Meeting Law Guide](#).

Ms. Nober shared ways the council can and cannot communicate in between meetings to be in compliance with the open meeting law and the importance of posting meeting notices 48-hours in advance (excluding weekends and holidays).

Councilor Canedy asked for guidance if someone sends an email commenting on conversations. Ms. Nober said best to respond asking them to please not comment via email. If email is used, respond to sender directly asking not to, "reply all."

Councilor Reynolds asked if there are there limitations about our outside conversations. Ms. Nober said nothing is stopping you from expressing your own opinion but be clear this is not the opinion of the Council.

Ms. Nober suggested the Council schedule training on the Conflict of Interest Law. For the purposes of the Law, Council members are considered unpaid state employees and she concluded with an overview of her department structure.

Councilor Reynolds asked to what extent she hires outside counsel. Ms. Nober explained that the Attorney General's Office acts as counsel for the agency.

Commissioner Roy introduced Deputy Commissioner of Operations and Recreation Nicholas Gove, offering high praise for Mr. Gove's ability to deftly manage DCR's significant portfolio of properties under various climate conditions.

Mr. Gove gave a presentation including an asset summary, programs and leadership staff under Recreation and Operations, emergency management and snow and ice responsibilities. (Presentation available on website post Council approval of the minutes.)

Councilor Murphy asked about leases and permits relative to rinks. Mr. Gove said each rink has a capital plan, that leases can be extended but legislation will be required if an extension or a new lease is required.

Councilor Canady asked if DCR owns and maintains boat ramps. Mr. Gove said yes and most are operated by Office of Fishing and Boating, which has agreements with municipalities.

Councilor Hanss asked if DCR was considering MassDOT taking over parkways. Commissioner Roy said we have discussions with MassDOT on a case by case basis.

Councilor Reynolds asked if contracted assets like rinks are a revenue generator, noting there is a tension not just to maximize value. Mr. Gove said rinks are not a significant revenue generator.

Ms. Ortiz asked how security of the State House became part of the DCR mission. Councilor Smith, who previously held the post of Director of State Office Buildings, offered an explanation relative to mergers of past organizations.

Councilor Reynolds opinioned about the consistent pattern of owning property and someone else manages it. Commissioner Roy said we have buckets in our budget that puts constraints on the agency.

Councilor Smith asked if it ideally would it make sense for MassDOT to manage the parkways? Acting Chairwoman Clish said this is a very hot topic because parkways have a look and feel. Commissioner Roy said there were very strong advocates of parkways, which were originally designed for bikes and horses to stroll along the river. Now they are major arterial roads.

Councilor Ortiz said living in Boston, citizens find it complicated as to who owns which road. Acting Chairwoman Clish said it's an old city put together over centuries.

Councilor Murphy asked for an update on the (sailing vessel) Ernestina. Councilor Smith offered history on the vessel's 1992 Sail Boston participation and importance to the Cape Verdean community. Commissioner Roy said DCR is in discussions to transfer the asset to Mass Maritime Academy.

Commissioner Roy introduced Jim Montgomery, DCR Director of Administration and Finance who provided an overview of the various funding mechanisms of what he called an, "at least a quarter of a billion dollar enterprise." (Presentation available on website post Council approval of the minutes.)

Discussion took place on DCR priorities with various councilors asking questions about beach preservation, storm water management, collection of parking fees, cost of maintenance of equipment and deferred maintenance—a sum in the area of \$1.6 billion. Commissioner Roy noted that DCR has hierarchy of priorities: safety, universal access, code compliance, protecting the Commonwealth's assets and improvement of facilities.

Commissioner Roy introduced Jennifer Norwood, Director of Partnerships and External Affairs. She spoke about relationship building with the approximately 125 Friends groups including the established Massachusetts Forest and Parks Friends Network, municipalities and leveraging public-private partnerships. She followed up on discussions from the Friends Network meeting to update DCR's MOU template with Friends Groups and the progress on a task force to do so. (Presentation available on website post Council approval of the minutes.)

Commissioner Roy introduced Patrice Kish, Acting Chief of the Division of Planning and Engineering. She noted DCR's unprecedented investment over past four years in campgrounds, including the acquisition of a campground in Wellfleet, now under renovation to open mid-summer 2019 and investment in rinks – making them operationally and environmentally efficient and Title IX compliant. (Presentation available on website post Council approval of the minutes.)

Ms. Kish explained her various departments and bureaus: environmental engineering, transportation infrastructure, waterways, construction permitting, electrical infrastructure, Hazmat, storm water, flood control and dam safety, where DCR regulates the states 3,000 dams. These areas together have a significant impact on DCR resiliency to climate change.

Commissioner Roy introduced Deputy Commissioner Priscilla Geigis, who has been in state government service for 26 years, named DCR Parks Director in 2004—noting her expertise in behind the scenes efforts to give visitors a seamless, fulfilling park experience. She gave a presentation highlighting the historic and cultural treasures of DCR. (Presentation available on website post Council approval of the minutes.)

Ms. Geigis said her challenge is to balance conservation and recreation, i.e. our mandate to protect the water that affords visitors swimming and boating, and the specialists DCR employs to maintain this balance across our bureaus and divisions.

Ms. Geigis spoke of how engaging communities is critical in our efforts. She shared how our Lakes and Ponds program worked to educate the public on water-born invasives and how boaters can maintain their vessels to protect against the spread of invasives and spot them.

She described the controlled burns managed by forest fire control, the work of service foresters and the successful, “Greening the Gateway Cities Program” in planting nearly 20,000 trees in 26 cities while giving people jobs and skills and improving energy efficiency in those communities.

In addition, Ms. Geigis spoke of the role DCR plays in cultural and historic resource protection for some of the Commonwealth’s greatest assets such as in Plymouth Memorial State Park and the role of preservation planners.

Other areas under Ms. Geigis responsibility that were discussed include the Historic Curatorship Program, which provides DCR with \$7 for every DCR dollar invested; GIS work on land planning and storm mapping; DCR’s ecology program, which includes shorebird and bat monitoring and protection; as well as invasives and vegetative management. Resource management planning for parks and climate mitigation plans for the agency also are central to resource stewardship.

Visitor events such as Park Serve Day and Summer Nights serve and engage the wider community in DCR parks and promote the overall public mission. Ms. Geigis also led commemoration efforts around the agency’s 125th anniversary in 2018.

This concluded the staff presentations.

Public Comment

Acting Chairwoman Clish opened the public comment period.

Deb Cary of MassAudubon gave a shout-out to DCR and Kevin Allen for great work at Mt. Wachusett Superintendent’s House renovations and the new amenities. She noted opposition by the Stewardship Council to the Westminster landfill. She also expressed concern about the need for increased staffing at Mt. Wachusett.

Doug Pizzi of Mass. Conservation Voters, “amplified” Deb Cary’s remark on Westminster.

Bill Boles of the New England Mountain Bike Association and Friends of Wompatauck State Park said he is very impressed with everything DCR does. He welcomed new councilor Ann Canedy and said that Friends of Wompatauck is running a “SnowPatuck Winter Fest” to raise money for a new playground at Wompatuck.

Joseph Kelly, a former DCR employee suing the agency, restated his grievances against a former supervisor and the agency relative to fair employment practices. He stated that 99.9% of DCR employees are great and implored that fair employment law posters be posted in all DCR facilities.

Acting Chairwoman Clish motioned to adjourn the meeting at 2:45 p.m., the motion was seconded, all in favor, the motion carried.

The next meeting will be held on March 1, 2019 at Wompatuck State Park, 204 Union Street, Hingham at 11 a.m.