# February 24, 2023 Meeting Minutes

Committee Members Present: Susan Smiley, Dennis Smith, Melissa Harper, Vivian Ortiz, Ted Dooley

Other Councilors Present: Jack Buckley

DCR Staff Attendees: Matthew Perry, Nick Connors, Hilary Treat

## Call to Order – Committee Chair Susan Smiley 8:05am

Chair Smiley welcomed the attendees, took attendance of Councilors, and went over the meeting agenda.

## Approval of Minutes

The committee approved the minutes from the January 27 and December 2 meetings.

## Update on Partner Presentations

Councilor Buckley asked Matt Perry if anyone had responded to his request of meeting with the Fish and Wildlife Board before the June meeting of the Stewardship Council.

Mr. Perry responded that a handful of people have responded and that he will send another email to councilors to find out. The meeting would take place at 4:00 or 4:15pm prior to the Council meeting.

Councilor Smith said he thinks it is a good idea and that an hour before the council meeting will also allow time for chit-chat. He asked Mr. Perry to provide councilors with an agenda for future meetings.

Chair Smiley asked if there were any objections to meeting with the Fish and Wildlife board and there were none.

Mr. Perry informed the committee that there were three new requests for presentations submitted from outside groups. Two of them were from requests without a DCR affiliation and Mr. Perry said he would try to gather more information on them. The other request was from the Charles River Watershed Association regarding the Watertown Dam.

Chair Smiley mentioned that any group presenting should be a partner or have an MOU with DCR, and that a relationship with the agency is a must.

Nick Connors informed the committee that the issue of the Watertown Dam will be addressed by the commissioner at the March Stewardship Council meeting and that CRWA is a longtime partner with DCR.

## Update on SRI Partnership Scrum

Chair Smiley welcomed Hilary Treat, Manager of Statewide Initiatives and Programs at DCR to the meeting to discuss the Strategic Readiness Initiative scrum related to partnerships.

Ms. Treat said that the Partnership SRI team made a guidebook that focuses on open communication and efficiency. She said she was open to any questions that the committee had.

Chair Smiley noted that Mary Cardwell gave a very good and elaborate update at the last Stewardship Council meeting and asked if there was anything that Ms. Treat would like to know from the Council. She asked Ms. Treat what she did at DCR.

Ms. Treat responded that she works with partners on Summer Nights, works with Girl Scouts, works on Park Serve Day, and interacts with partners regularly in her role. She noted that the scrum process ended on December 31 and that the objective was to complete a guidebook. The group is now waiting in a holding pattern after completing the guidebook.

Mr. Connors added that after Jenny Norwood moved on from DCR, Ms. Treat was tasked with taking on the partnerships portion of the SRI and was the one who guided it to its completion. He said that the guidebook will help guide DCR internally as it staffs up the partnership group, but they are waiting on guidance from the new administration before moving forward.

Chair Smiley said that this information was very helpful and asked if there were questions from committee members.

Councilor Buckley asked if the guidebook will be critiqued by partners.

Mr. Connors replied that there will be opportunity for that, and those conversations will happen with the new administration.

Chair Smiley asked for an update on the MOU process.

Mr. Connors responded that the process has been changed so it is turnkey and that more complicated relationships can be achieved through a rider. He noted that the only group who has signed one of the new MOUs so far is the Walden Woods Project.

Councilor Ortiz said that she had spoken to Ms. Norwood before she left about the Neponset River Watershed Association could do a trial run with the new MOU.

Mr. Connors stated that the idea is to have all of the MOUs expire at the same time of year or month so that DCR is no longer tracking multiple end dates and that everything will happen all at once.

**Discussion of Public Comment at Stewardship Council Meetings**

Councilor Smith expressed concern that they public comment at the last meeting was dominated by two main topics and was very repetitive. He suggested that the structure of the comment period should be tighter so that the Council is not bombarded with many comments that are all the same.

Chair Smiley suggested that the Stakeholders Committee take on public comment and asked Councilor Smith to continue to speak on the subject.

Councilor Smith suggested that a new rule set up ahead of time could prevent something like that from happening again. He said requiring guests to state their name, residence, and topic, cutting off time to sign up for comment, adding a time clock, or only allowing three people to speak on the same subject were ideas he had.

Chair Smiley suggested deciding whether the public comment should be at the beginning or the end of the meeting and should have more structure around it.

Councilor Buckley suggested looking at the guidelines again. Mr. Perry put a [link to the guidelines](https://www.mass.gov/how-to/making-public-comments-at-a-stewardship-council-meeting) in the meeting chat.

Councilor Harper said that they need to be careful of how much the council controls voices that are heard during the public comment. She said that it could get political quickly, suggesting that they mention at the beginning of the comment period that they don’t want people speaking on comments someone has already made, trying for self-policing.

Councilor Ortiz suggested asking for one representative per organization to speak on behalf of the members.

Councilor Harper added that it could be added to the guidelines not to repeat topics.

Councilor Ortiz continued that they could ask people to add the name of their community or organization to their name on Zoom. It would help to know what groups attend and preventing Zoom bombing.

Councilor Buckley commented that people who speak on the same topic are not always from the same organization and that it is hard for him to look at the text message from Mr. Perry with who will be speaking and run the meeting at the same time.

Councilor Harper suggested that the comment list be published in the chat.

Councilor Buckley pointed out that if they only let one or two people comment on a certain topic, others can submit comments in writing.

Chair Smiley suggested that they look at the guidelines as they are written and see where changes can be made.

Mr. Connors asked if Councilor Buckley could read out the public comment rules at the meeting for a couple of months to remind people what they are and that they aren’t engaging in discussion.

Councilor Buckley suggested that people need to register to comment by 9:30 at a meeting.

Councilor Ortiz said that she would be cautious about that since some people work and cannot attend the full meeting.

Councilor Smith suggested that Mr. Perry put together a draft of new guidelines based on the comments made that can be discussed at a later Committee meeting.

## Future Committee Meetings

The next meeting of the Stakeholders Committee will be held on April 7, 2023.

## Adjournment

Councilor Smiley thank everyone for their attendance and adjourned the meeting.

*Please check the DCR Stewardship Council webpage for notice of upcoming meetings.* [*https://www.mass.gov/service-details/dcr-stewardship-council*](https://www.mass.gov/service-details/dcr-stewardship-council)