# February 9, 2024 Meeting Minutes

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

**Other Councilors Present:** Jack Buckley

DCR Staff Attendees: Matthew Perry

**Public Attendees:** Denis LaForce, Chris Redfern, Wendy Machmuller

Call to Order – Committee Chair Susan Smiley

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

## Public Comments

Chair Smiley asked if any members of the public in attendance would like to make a comment.

The public in attendance declined to speak.

## Approval of Minutes

Councilor Smith moved to approve the Committee’s December meeting minutes.

Councilor Ortiz seconded.

Chair Smiley noted one correction that she had for the minutes that Mr. Perry will make.

Councilor Harper abstained.

The December minutes were approved.

Councilor Harper moved to approve the Committee’s January meeting minutes.

Chair Smiley seconded the motion.

Councilors Ortiz and Smith abstained.

The January minutes were approved.

## Requests to Present at Meetings

Mr. Perry gave an overview of possible presentations at future Council meetings.

He said he would be following up with the Somerville Cyclists group, the Charles River Watershed Association, the backcountry ski group in the Berkshires, and Save the Harbor, Save the Bay. He also said that he had a meeting with the director of Mass Horticulture Society based at Elm Bank in Wellesley, and that he would check-in with Councilor Jeff Collins about getting a presenter from Mass Audubon.

## Stakeholders Listening Session

Chair Smiley shared the draft agenda for the listening session on February 26th. She said the goal is to have the session end at 7:30pm and that she would like to have an outline and set expectations.

Mr. Perry went over what the Finance Committee does for their listening session.

Councilor Ortiz said that expectations and preparation should be part of the agenda or in an email that goes out as an invite. She said that they speakers should share about the group or organization that they are involved with.

Chair Smiley said that it should also include what the committee is trying to accomplish.

Councilor Ortiz noted that public meetings will usually take place at 6:30pm because some people will still be commuting at 6pm.

Councilor Smith said that if people are able to come in at 6:30pm, even if the session starts at 6, they will still be able to participate.

Councilor Harper commented that they should record the session and any councilors that can’t make it can watch it after. She added that it will allow them to analyze the information that people share and identify trends.

Chair Smiley said that she would like to keep the start time at 6pm in case it is a large group that shows up so they can allow everyone to speak.

Councilor Harper asked what the key questions that the committee wants answered are. She said it could turn into a free-for-all, which is something they might want, but if not, they might want an overarching question that people can engage with.

Chair Smiley said that they want some structure and that they want it to be a success for friends and stakeholders. She suggested that they request a simple introduction of the person’s name, organization or group, and then they will have 2-3 minutes to speak.

Councilor Smith said that they should ask everyone to sign up ahead of time and have a cutoff point. He suggested that people could check in with Mr. Perry who can keep track of the list of speakers.

Mr. Perry went over how comments are taken during the Finance Committee’s listening session.

Councilor Ortiz said that participants should put their name and organization as their name on Zoom and put a comment about their organization in the chat.

Chair Smiley said that Mr. Perry will monitor the chat.

Mr. Perry said that they can take written comments via email or chat.

Chair Smiley asked what else they want to hear from participants.

Councilor Harper said that they should figure out what they want to accomplish and what a successful listening session looks like. She said that should guide any questions that they ask.

Chair Smiley asked what Councilor Harper sees as the goal.

Councilor Harper asked if they are looking for a roadmap of what DCR needs to improve upon or do differently or should it go in a different direction.

Chair Smiley said that they should keep it simple and that they should say they are checking in on the health of the relationship between the groups and DCR, what’s working well, and where they see continuing challenges. She said that once they have the information, they can use it to sculpt how the face-to-face stakeholder meeting is going to go.

Councilor Buckley said that the first Finance Committee listening session was more open ended but in the following ones they tried to frame it more. He said there were only a handful of people at the first one, but the most recent one had over 40 participants.

Chair Smiley said that they don’t know what they’re going to get so they should make it open, collaborative, and simple. She said they should ask who the person is, their organization, how they interact with DCR, and what’s working and what’s not. She said they can take all of this back, continue discussions, and eventually have a face-to-face meeting.

Councilor Ortiz agreed with Chair Smiley. She asked if they should touch on the Strategic Readiness Plan.

Chair Smiley said that she feels a little lost on that and it is unclear where the process is.

Councilor Ortiz said she likes the idea of keeping it as simple as possible and that giving an assignment might deter people from participating.

Chair Smiley suggested that when the face-to-face meeting happens, DCR can bring information on the Strategic Readiness.

Councilor Buckley said that going forward, he would like to have the council focus on partnerships now that the forestry process is coming to an end.

Mr. Perry let the committee know that David Burnes is no longer the Director of Partnerships at DCR and that the position is now vacant. He said that for outreach, he will reach out to the list of partners that he has.

Chair Smiley said she would like to begin outreach after the meeting.

Councilor Harper said that she can’t attend but would be happy to take the recording and summarize the thoughts for discussion at the March committee meeting.

Councilor Smith said that he would like to convey to DCR that as they begin the hiring process for the Director of Partnerships, that the person they hire should have expectations of working with the council.

Chair Smiley said that she would draft a letter to send to DCR.

Councilor Smith agreed that it would be good to send a letter outlining the expectation.

Councilor Buckley said that it should be mentioned that the full council will be focusing on partnerships.

Chair Smiley will draft a letter that will be sent to Commissioner Brian Arrigo and Deputy Commissioner Zach Crowley.

Councilor Ortiz said that she is loving the social media posts from DCR. She asked if the Commissioner will be doing more Fireside Chats like the one he did at Breakheart and whether they could promote the listening session on the social media.

Mr. Perry said the Fireside Chats event is an event hosted by the Breakheart staff featuring many different members of the DCR staff speaking about their roles. He said he could speak with the communications team about putting the info for the listening session on social media.

Councilor Buckley said that it is important to get the word out any way they can and suggested contacting Mass Parks for All.

Councilor Smiley said that they should have an end time since it will be a long day and they want to be thoughtful about it. They will include 7:30 on the agenda as the end time.

## Update from Councilor Buckley

Councilor Jack Buckley, Chair of the Stewardship Council, updated the committee on the upcoming council meeting and the joint meeting with the Fish and Wildlife Board on February 15.

Councilor Ortiz said she will not be able to attend in-person on the 15th and asked if she could attend virtually.

Mr. Perry said yes, and that he will work with Councilor Buckley on it.

## Public Comment

Denis LaForce of Sutton spoke about cycling and camping and said he was interested to learn about what the Stakeholders Committee did which led him to attending the meeting.

Wendy from Brookline said that she is a member of the public that has been trail running lately.

Chris Redfern, Executive Director of the Friends of the Fells said that once the details are finalized on the listening session, he can help with outreach to other friends groups.

## Adjournment

Chair Smiley thank everyone for their attendance.

The meeting was adjourned.

*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)