



## June Meeting Minutes

**Stewardship Councilors in Attendance:** Heather Clish, Michele Hanss, David C. Murphy, Antonia Pollak, Dennis Smith, Nate Walton

**Stewardship Councilors Absent:** Walter Bickford, Elisa Campbell, Whitney Hatch, Wayne Klockner, Jim Van Dyke

**DCR Staff in Attendance:** Lisa Barstow, Stephen Doody, Jennifer Norwood, Joe Rotondo, Commissioner Leo Roy

**Public Attendees:** None recorded

**Attachments:** *DCR Communications and Community Relations Presentations*

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### Welcome and Call to Meeting

Antonia Pollak, Acting Chairwoman called the meeting to order at 12:02 p.m.

### Commissioner's Report

Department of Conservation and Recreation is currently celebrating its 125 years of history.

- It all started on June 3, 1893, the DCR, then as the Metropolitan Parks Commission, which was the first regional parks commission in the country, acquired land where the famous Waverley Oaks once stood.
- The park, Beaver Brook Reservation in the Town of Belmont, became the first state park in Massachusetts. Now after 125 years, the agency continues its mission to protect, promote, and enhance our state's natural, cultural, and recreation resources for us all to benefit. Waverley Oak Trees still stands today, and I invite you to visit the park to see where it all began!
- This special year, DCR fashioned collector's edition medallions for our employees and partners. Commissioner Roy distributed medallions to Council members to recognize their commitment and passion to the DCR.

DCR joined with REI, Inc. to celebrate our years of shared stewardship.

- This year is REI's 80th anniversary. In 2017, and again in 2018, REI has teamed with DCR to coordinate trail cleanup events at several of DCR's parks on June 2, National Trails Day. The

event served as a great example of a meaningful partnership. Volunteers statewide participated in trail cleanup projects at:

- Blue Hills Reservation; Charles River Esplanade; Great Brook Farm; Middlesex Fells Reservation; and Wompatuck State Park, at which I was able to participate

#### Waterfront Schedule

- With the start of the unofficial summer season commencing on Memorial Day Weekend, the agency has opened its designated waterfront and spray decks throughout the Commonwealth. Later this month, deep water and wading pools will open and all move to seven days a week with lifeguard services at many of our beaches and waterfronts. Water quality testing at designated swimming areas has already begun, and comfort stations at many of DCR's beaches will be open for the season.
- The DCR will also have both interpretive and visitor services staff on hand at many state parks and campgrounds throughout the summer to provide residents and families with increased programming, events and other activities. DCR Rangers also will be patrolling state park locations to ensure a safety.

#### Lifeguard Recruitment Efforts

- This year, our Aquatics Department has done a great job in recruiting lifeguards for the upcoming season. While the exact number is shifting with testings and certifications ongoing, we are now north of 600 guards, and very comfortable with staffing levels.

#### Universal Access Program

- DCR's Universal Access Program hosted its annual Adaptive Recreation Fair on Saturday, June 2 at Herter Park and Artesani Playground. Adaptive recreation organizations attended the fair to inform the public about the programs, products, and opportunities available to individuals with disabilities in Massachusetts.
- Organizations showcased the wide range of adaptive equipment that assist people with disabilities to access the great outdoors. Additionally, participants had the opportunity to sign up for upcoming summer programs being held within state parks. The annual Adaptive Recreation Fair also featured product demonstrations, music, refreshments, and family-friendly activities, such as cycling, hiking, letterboxing, face painting, and games.
- Now in its 23rd year, DCR's Universal Access Program provides year-round outdoor recreation experiences for people with disabilities in Massachusetts state parks. Summer UAP programs include kayaking, canoeing, cycling, hiking, rowing, and sailing. Winter participants enjoy snowshoeing, cross-country skiing, kick-sledding, sit-skiing, and ice skating.
- Last year, approximately 5,500 individuals participated in DCR's UAP coordinated or supported events.

#### Ongoing Projects

- The DCR is in the process of completing the replacement of the \$1.5 million Joseph Thompson Pedestrian Bridge in Watertown. The bridge will open this summer.
- DCR has made huge steps forward with the \$1 million Halibut Point State Park Visitor Center project. The building had been closed to the public since 2015 due to necessary repairs. The building is slated to open spring 2019.
- We also started a \$2 million landscape rehabilitation project at Pilgrim Memorial State Park, ahead of the 2020 celebration of the 400<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the pilgrim's landing. The DCR's 2020 Improvement Project invests \$3 Million in park rehabilitation including improved bathroom facilities, restored vegetation and lawn, repaired pathways and benches, and improved accessibility. The landscape rehabilitation work is scheduled for May through early November this year, and the rehabilitation of the restrooms will follow in winter 2018/2019.

- The completion of electrical work in May commences our first full performance season at the Herter Park Amphitheater in Allston. The Friends of Herter Park have been restoring the amphitheater and is in the process of obtaining an MOU with DCR to program at the space. Last year we programmed a mini-season. This year, we expect 30-40 free/low cost programs for the community.
- The Hatch Memorial Shell's roof repair work has been completed. Hundreds of tiles were set into place, and importantly, waterproofing materials have fortified the roof to prevent future leaks from occurring. Importantly, this work was timed so perfectly that the first concert on the stage will be our Fourth of July celebrations on July 3<sup>rd</sup> and 4<sup>th</sup>.

#### Recent Hires

- Leonard Lee joined our agency as Manager of the Melnea A. Cass Recreation Complex, Roxbury Heritage State Park/Dillaway Thomas House. Leonard's first day on the job was this week, and he has the tall task of managing day-to-day operations at the Cass and will also be immersed in programming and visitor experience at Dillaway Thomas. Most recently, Leonard served at the Massachusetts Department of Public Health as Director of the Division of Violence and Injury Prevention.
- Additionally, Mike Nelson has been named the new Director of Ranger Services, where he has done a superb job filling-in since February. Mike began his career as a seasonal Park Ranger for the Metropolitan District Commission in August of 2000. Mike served as Acting District Manager for the Middlesex-Essex District in 2017. He earned his Bachelor's Degree in Resource Economics (concentration in Natural Resources) from UMass Amherst and he received a Master's Degree in Environmental Earth and Ocean Studies from UMass Boston.

#### EPA A- Grade

- Last week the US Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) announced the lower Charles River received an A- for bacterial water quality within the river during 2017. The lower Charles River has improved dramatically from the launch of EPA's Charles River Initiative in 1995, when the river received a "D" for meeting boating standards only 39 percent of the time and swimming standards just 19 percent of the time. The Charles River is a unique natural resource contained within this urban setting, offering the public with an exceptional green space to meet their recreational and commuter needs. It can be easy to forget, but it also serves as an important and diverse ecosystem where plants, animals, and aquatic life depend on the Charles River's health, as well.
- The EPA's A- grade underscores the long lasting effort we have all collectively demonstrated. However, our work is not done. We must remain diligent to ensure that this natural resource of ours continues to be protected.
- Herter Park and Esplanade will pilot a Beer Garden – focused as a family-friendly venture with craft beers and donations to each park.

A member thanked DCR on the Beer Garden as an impressive new opportunity. Interest among members for a schedule was expressed. *UPDATE AS OF JULY 12: Sites are expected to be operational in the next two to four weeks.*

A member commented that New Hampshire has a state park license plate where a higher fee goes to state parks and also allows drivers wider park access.

DCR is exploring taking over street lights from utilities to avoid jurisdictional confusion and improve service. DCR currently owns approximately 5,000 of the 13,000 where we have some responsibility.

We have now have a searchable database from 1893 of minutes of all Stewardship Council meetings as part of our 125-year anniversary.

### **Article 97 Update**

Legislation has been filed to transfer a piece of land at the Westminster State Forest to the Town of Westminster for a landfill expansion. The proponent is offering a two-for-one land swap, and a tipping fee payment, as compensation to DCR. The DCR is studying the proposal.

Heather Clish stated that the land exchanged should be of equal or better ecological value, not just land of equal monetary value.

A member asked if a map of the acquisition can be provided to the Council. The Commissioner said he would bring one to the next meeting.

### **Committee Updates**

Finance Committee Chairwoman Heather Clish provided a state budget update and provided a schedule of legislative meetings relative to finalizing the state budget.

### **Special Business**

Lisa Barstow and Jennifer Norwood presented on Internal Communication and Constituent Service strides made as a result of Agile Scrum initiated programs. *Presentations will be available online.*

Gaps identified in the Scrum on internal/employee communication were horizontal and vertical, involved lack of communication technology for staff and made transparent the need to create ongoing, communication products and projects to ensure we continue to give staff at all levels the opportunity to speak and to listen.

Smart phones were purchased for staff with flip phones or without cell phones, a wide scale effort to bring high-speed internet into areas that were dial-up or had no internet service is underway and continues and a clear expectation has been set that from the top down, managers hold regularly scheduled meetings with all staff, which was not always consistent.

“Coffee with the Commissioner,” was introduced in 2017. Commissioner Roy meets with staff across all five regions at least twice a year, per region. It is a listening tour for the Commissioner, any question is fair game, and staff hears directly from the top about agency-shaping information relative to the budget, Operations and A&F.

Other programs have been introduced to build camaraderie and unity across the varied disciplines of our diverse agency. Brown bag lunch programs held across the state had a profoundly positive impact on regions outside of Boston, where often the impression is Boston-centric. We have reimaged the Intranet site into a news magazine, rich with photos and the ability to archive stories, Commissioner emails to all staff and other agency news.

Jennifer Norwood spoke on the merits and continued progress of the new constituent management system. With only two staff members to handle approximately 10,000 emails and 20,000 phone calls per year, the system helps decipher true emergencies from simple queries, better assign tasks, and accumulate data.

The new system is still being rolled out into various regions, but already has helped close the loop on constituent contacts with less time and more expediency and provide crucial data to make better informed decisions at every level.

Council members were impressed with this new ability to quantify constituent contacts, and mine data—a benefit on several fronts beyond better constituent service including legislative relations and public safety.

### **Approval of Minutes**

Dennis Smith recognized errors in April minutes. A motion to defer approval until the July meeting was made and seconded. All in favor, the motion carried.

Acting Chairwoman Pollak motioned to approve the May minutes, motion was seconded. All in favor, the motion carried.

Commissioner Roy announced the Paine Campground acquisition has just closed.

### **Adjournment**

Acting Chairwoman Pollak motioned to adjourn at 1:43 p.m. The motion was seconded. All in favor, the motion carried.

Next Meeting: July 12, 2018 at Great Falls Discovery Center, 12 p.m., 2 Avenue A, Turners Falls.