**Department of Conservation and Recreation Stewardship Council Meeting Via Videoconference February 10th, 2022, 9am to 11am**

**Council Members Present: Chairman Jack Buckley, Ann Canedy, Esq., Jeffrey Collins, Dicken Crane, Melissa Harper, Susan Smiley, Dennis Smith, Jennifer N.S. Wilson, Esq.**

**Council Members Not Present: Vivian Ortiz**

**DCR Staff Attendees Nick Connors, Stephanie Cooper, Dan Cushing, Patrice Kish, Stefan Skalinski**

**Public Attendees**: Vivian Morris, Edgewater Neighborhood Association; Katie Conlon, Buckland; Douglas Cornelius, Newton; Clarise Hart; Chris Redford; Sarah Freedman; Glen Ayers; Elisa Campbell; Bill Boles, NEMBA; Ellen Arnold; Sharl Heller; Galen Mook, Mass Bike.

**Call to Meeting-Chairman Jack Buckley**

Chairman Jack Buckley called the meeting to order. This is Jack Buckley’s first meeting as Chairman. He started by thanking the Council members in helping with the transition. He also thanked the DCR staff and the advocate groups.

**Regular Business I**

Chairman Buckley added an item to the agenda for the approval of minutes. Councilor Wilson asked to have a little more time with the minutes.

Chairman Buckley entertained a motion to push the approval of the January 13 minutes to the next meeting. Councilor Wilson moved to push the approval of the minutes to the next meeting, seconded by Councilor Smiley.

Councilor Canedy commented on the meeting minutes for the January 13th meeting. She was hoping to find a happy medium with the abbreviated minutes from the Stefan Skalinski and the more detailed minutes from Lisa Barstow. Although generally the minutes were well done and certainly appreciated, there were some typos and grammatical errors.

Chairman Buckley added that people liked the way Lisa did the meeting minutes. He was going to talk to DCR staff about the minutes.

The motion to defer approval of the minutes was to the next meeting was unanimously approved.

**DCR Report-Stephanie Cooper, Acting Commissioner**

The Acting Commissioner thanked the Chairman for the support and for taking on this role. She is looking forward to working together and collaborating in the future. The Acting Commissioner report focused on two things: the last winter storm and the Governor's proposed budget.

**Winter Storm:**

* The state was hit hard by the latest storm, especially the eastern part of the state. DCR was able to fulfill its duties during and after the storm. There was a lot of snow cleanup around the state.
* Commissioner Cooper was able to meet with DCR staff at the new Northpoint Facility. She was able to talk to staff who had to deal with cleanup, stopping runoff in rivers and overall facilities needs during the storm.
* The staff was able to make sure the roads, paths, parking lots were safe for travel and to allow people to use the facilities.
* Across coastal areas there were flood concerns. As an example, flood control staff was able to control the floodgate in Revere during three high tides during the storm.
* DCR is under the statewide emergency response and played a key role in the last major winter storm.

**Governors FY23 Budget**

* The FY23 budget was submitted to the legislature, with a proposed operating budget for DCR of $113 million. This is an increase of $829,000 from the last fiscal year. But that number is technically higher.
* The current budget includes $7 million for earmarks. That funding is outside the support for operations and staffing etc. This new proposed budget “in reality” adds $8 million.
* Commissioner Cooper recognized the Council for helping with input for the budget. DCR shares the Council’s priorities, seeking resources to expand and support partnerships and support the Resource Management Plan Program (RMPP)
* The Acting Commissioner wanted to highlight two areas of investment in the FY23 budget. One is $1.4 million dollars which will go to expand the Swim Safe program and investments in the DCR Water Safety program statewide. Another $4 million will go to the Summer Nights programs.
* Two elements of the budget directly respond to the Special Commission's recommendations. The first includes $350,000 to fund conversion of seasonal workers to full time. The budget also addresses the retained revenue account, replacing it with line-item funding.
* In terms of Special Commission response, DCR is looking to hire an outside consultant to support working with the Special Commission process.
* A project manager is working to update the DCR website and its online presence. An example of improvements would be sending out alerts on water quality issues and capacity issues at parks.

*Edgewater*

DCR held a 25% design meeting on January 27th. DCR is making progress on that project. There also was a disruption during the meeting. DCR is working to make changes to the virtual meetings to prevent that from happening again. The public comment period has been extended.

*Doyle Playground*

DCR has completed Phase I of Park Design. There was a community stakeholder meeting on February 10th.

*RMPs*

There is a Public Meeting on March 1st to seek comments on the Myles Standish RMP project. The South Coast district and Central Highlands district RMPs Public Meetings will be scheduled once the Myles Standish meeting is finished. DCR is working internally on the RMP for the lakes district in the Berkshires.

*Q&A*

Councilor Crane asked for an update on the Windsor State Forest project. Acting Commissioner Cooper said this is a project that DCR is looking at in thinking about the Capital plan next year. The Windsor State Forest has been closed because of the lack of staff and DCR is looking to reinvest. There was uncertainty expressed as to whether the delay has to do with DCR’s readiness on funding side. Commissioner Cooper can get a more detailed answer from the Conservation Commission. Patrice Kish said DCR’s Dam safety staff had been working with the ecological staff in addressing the environmental issues with the dam project. DCR is working on the project, which is part of a larger campground rehabilitation and expansion.

Councilor Harper asked if there was any work being done or being planned in increasing the capacity of DCR to engage more fully with the partners across the Commonwealth? This would include increasing responsiveness to partners and friends' groups who are trying help move important projects forward on DCR property. Acting Commissioner Cooper said DCR has some staff to engage with these groups, and expressed appreciation for so many who want to engage. DCR is looking at how to frame some of the priorities and how to succeed with some of these projects with partnership groups. This is something DCR needs to look at over time to maximize opportunities and advance shared priorities. Councilor Harper requested that the Stakeholders Committee be included in discussions on this topic.

Chairman Buckley had a question about the hiring of a consultant. He asked if the Stewardship Council would be involved in selecting one. The Acting Commissioner agreed that they should. Chairman Buckley also wanted to look into ensuring dedicated administrative staff for the Stewardship Council. The Acting Commissioner understood, mentioning the work of DCR staff such as Paul Cavanaugh on the RMPs and Dan Cushing on putting together the meetings. She also thanked Stefan Skalinski for stepping in to do the minutes.

**Special Business I**

*Presentation on Deferred Maintenance [(add link)] -*Presented by Patrice Kish, Director of Historic Resources and Mary Clutchey

Q&A

Councilor Collins asked how ecological/land management is integrated in the capital assets? Director Kish said that DCR considers “deferred conservation” as part as deferred maintenance. DCR works with ecological staff to determine the extent of the deferred conservation that needs to be addressed. Part of the Capital budget is allocated to things like regional invasive species management plans.

Councilor Crane asked about climate change, noting he didn't hear it articulated as a consideration as part of the back log of maintenance on buildings. There are greenhouse gas and climate change impacts. He said it should be expressed that DCR should seek adequate funding to deal with those issues. Director Kish said DCR is working very hard to comply with the Governors Executive Order 594. When DCR approaches a deferred maintenance project, it takes in consideration both climate resilience and net zero gas emission. DCR works with CAMIS staff so that climate issues are incorporated.

Councilor Harper asked what the trend has been for capital funding for the budget for last several years and where it is expected to go. $84 million in progress on a billion dollars’ worth of maintenance needs suggests it will take a long time to get caught up. She was wondering if there are any trends indicating more capital funding in the future. Director Kish said DCR is in the process of developing the 5-year Capital Plan. DCR is subject to a cap that is put in place by A&F. The trend has been an increase in DCR capital budget. DCR is proposing a significant increase over the next few years. Acting Commissioner Cooper said that DCR is in the preliminary stages of the process. She also mentioned that on all projects, DCR investigates climate issues and limiting carbon impact.

Councilor Wilson asked about the capital budget cap, seeking a reminder of where the cap comes from. Acting Commissioner Cooper said it’s part of the budget allocation. It is based on what bonding the Commonwealth has done overall that supports capital investment.

Councilor Smiley asked whether there is a detailed summary on what the other funding sources are available from a partnership standpoint and/or operating earmarks. Director Kish said that is not information DCR has available right now but can work with the finance team to get something for her.

Councilor Smith asked if there are any properties we should not be investing in. For instance, are there any properties we should look to dispose of in some way? Any properties we can anticipate will be underwater or made unusable because of climate change, and so not worth further investment in those properties? Director Kish said the answer to those questions is “yes.” DCR evaluates every project with those questions in mind. That evaluation guides DCR in what properties should demolished/disposed of. DCR does allocate a portion of its capital maintenance budget to those activities. On the question on climate, DCR evaluates impact with every project that DCR undertakes. There are climate assessments on several DCR properties. There is a great team on climate issues.

The Council Chairman Buckley stated that in 2016 there was a billion-dollar backlog. Are we winning on this or losing? Is there a better way to articulate to our advocates so they know how DCR is doing? He brought up the cap. He said the ARPA money was so important if we could get it. He also mentioned that when the website is updated, he hopes there would be a map of the state with DCR capital projects.

*Public Comment – Guidelines are available on the DCR Stewardship Council website*

Chairman Buckley invited members of the public for comment, which was offered by the following:

* Vivian Morris
* Katie Conlon
* Douglas Cornelius
* Clarisse Hart
* Sara Freeman
* Glen Ayers
* Elisa Campbell
* Bill Boles
* Elena Arnold
* Shari Heller
* Galen Mook

**Regular Business II**

There was a time shortage because of technical difficulties at the beginning of the meeting. The Council decided to postpone the breakout sessions of the subcommittees. The Finance committee plans to meet next week. Subcommittees who met prior presented a summary:

*Policy and Operations Committee*

This Committee has been considering its 2022 priorities. Two categories are (1) recommendations from the Special Commission and (2) next steps on proposed amendments to the Council’s authorization legislation. The Committee is also focused on coordinating the strategic planning process so that it is aligned with the budget cycle, RMPs, and other aspects of the annual DCR and Council calendar. The Committee anticipates using off cycle meetings. There were some comments about follow up process on public comments. The subcommittee is eager to be moving forward on RMP process and looking at other substantive areas the subcommittee that can work on.

*Stakeholders Committee*

The Subcommittee is still waiting on the information of the outcome of the MOU with friends groups. There was a friends group meeting recently but the subcommittee did have questions on the final resolution and exceptions. Also, the subcommittee wanted to not forget about the public comment response after a meeting. Councilor Ortiz noted that Lisa Barstow is missed, and it is important to have someone who can fill in for the things Lisa did.

**Adjournment**

Chairman Buckley entertained a motion to adjourn the meeting, which was made and seconded. The Council adjourned, until the next meeting in March 2022.