# June 2, 2023 Meeting Minutes

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

Other Councilors Present: Jack Buckley

DCR Staff Attendees: Matthew Perry

## Public Attendees as Registered: Timothie Biggs, Karl Dziura

## 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 made a motion to approve the April 7, 2023 meeting minutes. Chair Smiley seconded.

### Roll Call on Approval of April 7, 2023 Minutes

Councilor Dooley – Yes

Councilor Harper – Yes

Councilor Ortiz – Yes

Councilor Smith – Yes

Chair Smiley – Yes

The April 7, 2023 Minutes were approved.

Councilor Ortiz made a motion to approve the May 5, 2023 minutes. Chair Smiley seconded.

### Roll Call on Approval of May 5, 2023 Minutes

Councilor Smith – Yes

Councilor Ortiz – Yes

Chair Smiley – Yes

Councilor Harper – Abstain

Councilor Dooley - Abstain

## Strategic Oversight Plan

Chair Smiley reported that she submitted the committee’s draft portion of the Strategic Oversight Plan to Councilor Wilson for inclusion in the Policy Committee’s full draft of the plan. Chair Smiley shared her screen to show what the committee submitted.

Councilor Smith asked if any substantial changes were made to what was sent out to the committee members to review.

Chair Smiley said that only grammatical changes were made.

Councilor Buckley said that once the full draft is put together, the committee can review their section again and make changes.

## DCR Host Communities

Councilor Dooley raised the question about the relationship between DCR and municipalities that have DCR properties in them. He is interested in learning about how DCR works with these communities and responds to concerns that they may have.

Councilor Harper said that she can speak about the town of Hull, and that what she has heard is that it’s not too different from what the committee has heard from Friends Groups. She said there are attempts to work with DCR on projects and activities and that sometimes these move forward smoothly and sometimes there is no response. She said overall there is an inconsistency and a lack of transparency when DCR works directly with communities which is similar to what has been said by other stakeholders.

Chair Smiley said that Gateway Cities are integrated into municipal support and that they might be the top focus for the agency. She added that there may be other programs that help communities or set priorities.

Councilor Smith said that DCR has a number of programs where municipalities submit proposals for funding from DCR and asked if a list of those programs could be provided to the committee.

Councilor Buckley said that there is a difference between municipal management and oversight vs. the relationship that the agency has with partners and friends.

## Partnerships

Mr. Perry updated the committee that DCR is in the preliminary stages of planning an in-person Friends Conference. This was an annual event that hasn’t been held in person for a couple of years because of the pandemic.

Chair Smiley said that the last time a Friends Conference happened, they weren’t really involved and asked if the committee would have any input in the planning this time around.

Mr. Perry said that he is part of the planning group and will involve them as much as he can.

Councilor Ortiz said that last year a virtual meeting was held and friends groups were not given the opportunity to speak or give any input to DCR.

Councilor Buckley agreed with Councilor Ortiz, saying that DCR brought friends groups in and didn’t give them the chance to say anything.

Councilor Harper said that there was no connectivity in the agenda to things that the committee has been trying to move forward and that it was disconnected to the relationship that the Stakeholders Committee is trying to have with friends groups.

Councilor Buckley recalled that there was a conference held once at the Wachusett Reservoir that ran in conjunction with a Council meeting.

Councilor Harper said that there was also one at a Double Tree Hotel that also included a Council meeting.

Chair Smiley asked if the Stewardship Council could help shape breakout sessions. She said having sessions would help friends and partners that attend feel like they had a full day. She also said that it might be too much to try to do the conference and a Council meeting like has been done in the past.

Councilor Ortiz said that it would be good to make the conference longer since people have to travel and that breakout sessions are extremely important and should be structured as a way for friends to have conversations amongst themselves and for the Stakeholders Committee to get an understanding of what is happening as well.

Councilor Smith said it would be helpful to get feedback from friends and partners before setting the agenda for the meeting.

Councilor Buckley agreed, saying that things like that go a long way, and that they should also be asked when and where they would like the conference to be.

Chair Smiley suggested creating a survey.

## Presentation Requests

Mr. Perry reported that no new requests had been submitted, but that he had the opportunity to meet some representatives of friends groups and partners at the Mass Parks for All event and that he followed up with the link to submit a presentation request.

## Public Comment Period at Meetings

Councilor Buckley asked if everyone thought the two-minute warning that he has been giving to public commenters was good.

The committee agreed that it was.

## New Business

Councilor Ortiz asked how DCR was resolving the public comments received at the monthly Council meetings.

Councilor Harper has said that she had been tracking the comments to bring to the commissioner, but that she is no longer doing that since Mr. Perry began working with them.

Mr. Perry said that he has been tracking public comments and can present them to the Stakeholders Committee if they feel that would be helpful.

Councilor Buckley said in his conversations with the Commissioner, he has emphasized the importance of public comments.

Councilor Ortiz said that the Commissioner should mention in his remarks to the Council when he is responding to a public comment.

Chair Smiley said that she is hesitant to bring up the public comments at the Stakeholders Committee meetings and that the full Council meetings are more appropriate.

## Public Comment

No comments from members of the public.

Councilor Buckley reminded the committee that the next Council meeting includes a joint meeting with the Fish and Wildlife board. He said there is lots of overlap between the two agencies and that between them, they own 750,000 acres of land in the state.

He also noted that the Finance Committee’s listening session was successful with 40+ people attending. He said attendees were very appreciative about the opportunity to speak.

Councilor Buckley asked Councilor Ortiz about the Edgewater Drive project.

Councilor Ortiz said she has not been attending the meetings about the project but that she would appreciate an update from the Commissioner.

Councilor Harper said that if the listening session is working for the budgeting process, could the Stakeholders Committee consider hosting one for partner groups to get feedback for the meeting in the fall.

Councilor Buckley said that he thinks it would draw a good crowd.

Chair Smiley said that maybe the committee can integrate a friends listening session in August when the Council does not meet with hopes of it becoming an annual check in with friends and stakeholders.

Councilor Smith commented that it is hard to get people to meet in August.

Councilor Harper said that August would be too late to set an agenda for the fall meeting.

Chair Smiley said that she is open to whatever makes the most sense.

## Adjournment

Councilor Smiley thank everyone for their attendance.

Chair Smiley adjourned the meeting.

*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)