# January 24, 2024 Stakeholder Committee Meeting Minutes

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

Other Councilors Present: Dicken Crane

DCR Staff Attendees: Matthew Perry

Members of the Public: Alexis

## Call to Order – Committee Chair Susan Smiley

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

## **Update from Council Chair Dicken Crane**

Councilor Crane said that he was happy about the winter weather and the recreational groups that can now enjoy the outdoors including the snowmobilers.

## Approval of Minutes

Councilor Ortiz moved to approve the November 1, 2024 meeting minutes.

Chair Smiley seconded the motion.

Councilor Dooley abstained.

The November minutes were approved.

Councilor Ortiz moved to approve the December 6, 2024 meeting minutes.

Councilor Harper seconded the motion.

Chair Smiley abstained.

The December minutes were approved.

## Partnership Presentation Requests

Mr. Perry reported that there were no new requests to present from outside partners. He said that for the February meeting, DCR staff and a few partner groups associated with the Boston Harbor Outer Islands cleanup that happened in September will be presenting. He said he would follow up with Mass Parks for All to see if they are still interested in presenting at a future meeting.

Councilor Harper said that they should check in with councilors to see if there are any organizations or friends groups that councilors want the committee to reach out to directly.

Councilor Crane said that Councilor Collins had made comments related to presentations from DCR staff, and a standardization of the presentation to show how the person or part of the agency fits into the bigger picture of DCR. He said that its sometimes assumed that councilors know how staff and what they work on is fits into bigger picture of the agency when that’s not always the case.

Councilor Smith said that this had come up before and that the council asked for an organizational chart. He suggested that they make a formal request again.

Chair Smiley said that she knows creating an organizational chart can be a challenge and that the Commissioner or a Deputy Commissioner may be able to give the council an overview.

Mr. Perry said that he can ask the Commissioner to give an overview of the organizational chart during the next council meeting.

Chair Smiley said it would also be interesting to see how DCR fits into the overall EEA organizational chart.

Councilor Harper said that she feels like sometimes the presentations from DCR staff inform the councilors, but they don’t say how the council can help or assist with any challenges that they may face. She suggested asking presenters about their biggest successes or obstacles, because that’s where the council can have the greatest influence by advocating through committees or the budget process.

Councilor Jasinski said that as a member of a group that has made presentations in the past, it is important for groups to understand what follow up could look like.

Chair Smiley asked if there was a format for staff presentations.

Councilor Ortiz said that if there were a template, that could help with staff to make sure presentations follow a certain format.

Councilor Harper said that it would be helpful to have a list of questions that they want every presentation to answer, and that the presenter can do it in any format that they want while capturing the information they ask for.

Mr. Perry said that he could write up questions to share with the committee.

## 2025 Stakeholders Committee Meeting Schedule

Chair Smiley said that she is setting a lighter schedule for the committee, and that the next three meetings will be on February 21, May 2, and June 27. She also said that if anyone is interested in becoming the Committee Chair in July, she would like to talk to them.

Councilor Harper said that February 21 is during school vacation week and that she won’t be able to make the meeting.

## DCR Partnership Office Update

Mr. Perry said that the new Director of Partnerships will be starting soon, and that the jobs for the Boston and South Regional Partnership Coordinators have been posted and that interviews are the positions are happening. He said in the meantime, a lot of work has been done to prepare for the Director of Partnerships and for the fully staffed department.

Chair Smiley said that it would be good to meet with the Director of Partnerships as a committee before they meet the entire council.

Councilors Harper and Ortiz agreed.

Mr. Perry said that he will work with the new Director to get a presentation together.

Chair Smiley said that it would be great to also have Leah Hopkins, Indigenous Peoples Coordinator, meet with the committee. She also said that with the Partnership Matching Funds program, she and Chair Crane spoke with the commissioner and they are looking to get the new staff member on board and understand how they can better restructure it to make it more effective for the agency and partners that are involved.

Councilor Ortiz agreed that Ms. Hopkins would be great to meet with and that it would be good to have an idea of what she’s doing in case the council wants to do more outreach to communities.

Councilor Harper said that it would be good to meet with the regional partnership coordinators to hear about the regions they represent and what the challenges are.

Chair Smiley said that they could maybe get one coordinator per meeting to give an update.

Councilor Ortiz said that its important for the committee to have a relationship with the coordinators and to let them know that they can reach out to the councilors.

Chair Smiley said that she speaks with Ombudsman A.J. Tourigny often, and that she considers him a partner and that it is good for public stakeholders for them to have this kind of relationship.

Councilor Crane said that for in-person meetings, the regional coordinator of where they are meeting should be invited.

Chair Smiley said that she would like to engage in DCR events more and know about them before they happen. She said that if the coordinators come to meetings, they can speak about events that will be happening.

Councilor Jasinski suggested matching the regional partnership presentation with a friends group from the region they represent.

## Councilor Terms

Councilor Harper updated the committee on her work addressing the upcoming expiration of 10 councilor’s terms in 2025. She said that she had a call with the Commissioner and explained the volume of terms coming up and sent a list to him of the councilors that would like to have their terms renewed. She said he will move those into the renewal process right away and will have a conversation with EEA to let them know about the situation as well. She said that once the Commissioner has the conversations he needs to have, they can connect with the Governor’s office to move things forward.

Councilor Crane said that they don’t want to lose having a full complement of councilors and that is what is driving the council to participate in the process of appointing councilors.

Councilor Harper said that they are not trying to control who is nominated, they just want to make sure that there are enough nominations and that things are moving forward.

Chair Smiley said that she will make an update on this a regular agenda item going forward.

## Other Business

Councilor Crane said that the Massachusetts Environmental Trust, which gives grants for watershed and other environmental organizations, has been dormant since 2019, but that there is an effort to bring it back. The funding for the organization comes from the sale of the environmental license plates, and that they will be having a low number plate auction. He said that DCR has partnered with the trust in the past, and that the council can let partners know that it is getting back to awarding grants.

Chair Smiley said that this would be a good presentation for the full council.

## Adjournment

Councilor Harper moved to adjourn the meeting.

Councilor Dooley seconded the motion.

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)