



October Meeting Minutes

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

Council Members Not Present: none

DCR Attendees: Lisa Barstow, Paul Cavanagh, Stewart Conner, Stephen Doody, Priscilla Geigis, Joe Rotondo

Public Attendees: Bill Boles, NEMBA/Friends of Wompatuck; Mike Hemphill, Consor; Lee Toma, Milton Bike Committee; Doug Pizzi, Mass Conservation Voters

Welcome and Call to Meeting – Chairman Nate Walton

Chairman Walton opened the meeting with a review of the Council's meeting structure; committee meetings monthly and full-council meetings quarterly. He asked for the council's approval of a statement thanking Leo Roy for his service later, to be voted upon later in the meeting.

Commissioner's Report – Deputy Commissioner for Conservation and Resource Stewardship, Priscilla Geigis

The report is attached hereto and made a part hereof.

Q&A

Councilor Ortiz shared that there will be a celebration for Neponset Greenway on October 22, at 1P. There will be a noon presentation on the history of river and the planning process. Ms. Ortiz said they will send all members an invitation.

Councilor Buckley referenced article in the New York Times about regulating e-bikes and inquired about the DCR's policy.

Deputy Commissioner Geigis said right now e-bikes are not allowed on DCR property. There is consideration of having e-bikes on improved trails but not mountain bike trails.

Ms. Ortiz wanted to ensure this was communicated to the community. Ms. Geigis said there would be a public meeting process regarding such policy, this is just a matter of internal discussion at present.

Councilor Smith added that the National Park Service just established a limited e-bike policy at the National Seashore.

Paul Cavanagh noted can use them within the speed of the bike path, if you want to exceed, you must go on paved path.

[View NPS electric bike policy](#)

Mr. Walton asked Ms. Geigis about accommodating public access at the MIT Boat House. She did not know the answer but noted to look into the matter.

[DCR was operating under a five-year permit with MIT. The Legislature now has authorized the state Division of Asset Management and Maintenance (DCAMM) to enter into a lease agreement with MIT for the Boat House and Sailing Pavilion. DCR will be consulted as needed.]

Special Business

Paul Cavanagh presented on Resource Management Plans. His presentations and hand-outs are attached hereto and made a part hereof.

Q&A

Councilor Reynolds asked if parkways were included. Mr. Cavanagh said yes, we call them linear parks.

Vice Chair Harper asked how you decide on the priority [of the list of properties]. Mr. Cavanagh said we went through inventory, met with staff and ranked properties based on the rarity of national resources and level of diversity of recreation and came up with rankings as our first effort, but it didn't work well for complexes. In 2017, we broke up the 80 properties and re-ranked the same inventory, under how complex it is to manage that park—weighted to protect our natural and cultural resources.

Mr. Reynolds asked Mr. Cavanagh if the Stewardship Council approved the priority. Answer was no. Mr. Reynolds asked who works on plans. Answer: one and a half FTE. Mr. Reynolds suggested would it not take decades to finish this and questioned what would it take to move this along?

Ms. Geigis said it would be ideal to have staff, and we are taking a hard look at whether we need to hire a contractor. In 2017, when we were reassessing the RMPs, we questioned what should be in there, because there is no mandate. But we determined what we include is what we think our audiences need to know.

Councilor Wilson asked if this needs to be done because people are chomping at the bit or if it feels as though we should be addressing it?

Ms. Geigis explained it is so much easier to have a plan in front of you to explain why we do what we do. We have different operational systems and people changing all the time. So these are a good roadmap.

Mr. Cavanaugh said we have a hard time often because the boundaries were mapped wrong. Our GIS people do a great job for us here. Often the deeds are several hundred years old. Had we not corrected our boundaries; we would have had false assumptions.

Mr. Buckley spoke of experience with MassWildlife—buying land and not paying attention to property lines. We looked at getting a contractor. It was going to take over five years to get the ownership straight.

Ms. Harper asked if the stakeholders ever been surveyed or assessed as to what they want. Can we ask folks internally and externally which parts of the plan they are using most?

Mr. Cavanaugh said we've asked internally but not externally. Staff says: If the information is in the plan, we know it's correct. We do a lot of regulatory compliance. Part of what Mr. Cavanagh does is revisit the RMP to see if we've done what we're supposed to do. Our South Region Director says he can give this [RMP] to a new employee and they can be effective on the first day of work. Mr. Cavanagh said everything is standardized so operations folks can find the information from Berkshires to North Shore.

Mr. Reynolds asked Mr. Cavanagh to give us suggestions if you could change something so we can think about how we can support you and your staff, so you are successful.

Mr. Cavanaugh noted utility companies build on our property, there are abandoned buildings on our property. We are including things in RMPs that aren't required, but how can we manage our properties if we don't know the infrastructure and the recreation activity?

Mr. Reynolds said it's its implicit in the legislation these plans should be our priority.

Mr. Buckley noted the important point that if there are priorities greater than this—the entire management of 450,000 acres land—it would be good to know.

Ms. Geigis said we're going to revisit this again, bring in more technology and more GIS based. We did a Stewardship Map at the request of Councilor Walter Bickford. We have that information at the ready.

Mr. Cavanagh said the Stewardship Map gives people a tool to help manage them manage today. We have that for every property today.

Mr. Reynolds proposed having an "RMP light" process to approve so we're not operating without RMPs for the parks.

Mr. Smith suggested staff cut back on some issues to address this.

Mr. Buckley said the agency has to examine its own priorities, but we can demonstrate to the legislature funding needs.

Discussion ensued about advocating on this for this budget cycle in meetings with the Secretary and A&F.

Chairman Walton noted that while the Council does not want to micro-manage the RMP process, as a statutory responsibility of the Council, its members should be involved in advocating for solutions that will allow DCR to streamline the process.

Further discussion ensued about those parks designated for recreation and the types of recreation that occur in our parks. New technology brings issues like e-bikes and drones. Mr. Cavanagh said the RMPs are living documents but RMPs are written to protect the habitat and visitors from unforeseen changes.

Mr. Cavanagh will work with the policy committee to develop a plan to address the gap in completed RMPs with a new set of criteria to expedite turnaround.

Regular Business

Chairman Walton motioned to approve the statement to Leo Roy as written. The motion was seconded, all in favor. the motion carried.

Mr. Smith moved to approve minutes. The motion seconded, all in favor, the motion carried.

Chairman Walton offered the floor to Mr. Smith to discuss meeting locations. Mr. Smith suggested we have more meetings in Boston or Boston area. Possibly meet at Stakeholder sites, Appalachian Mountain Club, Sierra Club, etc. Begin those locations during January to March meetings, choosing a place with breakout sessions.

Mr. Buckley suggested when we go to a DCR park, it would be helpful have a tour and information about the park. Ms. Wilson said if so we should schedule and plan appropriate time for that.

Chairman Walton offered a motion for Mr. Smith to find a suitable Boston location(s), the motion seconded all in favor, the motion carried.

Public Comment

Bill Boles – Deer management is successful in the Blue Hills, but Wompatuck is overrun by deer. Noted 380 deer kills by car and deer are starving every winter. He encourages DCR expand deer management into Wompatuck. If we hold public meetings in Hingham; most people understand this and would be supportive. *(Issue was discussed at DCR Senior Staff meeting.)*

“Paul Cavanagh blew me away.” Suggest there be a report every two or three years to this Council on RMPs to know if we achieved our goals. Mr. Boles agreed these should be living documents, many state forests change property lines. Finally, Mr. Boles said he is really going to miss Commissioner Leo Roy and cannot remember a commissioner more out there with the general public or who had the detailed knowledge as he did.

Lee Toma, Milton Bike Committee – Thank you for the Pumpkin Float each year. A thousand people come out last year and Mr. Toma encourages DCR to continue to support that event. He looks forward to parkway study. Congratulations DCR on Neponset Greenway on winning APA Award. We look forward to connecting Dorchester to that for commuters. Lee encourages policies for e-bikes, e-scooters and e-skateboards. Request to install bike racks at Houghton’s Pond. Would benefit the park. *(Inquiry on bike rack at Houghton’s Pond has been made to regional office.)*



Post Committee Meeting Reports

Policy Committee

Policy committee recommends DCR generate a new RMP outline for our approval. Will approve by end of October. To the extent of DCR has material changes, DCR has latitude to make changes. Instruct DCR to create a prioritization plan with respect to various complexes. Council would approve the plan in January 2020 with a five-year plan to complete. Including capital input from finance committee.

The Committee supports a letter opposing S1719, legislation barring municipalities from assessing taxes on curatorship properties. Untenable position for local towns to dictate DCR land. Mr. Smith moves to approve the letter, the motion was seconded, all in favor, the motion carries.

Ms. Canedy agreed to look at the statute of the Council—not only the authority it gives but also whether some of the provisions are practical.

Stakeholder Committee

Mr. Smith has an eight-point stakeholder agenda. This committee will go into Boston to meet with Jennifer Norwood and report back at the December meeting.

Finance Committee

Mr. Murphy noted that Mr. Buckley has been following up on Budget process to meet with Secretary's office to make the important point, that parks are not just emotional drivers but economic driver to MA.

Mr. Buckley said what we're advocating for needs marketing and social marketing, organizing and building support for properties and programs. They will discuss this with the Secretary.

Mr. Smith noted when we have a January Orientation Meeting, we may want to invite an A&F person to attend.



Prior to adjourning, Chairman Walton suggested allowing more time for meetings. After discussion, including where meetings were held having much to do with overall commitment, as well as the option of using remote meeting technology, it was suggested to lengthen meetings to 2.5 hours.

Adjournment

Chairman Walton accepted a motion to adjourn, the motion was seconded. All in favor, the motion carried.

The next meeting of the DCR Stewardship Council will be held on Saturday, November 9, 2019 in conjunction with the Friends Network Annual Conference at this location: 180 Beaman Street, West Boylston.