# July 26, 2024 Meeting Minutes

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

Other Councilors Present**:** Jack Buckley

DCR Staff Attendees: Matthew Perry, A.J. Tourigny

Members of the Public as Registered**:** Jeff Miller

## Call to Order – Committee Chair Susan Smiley

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

## Approval of Minutes

Councilor Dooley moved to approve the Committee’s May meeting minutes.

Councilor Harper seconded.

The May minutes were approved.

## Stakeholders Listening Session

Chair Smiley said that the primary objective of the meeting is to sort of the listening session agenda for August 12, 2024, at 6:30pm. She asked the committee if they should have a theme for the session, and if they should get a message out to stakeholders before the meeting so they can have ideas about what they might want to discuss.

Councilor Harper said that at the last council meeting, it was proposed to have questions about more specific recommendations around what stakeholders were seeing that DCR needs. She asked if they should have a call for general input or feedback like the last listening session or if they should ask a question to get more specific information. She said that if the call is for general feedback, they may get similar themes to the previous session, and some of the things that were brought up may not have been addressed yet by the agency.

Chair Smiley suggested asking if they have seen improvements at DCR and asked if there were other questions that participants could respond to.

Councilor Ortiz said she liked the idea but worries that the question could lead to a list of things that haven’t happened in communities and may not be productive. She suggested that the session could be done regionally.

Councilor Dooley said that he thinks there is value in having more pointed questions, and said they could do a survey ahead of time to inform the questions asked.

Chair Smiley said that they would probably need more time to do a survey and to plan something regionally since August 12th is not too far away.

Councilor Harper suggested having a couple of facilitation questions that are asked during the session such as, what is the greatest improvement you’ve seen from DCR this year, and what do you think the greatest operational needs are at DCR. She said it would help get more specific but to Councilor Ortiz’s point, its not so broad that it goes on and on. She suggested that the questions are asked, but that there is also a poll for people who don’t speak so their thoughts can be captured as well.

Chair Smiley said that she likes the idea of keeping things broad and that greatest improvement and greatest operational need could lead to a lot of different things for participants.

Councilor Harper said it is good because they don’t know exactly the response it will generate but it allows them to dig a little deeper and will help with budget guidance and advocating for the agency’s future.

Councilor Buckley said that for the last meeting, there were DCR staff who weren’t in attendance that were able to watch the recording and that he would like to know what they got out of it.

Chair Smiley said that the questions would be 1. What is the greatest improvement you’ve seen at DCR, and 2. What is the biggest operational need that you see at DCR. She asked if there were any other questions that the committee would like to ask.

Mr. Tourigny said that he and Mr. Perry could talk to the Commissioner to see if he would like to add a third question.

Chair Smiley asked if Jeff Miller of the Snowmobile Association of Massachusetts who was attending the meeting as a member of the public would like to add anything.

Mr. Miller said that he thinks its important for the meeting to be proactive and have DCR say what’s been done since the last listening session, and what is planned to be accomplished in the near future.

Chair Smiley suggested that at a future in-person session, Mr. Tourigny might be able to run through a PowerPoint presentation of key initiatives.

Councilor Ortiz agreed that a quick recap about what was spoken about at the last listening session and what has resulted from those comments would be helpful. She asked if it was possible to know who was coming before hand saying she likes to know what organizations people are with.

Mr. Perry said that they can have people register through Zoom before attending.

Councilor Ortiz also suggested we can ask attendees what their favorite DCR property is.

Councilor Buckley said it would be good to hear what their favorite park is, and that its important to note that the council wants to hear what they want to say and is committed to holding these sessions.

Chair Smiley said that she likes the idea of a fun question that will help keep the session light. She asked if anyone would like to host the meeting, and that she is happy to if no one else does.

Councilor Harper said that she will not be there but is happy to take notes from the recording and get them to everyone by the beginning of September.

Chair Smiley said that the ground rules will stay the same, giving everyone 2-3 minutes to talk.

Councilor Dooley agreed, saying that he thinks operationally, the last session went well and no changes are needed.

Chair Smiley asked if they should do a poll during the session.

Councilor Harper said they don’t necessarily need a poll, but can encourage people to share additional thoughts they have through the chat.

Chair Smiley agreed that they should utilize the chat. She said she would like to get the notice out as quickly as possible, announcing it the following week on July 31 which will give everyone 2 weeks notice to sign up, with a final reminder on August 8th or 9th.

Mr. Perry said he would work with Mr. Tourigny and other partners to get the invitation out to DCR’s friends and partners.

Chair Smiley said that at the Mass Trails Conference in October, she is working to have an in-person listening session there because of the many stakeholders and other associates of DCR that will be there. The conference is on October 26 and 27.

Chair Smiley asked who will be attending on August 12.

Councilor Harper will not be able to attend, Councilor Dooley may be able to attend, and Councilor Ortiz will be attending.

## Adjournment

Councilor Dooley moved to adjourn the meeting.

Councilor Ortiz 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)