# **July 2024 Meeting Minutes**

Council Members Present: Jack Buckley, Dicken Crane, Susan Smiley, Jeff Collins, Phil Doherty, Ted Dooley, Dennis Smith, Jennifer Wilson, Laura Jasinski, Melissa Harper, Kevin O’Shea

Council Members Absent: Vivian Ortiz

DCR Staff Attendees: Brian Arrigo, Matthew Perry, Adam Morris, Chloe Gotsis, Ilyse Wolberg, Brenna Galvin

Public Attendees as Registered**:** James Paleologopoulos, Deb Carey, Chris Redfern, Buzz Constable, Andy Mathey, Chuck Anastas, Peter Lorenz, Wendy Machmuller, Eileen Gunn

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

Chair Buckley welcomed everyone to the meeting and did a roll call of councilors present. He expressed gratitude to the Governor, Lt. Governor, and Secretary again for appointing a full complement of councilors, saying that it is the first time in his tenure that all 13 seats have been filled. He said that with the hot weather everyone should be thankful for the state parks and beaches, and he thanked everyone working at them and that he hopes that political leaders will reflect on the importance of the parks. He said that he received an invitation from Steve Sears, Chair of the MassWildlife board, to a presentation on the Forests as Climate Solutions Initiative at a special meeting of the board. He said that his understanding is that Undersecretary Cooper will also be giving a presentation to the Stewardship Council at some point. Lastly, Chair Buckley noted that the council extended an invitation to the Secretary to attend a council meeting and that he hopes she is considering attending.

## DCR Report – Commissioner Brian Arrigo

Commissioner Arrigo thanked the Council for having him. He said it has been a busy summer season and that he is excited to give everyone an update on what has been happening over the past month.

### Kent Carlson Update

Commissioner Arrigo updated the Council with the sad news that former long-time DCR employee Kent Carlson recently passed away. A long-time public servant, Mr. Carlson held various positions in the agency with his last as the Director of Enterprise Information. The Commissioner said that the agency’s thoughts and prayers are with his family and friends including his DCR family and that they can share more information about services as they become available.

### Summer Nights

On Monday, Lieutenant Governor Driscoll, Mayor Wu and local elected officials joined Commissioner Arrigo and the DCR Summer Nights team at Ryan Playground to kick off the 10th year of our annual Summer Nights Program.  This incredible program provides free educational and recreational activities for teens and young adults in urban areas across our state throughout July and August. This is the largest year yet for the program with 100 partners hosting programs for 20,000 young people at 125 locations across 28 urban communities in Massachusetts. Seven new communities have been welcomed to the Summer Nights program this year: Norwood, Everett, Revere, Pittsfield, Somerville, Chicopee, and Easthampton. In addition to kicking off Summer Nights, the event also celebrated the newly completed and reopened Ryan Wading Pool, a more than $2 million investment that doubled the size of the neighborhood’s wading pool, installed new benches, spray features, shade pavilions and rubber surfacing that will help cool down the space for the community during the summer heat. A second Summer Nights kickoff event for our Western Mass partners will be held on July 17 with Governor Healey at the Holyoke Boys and Girls Club at 3:30 p.m.

### Fourth of July

The Fourth of July is the biggest day of the year at DCR properties and Commissioner Arrigo said that he likes to call it the agency’s “Superbowl.” Each year, DCR welcomes hundreds of thousands of people to parks all across the state to celebrate the birth of America. Commissioner Arrigo started his day at Cochituate State Park in Natick which reached capacity before 6 a.m., and then visited Hopkinton State Park before heading into Boston for the Pops celebration on the Esplanade. The Pops Fourth of July Celebration on the Esplanade is the largest event held on a DCR property all year and is an incredible feat for teams across the agency. Commissioner Arrigo acknowledged all the staff who spent the day working to make sure others could enjoy the holiday. He said that he is incredibly impressed and grateful for the staff’s dedication to the agency and to those it serves.

### Multilingual Signage

As part of DCR’s ongoing work to ensure its waterfronts are safe and welcoming spaces for everyone, the agency announced last week that they’ve installed new multilingual signage to welcome visitors to its 15 metro-beaches in nine languages including Spanish, Portuguese, Vietnamese, Haitian Creole, Mandarin, Traditional Chinese, Cape Verdean Creole, Russian, and Arabic. They’ve added new decals to visitor signs at the beaches that welcome beachgoers in the nine languages. This effort is a partnership with Save the Harbor/Save the Bay and the Metropolitan Beaches Commission (MBC), to enhance inclusivity and safety at beaches across Massachusetts. In addition to the new welcome decals, new, easier-to-understand beach and pool rules signs are being installed that outline safety regulations in English and Spanish, with QR codes to access the signs in eight other languages. The goal is to expand these new signs to all 81 waterfronts.

### Greater and Greener Conference

Commissioner Arrigo attended the Greater & Greener Conference in Seattle hosted by the City Parks Alliance. He joined innovators and decision-makers from across the global urban parks’ community to learn about cutting-edge projects, new ways parks are meeting the needs of our visitors, and how others are tackling some of the same issues we face. He said he was able to connect with many of our partners who were there including MassDEP, Boston Harbor Now, the Barr Foundation, City of Boston Parks and Recreation, and the Charles River Conservancy. He also saw Councilor Jasinski there.

### Cass Pool Celebration

On June 22, DCR welcomed the Roxbury community to the Melnea Cass Center to celebrate the opening of the Cass Pool and all DCR pools across the state for the summer season. Senator Liz Miranda, Representative Chynah Tyler and City Councilor Tania Fernandes Anderson, joined some of DCR’s Summer Nights partners and families and children from the Roxbury community. The Cass Center has been a cornerstone for the Roxbury community for over 50 years – bringing together neighbors, friends and families of all ages to run and walk the track, play lacrosse and tennis, swim and run through the spray deck. Early last month, DCR began work on substantial improvements to the Center including upgrading equipment and the athletic flooring, repairing the roof and adding new solar panels, planting new trees and more. The work will be wrapped up by Labor Day in time for the start of fall programming.

### MassTrails

On June 21, Commissioner Arrigo joined Secretary Rebecca Tepper and local leaders in Holliston to announce $12 million in grants for 65 trail projects statewide through the 2024 MassTrails Grant Program. These grants will significantly enhance trail infrastructure, fostering partnerships for trail maintenance, improvements, and new constructions to promote recreational opportunities and environmental stewardship. These investments also support a shared stake and stewardship in our parklands, open spaces, and trails, fostering a sense of community and involvement that we hope will continue for generations to come.

### Quinapoxet Dam Groundbreaking

On June 17, Commissioner Arrigo joined partners from the Massachusetts Water Resources Authority and the Department of Fish and Game to celebrate the groundbreaking of the removal of the Quinapoxet Dam. The dam was constructed in 1905 to support the creation of the Wachusett Reservoir and has outlived its usefulness due to significant upgrades MWRA has made to its water transfer systems. Commissioner Arrigo said that DCR is grateful to its partners at the MWRA and DFG for collaborating on the project that will restore the area’s natural ecology and create new recreational opportunities for people to enjoy for generations to come.

### Tree City USA

Commissioner Arrigo and the DCR Urban and Community Forestry team were with State Representative Kate Donaghue at the Fales Elementary School in Westborough for the National Arbor Day Foundation’s annual Tree City USA awards. This year, 90 communities and seven colleges and universities received Tree City and Tree Campus awards, some of whom have been part of the program for nearly 40 years. Massachusetts is a leader in this program, with the highest number of Tree Cities and Towns in New England. Commissioner Arrigo thanked Deputy Commissioner Priscilla Geigis, Director of Forest Stewardship Pete Church, Urban and Community Forestry Coordinator Julie Coop, and community Action Forester Mathew Cahill for their work on putting this event together each year.

### Did You Know Event in Holyoke

On July 18, DCR staff will be joining colleagues at EEA and DEP to host the “Did You Know Event” at Holyoke Heritage State Park. This event is designed to educate the community about useful resources offered by state agencies that could benefit them. Programs being highlighted include swimming, camping, Summer Nights, and the Greening the Gateway Cities tree planting program, as well as tips on recycling.

### Learn to Swim

The DCR Learn to Swim program provides free swimming lessons to kids at agency pools across the state. Knowing how to swim safely is an important life skill and something DCR has been teaching since the 1970s. DCR’s annual Learn to Swim classes are designed for beginner-level swimmers from ages 4-12 with a focus on water safety and learning basic swimming skills. Registration will close once classes are full. Registration is mandatory and done on a first come, first serve basis. For more info on the Learn to swim program and to register for lessons visit the DCR Learn to Swim website.

### UAP Summer Programming

In June, DCR announced its Universal Access Program (UAP) summer programming that includes adaptive paddling, accessible cycling, accessible swimming, accessible fishing, accessible camping (at 19 DCR facilities from the Berkshires to Cape Cod), and accessible golfing. A full list of the adaptive equipment and accessible programming DCR offers at its properties is available at mass.gov/dcr/universal-access.

### Councilor Questions and Comments

Councilor Smith said he appreciated getting the list of MassTrails grants and being able to see all of the municipalities that received them. He said he thinks the program is fantastic, and he asked what the $14 million matching funding for the Cape Cod Rail Trail is.

Commissioner Arrigo said that he did not know but would look into it.

Councilor O’Shea said he was happy to see all the work done at the Cass Center. He asked the Commissioner for an update on the DCR golf courses and the needs that the council heard about at the December 2023 meeting.

Commissioner Arrigo said that DCR has had a contractor out to address the needs of the greens and tee boxes, especially at Leo J. Martin although the contractor did visit both Ponkapoag and Leo J. Martin. He said that they’ve started the process of reseeding and rebuilding some of the greens. In addition, DCR is working with PGA of America to think through the longer term approach to the golf courses and what pieces need to be in place. He said that one important piece for Leo J. Martin is irrigation and that there is an earmark of ARPA funding that would allow irrigation work. They are working to get the systems upgraded within the time limit of ARPA spending. Commissioner Arrigo has also been engaged with the Mass Golf Association to think through best practices and how to bring them to DCR, and how can they support additional staff at the golf courses. He said the short-term work is to get contractors out to help with the greens and tees at Leo J. Martin, and then to think about a more long-term plan for the courses.

Commissioner O’Shea asked if the Commissioner could give another update during on the council’s fall meetings.

Councilor Jasinski commented about the Greater and Greener Conference and the importance of learning from other agencies across the country and meeting and building relationships. She appreciated having Commissioner Arrigo there and him taking the time to travel to the conference.

Councilor Wilson asked about waterfronts that are not safe to swim in and how sometimes lifeguards are present even when swimming is not allowed. She said that it can send a confusing message to people who go to swim but then can’t.

Commissioner Arrigo said that they are happy to think through the question and that lifeguards are assigned to different locations and said that it can be a mixed message to have a closed location and a lifeguard, but in the event someone does go out there, they want to make sure a lifeguard is present for safety. He said that in particular locations, they can have a conversation about thinking through a better system. He said that if there is no lifeguard and people do end up going into the water, it can raise other issues, so it might come down to messaging.

Chair Buckley commented that the video about the behind-the-scenes footage of the Fourth of July at the Esplanade shows how much work goes into DCR events and that the events that people appreciate and look forward to every year have a lot of people working to make them happen. He also asked how many kids have been taught to swim by DCR.

Mr. Perry shared the video that Chair Buckley referred to.

Councilor O’Shea asked about the interchange of the Mass Pike and Allston Brighton, and he said he would like to get an update on that project.

The Commissioner said there has been a lot of coordination with MassDOT and that they can give an update on it.

## Regular Business I

### Presentation from the Western Mass Backcountry Alliance – Andy Mathey and David O’Neil

Mr. Mathey and Mr. O’Neil presented to the council about the Western Mass Backcountry Alliance’s work restoring ski trails in the Berkshires and their collaboration with DCR.

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

Chair Buckley thanked them for the presentation and said it was another good example of the partnerships that exist in DCR.

Councilor Collins asked if they see the future of the work in recovering old runs or creating new glades, and what the environmental review is for the projects.

Mr. Mathey said that the “lost” ski areas trail footprints are still there and that it is the low hanging fruit for the project to restore them. He said that former DCR employee Paul Janighe pointed them to Beartown State Forest and Berkshire Basin, and they got right to work at those locations with the DCR staff. He said that there is so much work to do at these locations that they are imagining in the future working with private landowners or land trusts and creating new zones on public or private land, but that there are no real plans yet and for the next few years they will be working on DCR properties where the footprint of the trail already exists.

Councilor Collins pointed out the communities that exist at Mt. Wachusett and Mt. Watatic which are both DCR property, and said that he loved the comment about equity aspects and access and asked if there could be loaner programs to make equipment available to make skiing more accessible because once you’re in the backcountry, it is free.

Councilor Smiley asked how they plan on growing membership, and how they work with the changing climate and people who say that winter recreation is changing or going away.

Mr. O’Neil said regarding the second question, mitigating the warming winters may morph the organization as they seek snow further north. He said that they are at heart a skiing organization, but they also do other events like trips and training, but that it will be challenging in the future. He said that the management of the zones is to be able to ski on them with very little snow, and that’s not a lot compared to a commercial ski area. For membership, he said that skiing is predominantly a white male dominated sport and that they are trying to get away from that by giving lessons, lending equipment, and reaching out to allied organizations.

Councilor Crane said that he is always amazed at the things he learns at the meetings and said that he used to ski at the snow basin as a kid. He asked if there was a plan to connect public land and private land to allow people to get from one part of the backcountry to another. He also asked how it may work with other trail users like mountain bikers or snowmobilers.

Mr. Mathey said that right now the two zones that are being managed are far apart, and that the dream is to connect backcountry touring trails to backcountry alpine trails for full day or multiday trips. There are models like this in Vermont. He said that what most people in their community are used to is the “park and play” model of going to a place and having several runs during the day. They are currently working to connect Beartown Ski Area with Butternut Ski Area on an old CCC cross country trail.

Mr. O’Neil added that in Vermont, the Catamount Trail Association has 300 miles of trials with over 270 private landowners and has MOUs with all of them. He added that Bryant State Forest is not usable outside of the winter, and allows for no hiking or biking, but the alliance’s management works with DCR’s long term plan for the Forest.

Chair Buckley said that he hopes that the non-management strategies that are being adopted across the secretariat won’t affect activities like this and that there will be a carve out.

### Approval of Minutes

Councilor Smith made a motion to approve the minutes from the May 9, 2024 Stewardship Council meeting.

Councilor Crane seconded the motion.

### Roll Call on Approval of Minutes

Councilor Harper: Yes

Councilor Canedy: Abstain

Councilor Jasinski: Yes

Councilor Smith: Yes

Councilor Wilson: Yes

Councilor Crane: Yes

Councilor Collins: Yes

Councilor Smiley: Yes

Chair Dooley: Yes

Councilor Doherty: Yes

Councilor O’Shea: Abstain

Councilor Buckley: Yes

The June 13, 2024 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. No comments were given.

## Regular Business II

### Discussion of the FY2026 Budget Recommendation

Chair Buckley said that this is an attempt to get ahead of the administrative processes of the Secretary and Governor’s offices and an opportunity for the Council to weigh in. The Finance Committee was unable to hold a listening session but instead relied on the one held by the Stakeholders Committee to inform the document. He said that there are four specific recommendations around partnerships, visibility, management (Resource Management Plans), and implementation of the Special Commission Report and Strategic Readiness Initiative.

Councilor Collins said that he will send some suggested language about EEA’s initiatives

Councilor Wilson said that she thinks the document is great and that she likes the continuity of the process and themes. She added that she wants to emphasize the visibility piece saying it is something that the Council has talked about before and the Commissioner is interested in it. She said to keep pushing it and to ask for the resources needed, and to include campaigns like Be Kind! as examples.

Chair Buckley said those were good ideas and asked that they send additions to him and Mr. Perry to be included. He said that these suggestions will be sent to Governor Healey and Secretary Tepper.

Councilor Jasinski suggested that the council can help play a role elevating the things DCR needs support for internally to make the new regional partnership positions successful. She said that this doesn’t require edits to the document, but it is something that she wants to elevate.

Councilor Crane agreed with Councilor Wilson about the idea of continuity and consistency. He said that he sees a delay in progress for DCR achieving strategic goals with Resource Management Planning, and that it seems like a “one step forward, two steps back,” rate of progress. He said that he wasn’t sure how to put it in the context of the budget, but that the resource management plans need to get done and need to continually be updated.

Chair Buckley said that DCR, to their credit, has made progress in hiring additional staff to help with RMPs, and that the Policy committee has been having these discussions related to RMPs at their meetings.

Councilor Smith moved that the council approve the budget recommendation and allow for additional comments from Councilors before it is sent to the Secretary and Governor.

Councilor Crane seconded the motion.

The motion was approved by the council.

### Committee Updates

#### Policy Committee

Councilor Wilson reported that the committee is working with the Conservation Committee to prescreen a presentation about rodenticides that could go before the full council in the fall. The committee receives an update on RMPs from Resource Management Planner Paul Cavanagh at every meeting. She said that the full council hasn’t had an RMP come to it in a bit, and that there have been some changes in how pieces of the plans get done and work on announcements of public meetings to ensure they are accessible and translated into different languages to the benefit of the community. Councilor Wilson said these are all good changes, but there has been some frustration from the committee that these changes come up they hold up all of the plans in progress. She said that she and Chair Buckley will speak with the Commissioner about ways to move the RMPs forward and will bring a report back to the full council.

#### Stakeholders

Councilor Smiley reported that the Stakeholders Committee will be holding a listening session on Monday, August 12 at 6:30pm to hear from stakeholders, friends, and partners of DCR.

#### Conservation

Councilor Collins reported that the committee is communicating with Deputy Commissioner Geigis about discussing the Forests as Climate Solutions report at a future committee meeting and DCR’s role going forward.

### Councilor Comments

Councilor Harper said that in relation to operational challenges at DCR, the Stakeholders Committee may want to ask strategic questions at their listening session to learn more about what challenges the friends and partners of DCR are seeing.

## Adjournment

Councilor Collins moved to adjourn the meeting.

Councilor Dooley seconded.

Councilor Buckley thanked everyone for joining 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>