# March 8, 2024 Meeting Minutes

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

DCR Staff Attendees: Matthew Perry

**Public Attendees:** Denis LaForce, Caroline Scully, Heather Linscott, Jorge Perez

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.

Comment was offered by the following:

* Denis LaForce, Manchaug
* Caroline Scully, Adams
* Heather Linscott, Adams

## Approval of Minutes

Councilor Ortiz moved to approve the Committee’s December meeting minutes.

Councilor Harper seconded.

The February minutes were approved.

## Stakeholders Listening Session

Councilor Harper shared that she synthesized the recording of the meeting into key points and specific recommendations for projects or activities. She said this is for the agency to follow up on. She also documented who spoke and for what reason.

Councilor Ortiz said that Councilor Harper did a great job. She said it was awesome how many people came and that although there was frustrations, she said they heard a lot of love for DCR. She added that they should hold more of these on a regular basis.

Councilor Dooley agreed, saying that Councilor Harper did a good job capturing the essence of the session. He said it might be one of the better attended Stewardship Council events that they’ve held and that it’s a great way to get constructive feedback to pass along to the Commissioner and the rest of the council.

Chair Smiley brought up the next steps following the listening session, noting that the plan was to prep for a face-to-face meeting. She said that this is still the end goal, but it is going to be deferred for now as DCR continues to build its partnership staff. Once the DCR has the structure in place, they can start planning for a face-to-face meeting and in the meantime, they can plan to have another virtual meeting in the summer.

Councilor Harper said that the most important thing is to show clear action and clear next steps so people who participated don’t feel like its another example of DCR not responding. She said there are two buckets of takeaways that are actionable. One is specific properties and projects that people gave feedback on that need movement forward. She said there should be outreach that shows they were heard and that their time was not wasted coming to share their perspective. The other bucket is recommendations that people make or general feedback which is more of a long-term play and that DCR needs to work to be more responsive. She said that what was brought up at the session will help inform what will be on the agenda for the next one.

Chair Smiley said that these were great points, and that acknowledgment is a great first step. She said that they can continue to have listening sessions and gather feedback while DCR is getting their system in place. She added that they are interested in providing a space for people to be heard and to provide openness and transparency.

Councilor Ortiz asked how outreach was done to groups for the session.

Mr. Perry explained that information was sent to the existing DCR partnership lists and that other groups including Mass Parks For All reached out to their membership directly to let them know about the session. In addition, it was posted to the Stewardship Council webpage and the DCR webpage and was brought up at the Stewardship Council meetings.

Chair Smiley suggested that for the next meeting they work with the Mass Office of Outdoor Recreation, town administrators, EEA, and DOT to get a more expansive group engaged.

The committee had no major revisions for Councilor Harper’s summary and will present it to the full council at the March meeting.

## Requests to Present at Meetings

Mr. Perry said he is still waiting for form submissions from groups for partner presentations at Stewardship Council meetings.

Chair Smiley said that they would like to see a diversity of groups asking to present. She said that right now, there are lots of groups from Boston and other urban areas, and they would like to see more from the west, south, north and Cape Cod.

Councilor Ortiz agreed, saying it is an opportunity to see locations from around the state that would be good to visit.

Councilor Dooley suggested that they could hear from the Friends of Lynn and Nahant Beach at the September meeting in Swampscott.

Chair Smiley suggested they could hear from someone involved with the Boston Harbor Islands.

## Public Comment

Additional public comment was offered by the following:

* Jorge Perez, Springfield

## Adjournment

Councilor Harper moved to adjourn the meeting.

Councilor Dooley 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)