



## September Meeting Minutes

**Council Members Present:** Jack Buckley, David C. Murphy, Vivian Ortiz, Alvin L. Reynolds, Jr., Esq., Dennis Smith, Jennifer N.S. Wilson, Esq. and Nate Walton

**Council Members Not Present:** Ann Canedy, Esq., Melissa Harper

**DCR Attendees:** Lisa Barstow, Stewart Conner, Bill Cooksey, Stephen Doody, Joe Rotondo, Leo Roy

**Public Attendees:** Louise Johnson, Boston Resident; Bill Boles, NEMBA/Friends of Wompatuck; Sarah E. Freeman, Arborway Coalition; Linda Seigenthaler, Friends of Lawrence Heritage State Park; Lee Toma, Milton Bicycle Advisory Committee; Galen Mook, MassBike; Charles Anastis, Mass Conservation Voters

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### Welcome and Call to Meeting – Chairman Nate Walton

Chairman Walton called the meeting to order at 10:42 am.

The Chairman briefly went over the revamped Stewardship Council meeting structure – four full business meetings annually, with the other meetings being primarily break-out sessions for the various committees. He announced that today’s meeting is a full meeting with DCR’s Jenny Norwood, Director of External Relations, presenting a DCR/Friends Group MOU update. The Chairman also announced that Jim Montgomery (DCR Director of Administration & Finance) and George Trubiano (Budget Director) would provide the Council with an overview on the agency’s operating and capital budgets.

The Chairman said DCR’s Paul Cavanaugh (Resource Management Planner), pending approval from the membership, would be presenting to the Council in October on the Resource Management Plan process. The Council unanimously agreed with the Chairman.

Chairman Walton invited Commissioner Roy to deliver the Commissioner’s Report.

## **Commissioner's Report – Commissioner Leo P. Roy**

Commissioner Roy welcomed the Council and guests to Lawrence Heritage State Park, and reviewed its cultural and historic features.

### *Summer Nights Initiative 2019*

Commissioner Roy updated the group on the 5<sup>th</sup> Annual Summer Nights initiative, with increased programming this year and extended hours at select pools and athletic complexes in targeted urban neighborhoods and communities. This year, the DCR was able to increase the number of partner organizations, who provide specialty programming including athletics, arts and crafts, music, and more. The Baker-Polito Association together with valuable partners offered today's youth places to build memories, stimulate their minds, and spend valuable time outdoors. The extended hours of operations complemented other programs already offered by the DCR for families at throughout state parks, forests, and beaches across the state.

### *The End of Beach Services*

With the passing of Labor Day Weekend, the agency's beaches services have come to an end. Every year the DCR has hundreds of thousands of visitors seeking a respite from the summer's heat, and every year we deliver to them low cost, swimming opportunities in some of the most beautiful locations New England has to offer. Commissioner Roy thanked the DCR staff who work incredibly hard to make sure the public receives a great experience within our state parks.

### *Cape Cod Tornado Response*

Right in the middle of the outdoor recreational season, Cape Cod was unfortunately struck by a tornado. In an effort to keep residents and visitors safe post storm, the DCR closed the Cape Cod Rail Trail to public access because of potential downed powerlines, hazardous trees, and other debris. DCR deployed approximately 30 assets to Cape Cod to aid in recovery efforts. Commissioner Roy reported that just two days following the severe weather event, the Cape Cod Rail Trail was re-opened for public use. It is because of the dedicated individuals of the DCR staff that the Cape Cod Trail Rail became accessible to residents and visitors again so quickly and efficiently.

### *Hurricane Dorian Response*

Massachusetts was fortunately spared from the worst of Hurricane Dorian; however, the southern part of the United States were dealt a different hand. DCR was poised to deploy five saw teams, two staff members per team, to the southeast region of the country to assist in the clean-up efforts. The DCR staff were ultimately not called upon; regardless, the Commissioner thanked them for their willingness to help those in a time of need.

### *Revere Sand Sculpture Festival*

In July, the annual Revere Beach International Sand Sculpting Festival took place on Americas first public beach.

### *New Camp Meigs Playground*

A lot has happened in the Boston neighborhood of Hyde Park, a neighborhood with approximately 443 acres of DCR parkland. The Baker-Polito Administration's DCR has invested \$5 million in improvements to Kelley Field House, Bajko Memorial Rink, and most recently Camp Meigs Playground. In a continued effort to bring residents and visitors of Massachusetts a first-class state parks system, DCR invested \$380,000 in the new playground.

Work included:

- The removal of existing equipment and surfacing;
- The installation of new playground equipment for 2-5 year olds and for 5-12 year olds;
- The installation of universally accessible play structures including accessible swings, and ground level equipment;
- The installation of two toned, poured in place rubber safety surfacing that eliminates tripping hazards for all visitors; and,
- The installation of associated site amenities, such as benches, fully-accessible pathways, fence improvements, and landscaping.

Additionally, the agency completed pathway work, and repairs to the tennis courts at Camp Meigs totaling an additional \$150,000 investment. Because of its ample DCR parkland Hyde Park is uniquely positioned to enjoy all sorts of indoor/outdoor recreation opportunities. DCR and the Baker-Polito Administration are proud to continue to support the community by making significant improvements to these local state parks.

### *Magazine Beach Launch Ribbon Cutting*

Residents and visitors of the City of Cambridge can now enjoy a new, fully accessible boat launch. DCR cut the ribbon on the new Magazine Beach Launch and overlook deck on August 1, 2019. The \$300,0000 project scope included:

- Improving access to the launch area from the existing parking lot;
- Clearing and grubbing approximately sixty (60) feet of existing shoreline vegetation to provide a more generous staging area; and,
- Constructing an adjacent in-river overlook deck similar to the overlook deck built at the Watertown Riverfront Park Braille Trail;
- Re-grading the approach to the river, and installing a gravel/aggregate/crushed stone slope.
- The project tripled the size of the launch, providing space and opportunity for more boating activities in the river.
- The completion of this launch, combined with recent spray deck and Powder Magazine renovation, the Baker-Polito Administration has made Magazine Beach an all-inclusive, 100% accessible recreation space.

### *Viaduct Courts Ribbon Cutting*

Just a few miles downstream, DCR celebrated the completion of new tennis courts and a half basketball court at North Point Park, part of the New Charles River Basin. The new Viaduct Courts are an important urban recreation center supporting a healthy, active lifestyle whether you are a resident of Cambridge or visiting the region. The \$2.2 million project includes:

- Full remediation of the site;
- Creation of a combined tennis and half basketball court;
- Installation of lighting;
- Creation of new approaches to the courts; and,
- Installation of benches and landscaping.

In a continued effort to revitalize the New Charles River Basin for residents and visitors of Cambridge, the Baker-Polito Administration supports park improvements encouraging everybody to get outdoors.

### *Shawme-Crowell State Forest Playground*

The DCR continues to enhance its campground facilities, and we recently unveiled the new playground at Shawme-Crowell State Forest in Sandwich. Facilities like playgrounds assist in a child's development while improving upper and lower body strength in an inclusive play environment. Work on the playground includes:

- The removal of existing equipment and surfacing;
- The installation of new playground equipment for 2-5 year olds and for 5-12 year olds;
- The installation of poured in place, rubber safety surfacing that eliminates tripping hazards for all visitors; and,
- The installation of associated site amenities, such as benches, fully-accessible pathways, a fully-accessible parking space, and landscaping.

Investments like the \$420,000 project at Shawme-Crowell support the community by making significant improvements to these local state parks. The Baker-Polito Administration and DCR continue to make improvements to parkland in local communities in an effort to bring residents and visitors a first-class state park system.

### *Kayaking with Veterans*

Ahead of Labor Day weekend, Commissioner Roy had the pleasure of joining veterans at Camp Arrowhead in Natick for an afternoon of kayaking through the DCR Universal Access Program. DCR's Universal Access Program is dedicated to improving access to DCR parkland for adults and children with disabilities, providing opportunities to enjoy the outdoors.

### *Fanny Appleton Pedestrian Bridge Ceremony*

Commissioner Roy and Chairman Walton joined Lt. Governor Polito, MassDOT Secretary Pollock, Highway Administrator Gulliver, local officials and stakeholders at the Fanny Appleton Pedestrian Bridge for an official ribbon cutting ceremony on September 10. With increased traffic in the City of Boston, it is incredibly important that the DCR and our partners continue to assess opportunities for off-road pathway connections. And with time spent outdoors proving

to raise quality of life, it is essential for the agency to increase access to the state park system. The bridge has received the Arthur G. Hayden Medal, recognizing a single, recent outstanding achievement in bridge engineering, demonstrating vision and innovation in special use bridges.

Councilor Buckley asked the Commissioner if DCR gets reimbursed for out-of-state storm/fire/disaster response efforts. The Commissioner answered that, yes, DCR is reimbursed in-full through various federal compact agreements.

Councilor Smith commented about the excellent conditions he observed at Wellfleet Hollow Campground during a recent visit there. He also remarked positively about the adaptive programs at Nickerson State Park. Commissioner Roy elaborated on the overall popularity and success of biking/boating adaptive programs available at DCR.

Councilor Reynolds asked the Commissioner if DCR had funding for all the recommended enhancements included in the upcoming Parkway Study. The Commissioner said the short answer is “no” citing the competing demands of other capital and deferred maintenance projects.

Councilor Reynolds also asked if the Parkway Study would include biking policy recommendations, such as protected bike lanes. The Commissioner said the study would include “a variety of different treatments.”

Councilor Ortiz asked if DCR has “bike experts” on staff at DCR. Commissioner Roy said the agency achieves appropriate pedestrian and biking accommodations through a variety of methods, including on-staff expertise, engagement with consultants and a strong working relationship with MassDOT subject matter experts.

Councilor Murphy asked about the allocation of roadway budget dollars between MassDOT and DCR. Commissioner Roy said there is an open and ongoing dialogue between the two agencies and common sense generally prevails. He also noted that DCR’s former bridge inventory became the jurisdiction of MassDOT several years ago.

Councilor Buckley asked whether there’s deliberation on what roads DCR has care/custody of versus what roads MassDOT has care/custody of. The Commissioner said he believes that each incoming gubernatorial administration typically reviews these jurisdictional issues and tends to leave matters pretty much as is.

### *Committee Updates*

Chairman Walton invited Councilor Reynolds to provide a Policy Committee update. Councilor Reynolds said in 2019-2020 the committee will primarily focus on evaluating the Resource Management Plan process, the Council’s enabling legislation and on various roadways/cycling matters – he will then report back to the full Council with the group’s findings.

Councilor Reynolds also raised the question of how protests on DCR property are handled – and stated his intention to keep close tabs on Senator Bruce Tarr’s legislation pertaining to the

historic curatorship program and local taxation, a topic that was very important to former Stewardship Chair Whitney Hatch.

Chairman Walton invited Councilor Smith to provide a Stakeholders Committee update. Councilor Smith reported that the committee is in the process of identifying specific stakeholder groups and plans to invite collaboration with said groups on the setting of a future Stewardship Council agenda.

Chairman Walton invited Councilor Buckley to provide a Finance Committee update. Councilor Buckley reported that he and Councilor Murphy had met with DCR A&F Director Jim Montgomery weeks ago for several hours to get an overview on leases, retained revenue, capital budget, streetlights, staffing levels and budget priorities. Both councilors were very appreciative of the time Mr. Montgomery and his team devoted to providing a comprehensive update.

During his committee update, Councilor Buckley also commented on: Core funding, DCR's impact on the economy (120,000 jobs and \$911 million in tax revenue), retained revenue going to DCR programs vs. not being diverted to the general fund, his belief that the primary focus of DCR should be "conservation and recreation" and not becoming the Commonwealth's "attic", and finally, funding for digital marketing.

A discussion ensued amongst the Councilors about DCR's impact on the state economy, retained revenue dynamics, parking revenue and other fiscal matters.

### **Special Business**

Jennifer Norwood, Director of External Affairs and Partnerships provided the Council with a chronology/history of the challenges presented in trying to develop a final revised MOU between the DCR and the Friends Groups. She provided draft documents to the Council for their review prior to the meeting. After she answered a few questions and provided points of clarification, Councilor Smith motioned for the Council to approve the MOU contents highlighted by Ms. Norwood, subject to review by Policy Committee Chair Reynolds and Chairman Walton. The Council voted unanimously to approve.

Chairman Walton invited DCR's Jim Montgomery and George Trubiano to provide the Council a budget/finance overview. After doing so, a discussion ensued about the burdensome administrative task of processing earmarks that oftentimes have no association with DCR functions. Commissioner Roy emphasized that the retained revenue model currently in place stipulates that "we can only spend it if we earn it." Councilor Murphy thanked Mr. Montgomery and Mr. Trubiano for allowing councilors to "get under the hood" on a recent in-person visit with the agency's finance team.

Councilor Reynolds asked how much funding would be required to address the identified Parkway needs. Commissioner Roy pointed out that spending agency funds effectively takes commensurate human capital and project development, making it difficult to peg an accurate number.

## **Approval of Minutes**

Chairman Walton moved to have the July minutes approved by the Council. Councilor Smith seconded the motion. The Council unanimously approved.

Chairman Walton asked if there was any objection to having a Resource Management Plan presentation by DCR staff at the October meeting, which will likely stretch to three hours. No objection was raised.

## **Public Comment**

Chairman Walton invited members of the public to address the Council.

Louise Johnson spoke about the need for adequate cycling infrastructure. She said Massachusetts has a lot of catching up to do. The Council assured Ms. Johnson that bicycle policy will be at the forefront of their focus.

Bill Boles of the New England Mountain Bike Association spoke. He said that autumn is trail maintenance season for the recreation enthusiasts that he is associated with. Mr. Boles also reported that NEMBA had its most successful fundraiser ever last week, which included 800 participating bikers – up 500 participants from last year. He also inquired about a DCR regulations update; Commissioner Roy said that the editing process is underway.

Sarah Freeman of the Arborway Coalition expressed gratitude that the Arborway Safety Audit was progressing towards an eventual release date. She also talked about her fondness for throwback cyclist t-shirts that said “One Less Driver” on the back of them.

Lee Toma of the Neponset Greenway Council had great reviews for DCR staff. After saying that 20% of Milton is comprised of DCR property, he expressed thanks for signalized crosswalks and bike continuity on Unquity Road. He is also looking forward to the Parkway Safety Audit release date.

## **Adjournment**

Chairman Walton accepted a motion to adjourn, the motion was accepted unanimously.

*The next meeting of the DCR Stewardship Council will be held on October 11 at the DCR Water Supply Protection HQ, 180 Beaman Street, West Boylston at 10:30 a.m.*