# **February Meeting Minutes**

Council Members Present: Jack Buckley, Jennifer Wilson, Dicken Crane, Melissa Harper, Susan Smiley, Vivian Ortiz, Dennis Smith, Jeff Collins, Ann Canedy, Phil Doherty, Kevin O’Shea

Council Members Absent: Ted Dooley

DCR Staff Attendees: Matt Perry, Nick Connors, Doug Rice, Julie Martin, Mary Cardwell, Ilyse Wolberg, Bill VanDoren, Lindsay Nystrom, Thomas Brule

Public Attendees as Registered**:** Alexi Conine, Alison Wright-Hunter, Bart Bouricius, Bill Boles, Caroline Scully, Chris Egan, Chris Redfern, Chuck Anastas, Emma Ellsworth, Garret Weyr, Gia Neswald, Heather Linscott, Helen Johnson, Jane Winn, Jessica Bryant, Jonathan Wang, Judy Jacobs, Jun Lee, Karl Dziura, Kate Conlin, Ken Canfield, Ken MacKenzie, Kevin, Kevin Podkowka, Kristopher Massini, Laura Jasinski, Laurel Facey, Lauren C., Lexi Dewey, Lizzie Roche, Louise Johnson, Lynne Man, Matthew DiBona, Mike, Nikolai Anzuoni, Paula, Paula Uribe, Rich MacLean, Rosemary Wessel, Suzanne Gall Marsh, Todd Waldron, Tom Ryan

## Call to Meeting, 9:00am – Chair Jack Buckley

Chair Buckley welcomed everyone to the meeting and did a roll call of councilors. He said he was pleased that over 50 people were present at the meeting. In his comments, Chair Buckley reported that Councilor Smith has created an outline of a nominating committee that he will share with the council after the meeting and that it will be voted on in March. He also said that he has asked Matt Perry to create a matrix of the council and committee schedules to show when meetings are and what the topics of meetings are. Matt has also been asked to give a short update on legislation that effects DCR and the Stewardship Council. Chair Buckley also asked how DCR responds to reports of capital improvements that are needed at parks.

## DCR Report – Doug Rice, Commissioner

Commissioner Rice thanked the Council and chair for inviting him to speak. He then gave an update on DCR activities over the prior month.

### New DCR Staff

Commissioner Rice announced the hiring of Don Kent, Ph.D., and Amy Wilmot. Dr. Kent is the new Director of Research and brings more than 30 years of public, non-profit and private sector experience in resource protection and stewardship as well as environmental research and policy.  Don is the principal and founder of Healthy Lands and has executed conservation initiatives in the United States and abroad.  Among other career stops, he worked with the New Hampshire Department of Natural Resources and with Disney Research and Development.  Don has authored several books including: *Leadership Practices for Healthy Lands and Waters; Applied Wetlands Science and Technology*; and *Earth Day Every Day: Dispatches From the Conservation Front.*

Ms. Wilmot will oversee the Certified Interpretive Host program going forward. She has been with DCR, most recently serving as the Regional Interpreter Coordinator in the South Region.  Beyond Ms. Wilmot’s experience, she brings her passion to educate, interpret, engage and connect people to our natural, cultural and recreational resources throughout the state and to promote their importance to the Commonwealth.

Both of these positions were added as part of the Strategic Readiness Initiative.

### February Vacation Programs

During the week of February School Vacation, February 18 – 26, DCR properties are planning special events for families and kids to have some free fun and get some fresh air.  Highlights include games from the 1700s at Roxbury Heritage State Park, a hike to the former town of Dana’s common at the Quabbin Reservoir, a program at Walden Pond about the Ice Harvesting Industry in Massachusetts, and “Charles Elliot’s Dream,” a program about the man who helped create the Emerald Necklace, the Trustees of Reservations, the Metropolitan Parks Commission, the precursor to the DCR, as well as the Blue Hills Reservation. The DCR Universal Access program is holding an event at Wendell State Forest that will feature outdoor ice skating, cross-country skiing, sit-skiing, gentle sled hockey games, kick sledding, snowshoeing, and hiking.

### Forestry Meeting with EEA

Along with other members of the DCR staff, Department of Fish and Game staff, and EEA staff, Commissioner Rice had a meeting with Secretary Rebecca Tepper and Climate Chief Melissa Hoffer about forestry practices in the Commonwealth. Information was presented about how DCR’s forestry decisions are made and the process of creating Landscape Designations. It was a productive meeting and DCR is looking forward to having more conversations with the Secretary and Climate Chief about this topic.

### Snow and Ice

DCR staff has been hard at work over the past few weeks with snow and ice cleanup and dealing with damage from rain and windstorms. Commissioner Rice has been actively updating the Secretary and Governor about DCR efforts, and he’s had several conversations with them about coordination for future storms. Everyone involved at DCR has done a great job of keeping roads cleared and safe and properties accessible during all of the weather we’ve encountered. In addition, the parks support team responded to several issues in the parks stemming from the extreme cold weather that was experienced. They did an excellent job responding and Commissioner Rice thanked them for all of their hard work in those harsh conditions.

### Summer Preparation

Staff in the agency is getting ready for the summer season. Camping reservations open on February 15, lifeguard recruitment has begun, and seasonal rosters have been finalized. Recall letters have gone out to seasonal staff, and recruitment for all staff in general has begun.

### Councilor Questions and Comments

Councilor O’Shea asked for an update on maintenance at Ponkapoag and Leo J. Martin Golf Courses.

Commissioner Rice responded that an update will be provided.

Chair Buckley asked what happens to DCR’s snow and ice budget if all of the money is not used up during the winter.

Commissioner Rice said that he will get an exact answer, adding that even with small events and icing, DCR crews and staff are out and the resources are being expended.

Chair Buckley followed up by asking about the proposed logging moratorium and what DCR’s posture was on it.

Commissioner Rice stated that the first conversation about forestry happened with Secretary Tepper and Climate Chief Hopper last week, and that it was an opportunity to share and ask questions.

Chair Buckley asked if there was a moratorium happening at this point.

Commissioner Rice said no, nothing has been officially announced.

Councilor Wilson asked if the forestry business with DCR continuing on the course that it has been.

Commissioner Rice said that DCR has not stopped any of the active forestry projects.

Councilor Collins asked for more information about the Office of Dam safety at DCR and how it intersects with DER’s dam removal projects. He said that he was asking the question to be answered in the future.

## Strategic Readiness Update – Mary Cardwell, Program Coordinator, Conservation and Resource Stewardship

Ms. Cardwell gave an update on the end of the initial “sprints” that were part of the DCR Strategic Readiness Initiative.

After the presentation, Councilors were given the opportunity for questions and comments.

### Councilor Questions and Comments

Councilor Smith commented that the presentation was very valuable and that he saw many places where the council could be more involved. He said that councilors should jot down ideas for suggestions that could be made going forward.

Councilor Smiley thanked Ms. Cardwell for her presentation and agreed with Councilor Smith’s comments. She added that she would be interested in attending one of the March Customer Service Trainings. She added that she was wondering how DCR’s work would be connected to the work of the new Office of Outdoor Recreation.

Councilor Wilson said she was also interested in the Customer Service Training. She added that it would be great to be mindful of legislative opportunities where proposed changes to the Stewardship Council can be made.

Chair Buckley thanked Ms. Cardwell and said that the work she presented is central to DCR. He said that the core basis of the SRI was the Special Commission Report which was a product of the legislature and asked if there has been any update to the legislature on the progress that has been made.

Commissioner Rice responded that there has not been any specific outreach to the legislature, only one on one updates when requested.

## Regular Business I

### Presentation from Presentation by Bill VanDoren, DCR Forest Biometrician

Mr. VanDoren presented on DCR’s Continuous Forest Inventory program.

### After the presentation concluded, Councilors were given the opportunity for questions and comments.

Councilor Crane commented that the presentation reveals how much understanding that Bill and the Division of Forestry have of the complexities that are dealt with. He said that it doesn’t seem like something that every lay person is going to be able to wrap their head around but one thing that seems straightforward is the concept of carbon saturation in dynamic equilibrium.

Councilor Collins stated that the presentation demonstrates the level of professionalism and expertise that DCR takes to their work. He stated the importance of trees in the age class of 0-20 years to habitats of birds that are in decline in Massachusetts asked about young forests and whether the percentage was so low because of white tailed deer browsing.

Mr. VanDoren stated that although age is important, so is the size of trees and that is something that is being looked at as well. He added that they work with deer experts and note when subtle shifts in composition are seen, especially when species that deer find “tasty” are gone. Some of those effects have been noted in areas, and they are working better to understand it.

Chair Buckley asked whether beavers were in the same class as deer as far as their impact goes.

Mr. VanDoren said yes, and that even though it is called a forest inventory, all lands are inventoried including fields and wetlands. As a result, there is info on trees that beaver have affected over time.

Councilor Wilson commented that it was a helpful conversation to have when understanding the complexity of the program and that she hopes to see the presentation on the Stewardship Council website.

### Approval of Minutes – December 8, 2022 Meeting

Councilor Smiley made a motion to approve the minutes from the December 8, 2022 Stewardship Council meeting.

Councilor Canedy seconded the motion.

### Roll Call on Approval of Minutes

Councilor Harper: Yes

Councilor Canedy: Yes

Councilor Smith: Yes

Councilor Ortiz: Yes

Councilor Crane: Yes

Councilor Wilson: Yes

Councilor Collins: Abstain

Councilor Smiley: Yes

Councilor O’Shea: Abstain

Councilor Doherty: Abstain

Chair Buckley: Yes

The December 8, 2022 minutes were approved.

### Approval of Minutes – January 12, 2023 Meeting

Councilor Canedy made a motion to approve the minutes from the January 12, 2023 Stewardship Council meeting.

Councilor Collins seconded the motion.

### Roll Call on Approval of Minutes

Councilor Harper: Yes

Councilor Canedy: Yes

Councilor Smith: Yes

Councilor Ortiz: Abstain

Councilor Crane: Yes

Councilor Wilson: Yes

Councilor Collins: Yes

Councilor Smiley: Yes

Councilor O’Shea: Yes

Councilor Doherty: Yes

Chair Buckley: Yes

The January 12, 2023 minutes were approved.

### Public Comment

[Guidelines for Public Comment are available on the DCR Stewardship Council website.](https://www.mass.gov/doc/dcr-stewardship-council-public-comment-guidelines/download)

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

* Lynne Man, Massachusetts Chapter of the Sierra Club
* Chuck Anastas, Massachusetts Conservation Voters
* Louise Johnson, Jamaica Plain
* Kate Conlin, Buckland
* Rosemary Wessel, Cummington
* Heather Linscott, Adams
* Chris Egan, Mass Forestry Alliance
* Jane Winn, Berkshire Environmental Action Team
* Gia Neswald, Turners Falls
* Caroline Scully, Adams
* Karl Dziura, Conway
* Jonathan Wang,
* Miriam Kurland, Williamsburg

## Regular Business II

### Committee Updates

Finance

Chair Buckley reported that the Finance Committee met on February 7 and discussed capital projects with Patrice Kish, Chief of Planning and Engineering at DCR. He said that the committee is very pleased with the direction that DCR is going in.

Policy

Councilor Wilson reported that the Policy Committee met on February 2 and discussed Councilor Crane’s proposal for a new committee on natural resources. They also discussed creating a calendar for the committee that would work with the council’s calendar and create a predictable cycle every year. The next committee meeting will be held on February 28 at 8am.

Stakeholders

Councilor Smiley reported that the Stakeholders Committee held a meeting on January 27 and met with David Burnes, Director of Partnerships at DCR. The next committee meeting will be held on February 24 at 8am.

### Councilor Comments

Councilor Ortiz sent an invitation to the Neponset River Watershed Association’s February 19 King Tide event in the meeting’s chat.

Councilor Crane thanked Councilor Wilson for her work in clarifying the difficulty that the council has in understand its responsibilities based on the enabling legislation. He said that she has established a good plan for the council going forward that will get them close to doing what their duties actually are.

## Adjournment

The Council adjourned the meeting at 10:56am.

Please check the DCR Stewardship Council webpage for notice of upcoming meetings. <https://www.mass.gov/service-details/dcr-stewardship-council>