# January 5, 2024 Meeting Minutes

Committee Members Present: Susan Smiley, Ted Dooley, Melissa Harper

**Other Councilors Present:** Jack Buckley

DCR Staff Attendees: Matthew Perry, Dan Cushing, David Burnes, A.J. Tourigny, Zach Crowley

**Public Attendees:** Kate Conlin, Buckland; Denis LaForce, Sutton; Wendy, Brookline

## 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.

Kate Conlin of Buckland made a comment regarding the recently released Forests as Climate Solutions report.

## Update from Councilor Buckley

Councilor Jack Buckley, Chair of the Stewardship Council, updated the committee on the upcoming council meeting on January 11, 2024, and the plans for the joint meeting with the Department of Fish and Wildlife board on February 15, 2024.

## Approval of Minutes

The committee deferred approval of the December meeting minutes until the following meeting.

## Requests to Present at Meetings

Mr. Perry reported that he reached out to the Charles River Watershed Association (CRWA) about potentially presenting at an upcoming Stewardship Council meeting. He said that they offered to present about the Watertown Dam and the study that they are partnering with DCR on about the feasibility of its removal.

Councilor Buckley said that he would like to hear a more broad presentation about the groups interactions with DCR.

Mr. Perry said he would reach back out and offer for them to give two presentations, one that is general, and one that is about the Watertown Dam.

Mr. Perry said he is still communicating with the back country ski group that is active in the Berkshires to have them present as well. He said that he will work with David Burnes, A.J. Tourigny, and Zach Crowley to get the word out to groups that may be interested in presenting to the council.

Councilor Buckley said he will also mention this at the next council meeting.

Chair Smiley asked if there was potential for larger groups like Mass Audubon to present at a meeting.

Councilor Buckley said that Councilor Collins can help coordinate that and that Mass Audubon has extensive interactions with DCR.

Mr. Burnes said that he has a meeting with Stacey Butrell from Mass Audubon and can mention this to her.

## Stakeholders Listening Session

Chair Smiley asked Mr. Perry asked if there was a good date to hold the proposed Stakeholder listening session.

Mr. Perry suggested February 5 at 6pm with the session lasting an hour.

Councilor Buckley said that if it is held on February 5, the only opportunity to advertise it to the public will be at the January 11 council meeting, so it might be better to hold it after the February 15 meeting so it can be advertised at two meetings. He said that the expectations for the session should be fairly limited and that if lots of people are interested, they should be prepared to have it go over the time allotted.

Councilor Dooley agreed that it would be good to have the next two Stewardship Council meetings as opportunities to promote the event. He also said that they should make sure it is not held the week of February school vacation.

Chair Smiley suggested that the listening session be held on February 26, from 6pm to 7:30pm. She said that she will follow up with Councilor Buckley about a format for the session.

## 2024 Council Meeting Dates

Chair Smiley said that she sent out a schedule of Stakeholder Committee meeting dates to everyone, and that her only concern was there was one scheduled for the day after Thanksgiving. She said that meeting will be cancelled. She asked if they needed approval of the full council for the proposed council meeting dates.

Councilor Buckley said that Chair Smiley can mention it during the Stakeholder Committee update at the council meeting.

Councilor Dooley moved to recommend the 2024 meeting dates and locations to the council.

Councilor Harper seconded the motion.

The motion was approved.

## DCR Staff Introductions

Councilor Buckley asked if the DCR staff members that were present could introduce themselves.

A.J. Tourigny is the new Ombudsman at DCR. He said he will be working with external groups alongside David Burnes, Dan Cushing, and Craig Cashman, and that he reports to Zach Crowley.

David Burnes works with DCR’s partners. He is excited that A.J. is on board and that they are building a strong team to collaborate across the Commonwealth with both big groups and small.

Zach Crowley is the Deputy Commissioner for Policy and Public Affairs. He said that he is focused on rebuilding and restructuring to deliver on friends and partnerships. They are working on building back up the department, listening, and communicating to make sure there is a two-way flow of communication happening between DCR and its partner groups.

Dan Cushing is the Director of Public Engagement. He hosts public meetings for DCR’s projects and used to help with Stewardship Council meetings. He will be helping again as Matt is out on paternity leave.

## Public Comment

Wendy from Brookline said that she is listening in to the meeting and thanked everyone for having her.

## 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)