**Department of Conservation and Recreation Stewardship Council Meeting Via Videoconference March 10, 2022, 9am to 11am**

**Council Members Present:** Chairman Jack Buckley, Jeffrey Collins, Dicken Crane, Melissa Harper, Vivian Ortiz, Susan Smiley, Dennis Smith, Jennifer N.S. Wilson, Esq.

**Council Members Not Present:** Ann Canedy, Esq.

**DCR Staff Attendees:** Lisa Barstow, Nick Connors, Stephanie Cooper, Dan Cushing, Susan Hamilton, Stefan Skalinski, Paul Cavenaugh

**Public Attendees:** Lawrence Tucker, SAM; Ken Carlson; Glen Ayers; Sarah Freeman; Bill Boles, NEMBA; Suzanne Gall Marsh; Chris Redfern, Friends of the Fells; Elizabeth Roche, Chuck Anastas.

**Call to Meeting-Chairman Jack Buckley**

Chairman Jack Buckley called the meeting to order. He welcomed back Lisa Barstow after her extended absence. He advised the Council that he and Dicken Crane met as the Finance Committee and he would give a report at the end of the meeting. Since the last meeting Chairman Buckley was able to visit Halibut Point State Park and attend the virtual meeting on RMPs. He hopes to have an in-person meeting soon.

**Regular Business I**

**DCR Report-Stephanie Cooper, Acting Commissioner**

The Acting Commissioner stated she would highlight the Special Commission in this report. She announced that there would also a presentation on Water Safety Initiative by Susan Hamilton. Acting Commissioner Cooper started her report by responding to some of the public comments from the previous meeting.

*Response to Public Comments*

* *Snow removal improvements*. She mentioned that operations do a great job, but there is always room for improvement. She said she had reached out to operations about ways to improve the cleanup.
* *Edgewater Drive project*. The public comment section from the last meeting had been extended. There are plans to have another public meeting on May 1st about the project.
* Forestry, she said is part of our stewardship goals. There are many reasons why we must do it. She wanted to make it clear that DCR follows the rules and regulations in their authority. She understands that not everyone will agree on how it's done.
* The Acting Commissioner commended the friends' network that is doing a survey for ARPA. They reached out to DCR to ask what are some areas that are ARPA eligible.

*Special Commission*

This summer DCR will be in its 20th year as an agency. As DCR approaches that milestone, it needs to look at what the next 20 years will look like. Outdoor recreation plays an important role in the state's economy and is essential to the state. DCR played a vital role for people during the pandemic. Many people took advantage of outdoor recreation to stay healthy. Visitation at DCR locations has risen and it may keep rising. We also must be able to adapt to changes like climate change. It is time for a meaningful look at the agency. DCR hopes to be one of the nation's leading conservation and recreation agencies.

With the short amount of time left in the Baker-Polito Administration, DCR is going to embark on a sprint-based project to implement recommendations of the Special Commission. This process will be moving quickly over the coming months. The department is bringing in a consultant to help with the process. It is recognized that the Special Commission said this would be a strategic five-year plan that will take time. The process this spring is more of an abbreviated strategic plan in order to set DCR’s footing. DCR plans to develop core principles, like climate change and equity access. These principles are why and how DCR carries out its mission; taking stock where DCR is already leading and where it can fill in gaps to improve. How does DCR’s diverse portfolio connect to its core principles. DCR is putting together a dedicated team of staff to focus on this project. DCR will continue to work on specific recommendations from the Special Commission. For example, DCR is working on improving the website.

DCR is grateful for the guidance of the Council and will be asking for public feedback. This project will have a dedicated email and website with survey questions as a public forum. Acting Commissioner Cooper and Chairman Buckley suggested having an interim meeting in between this meeting and the April meeting. That meeting would be around the end of March.

At the end of the process, DCR will have a product that highlights where the strengths and opportunities are. It will be a body of research that articulates that if one is making a recommendation, how does one get there? What was the research?

*Q&A*

Commissioner Cooper mentioned opportunities and a path forward. Chairman Buckley asked, if the Acting Commissioner saw direct action within the agency to make changes. The Acting Commissioner said they will be making a set of recommendations. She anticipates DCR will be making those types of recommendations that Chairman Buckley was referring to. Chairman Buckley also mentioned how this Council will serve as a bridge from one administration the next.

Councilor Smith was curious if there has been any viable opposition to the recommendations of the Commission. The Acting Commissioner said there were some with different ideas on certain issues.

Councilor Wilson said the Acting Commissioner mentioned having dedicated staff to the consultant process. She asked if at the interim March meeting, the Council would hear more about the Council’s role. The Acting Commissioner said yes, the interim March meeting would be a larger meeting where DCR can get input and guidance from the Council.

Chairman Buckley commended the Governor and his administration for not putting this off and opined that the Council should help with the process.

Councilor Smiley asked if there is a way to get a monthly progress outline . The Acting Commissioner said she would be able to share information with the Council moving forward.

Councilor Collins said he participated in a similar sprint process with his organization (Mass Audubon) two years ago. He hoped that the immediate needs are balanced with long term needs of the agency. The Acting Commissioner appreciated the comments and said she has used Councilor Collins’ organization’s core principles as a guidance.

Councilor Crane asked how the Council connects the dots from the list Assistant Deputy Commissioner Susan Hamilton presented and stated that he felt it is important that the Council and DCR stay focused on how they connect to each other

Councilor Ortiz asked for clarification on the dedicated email on the website. Is this just for the process to engage feedback for the report or is it available for everyone after the report? The Acting Commissioner said the idea is there will be a page on the website for the Strategic Process and an email dedicated for that. She said she envisions staff would continue to provide updates after the report.

Councilor Wilson asked if there was an update on E-bike regulations. The Acting Commissioner said it is making its way through the regulatory process. Staff is getting close to the final regulations and she anticipates they will be out this spring. Councilor Wilson stated that it would be helpful when it comes out that DCR lets people know of the project. The Acting Commissioner said she would work with them on the process to get that done.

Chairman Buckley said E-Bikes and Edgewater are good examples of what we can do together. He commended the Commissioner for communicating to everyone that she is listening.

Acting Commissioner Cooper said she is thankful and grateful for all the work the Council has done and continues to do, ss well as the guidance Council provides us.

**Special Business I**

*Presentation on Waterfront Safety Initiative -*Presented by Susan Hamilton, Assistant Deputy Commissioner of Park operations.

Q&A

Acting Commissioner Cooper commented how important Waterfront Safety is for the administration. It is one of the highest priorities right now.

Councilor Ortiz asked if the last slide with the waterfront and pool schedule will be posted on the website and put on social media. Assistant Deputy Commissioner Hamilton said the schedule is on the website but can put up the slide format if it is better visually. She also said she will work with external affairs on putting that slide visual out.

Public Comments

*Public Comment – Guidelines are available on the DCR Stewardship Council website*

Chairman Buckley invited members of the public for comment, which was offered by the following:

* Lawrence Tucker
* Ken Carlson
* Glen Ayers
* Sarah Freeman

**Regular Business II**

Chairman Buckley said he is hoping to get the minutes done sooner rather than later, but said he will push approval off to the next meeting. There was a motion to defer the approval of minutes to the next meeting, which was seconded and unanimously approved.

*Committee Business*

There was a discussion about new members. The Council was hoping to get a sense of how we are filling out new members; how many vacancies there are open. Chairman Buckley said he will put together information to present at the next meeting.

The Council broke out into committee sessions.

*Finance Committee*

The committee met with Capital/Operations staff, they talked about deferred maintenance, ARPA funding, and the budget. They hope to schedule a public forum on budgets in May. In June they plan to have a public comment period and form budget priorities. In July, the Council will vote on budget priorities. The committee also wanted to point out the legislature’s willingness to work with them.

*Policy and Operations Committee*

Next month the Council will all have an opportunity to hear the report for the Myles Standish RMP for approval. Public comment period ends on March 23. Also, there are landscape designations that ripple through the RMP. During the presentation next month, the characteristics and the implications of landscape designations will be discussed. Chairman Buckley also commented that ten years ago. landscape designations were approved by the Council.

*Stakeholders Committee*

The committee talked about guest presenter requests. The committee hopes to have a presentation from a Friend’s group at the next meeting. The committee discussed the MOU process. The committee hopes to have Jennifer Norwood join the next stakeholders meeting. The committee hopes to have a dedicated DCR staff member. The committee also said Vice Chair Harper offered the Council’s help to DCR to get feedback .

**Adjournment**

Chairman Buckley motioned to adjourn the meeting, which was seconded and unanimously approved.

 The Council was adjourned and will be adjourned until the interim meeting.