# **May 8, 2025 Meeting Minutes**

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

DCR Staff Attendees: Brian Arrigo, Matthew Perry, Chloe Gotsis, Paul Fahey, Paul Cavanagh, Ilyse Wolberg

Public Attendees as Registered: Alexis, Bill Boles, Chip Jones, Chris Redfern, Chuck Anastas, Christine Liu, Lawrence Tucker, Suzanne Gall Marsh, Paul Nutting, DASP Phone

## Call to Meeting, 9:00am – Chair Dicken Crane

Councilor Crane welcomed the attendees and called the meeting to order. He did a roll call of councilors.

## DCR Report – Commissioner Brian Arrigo

Commissioner Arrigo thanked the Council and gave an update on recent events at DCR.

### Park Serve Day

Park Serve Day was held on Saturday, April 26 and Sunday, April 27, with 60 clean up and beautification events at more than 40 properties across Massachusetts. Despite the rainy weather, volunteers came out to help DCR get ready for the busy summer season by raking, planting, painting, removing invasives, spreading mulch, picking up trash, and so much more. Commissioner Arrigo was at Massasoit State Park in Taunton and Borderland State Park in Easton where he planted flowers and a tree and painted new passport program boxes.  Secretary Tepper and members of her team also joined in at the Fells, removing invasive garlic mustard from the Virgnia Wood trail. In total, more than 2,000 volunteers gave more than 4,000 hours of their time and collected more than 14,000 pounds of trash. Next year will mark the 20th anniversary of the event.

### Leadership Academy

DCR hosted its annual Leadership Academy in April, and Vice Chair Smiley attended for a “coffee with the councilor” portion of the day.  Commissioner Arrigo said that he continues to be amazed by the Leadership Academy and that it's a day full of learning, networking, and sharing of ideas and experiences among an incredible group of passionate public servants.

### Tree Planting with Governor Healey

On Earth Day, Commissioner Arrigo joined Governor Healey, First Lady of Massachusetts Joanna Lydgate, Secretary Tepper, Medford Mayor Breanna Lungo-Koehn, Rep. Christine Barber and about 20 local Girl Scouts to plant a tree and flowers at Torbert MacDonald State Park. He thanked all of the Boston and North Region staff that helped make this event a huge success led by Mystic Complex Field Operations Team Leader Chris Hoffman.  Chris and his team prepared the site for the tree planting, and Chris was right there with Governor Healey and the Girl Scouts explaining the process of planting a tree and helping them get the hands-on experience of putting it in the ground.

### Lt. Governor visits Great Falls Discovery Center

Lt. Governor Kim Driscoll visited the Great Falls Discovery Center as part of her tour of Western Mass, held in celebration of the Governor’s declaration of 413 Day in the Commonwealth. Her tour that day included a stop in each of the four counties that make up Western Mass – Hampden, Hampshire, Franklin, and Berkshire. The Great Falls Discovery Center plays an important role in public engagement, education, and strengthening community ties for the region. Commissioner Arrigo thanked Great Falls VSS Janel Nockleby for prepping the visit on short notice, and Park Interpreter Wren Wood for helping make the visit a success.

### Centennial Fountain Reopening

Commissioner Arrigo celebrated the reopening of the Centennial Fountain on the Esplanade. He said it was a great opportunity to celebrate DCR’s partnership with the Esplanade Association, and the work they do to help us maintain this special property that hosts millions of people each year. The new fountain will serve as a sign of spring for years to come and provide enjoyment to all who visit. Former Metropolitan District Commission Commissioner Ilyas Bhatti was also in attendance.

### Recreating Paul Revere’s Midnight Ride

Commissioner Arrigo and Digital Strategist Ryan Hutton made a social media video where they recreated Paul Revere’s midnight ride with a twist.  Starting at the Blue Hills they drove a 2024 Chevy Bolts from there to Somerville, where they met with DOER Commissioner Mahony, and then made their way to the Lexington Battle Green. The [video](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=oMvhbGromf4) is available on the DCR YouTube page.

### Paul Revere Midnight Ride Reenactment

On April 18, the 250th anniversary of Paul Revere’s midnight ride was celebrated with a reenactment that went through the streets of the North End to Steriti Rink, where Paul took a boat across to Charlestown’s City Square Park to get on a horse and warn the countryside that the British were coming. Crowds flocked to the event which also included the City of Boston’s first ever drone show which took place over the harbor.

### “Two Lights for Tomorrow”

Also on April 18, DCR properties – from the State House to Halibut Point to the Wachusett Reservoir – participated in "Two Lights for Tomorrow" to celebrate MA250 and the American Revolution. Two Lights for Tomorrow is a nationwide initiative to commence the celebration of the 250th birthday of the United States of America on the anniversary of Paul Revere's Midnight Ride. Two Lights for Tomorrow originated from a multi-state collaboration at A Common Cause to All in Williamsburg, VA, and uses the imagery of that shining light 250 years ago as a uniting call to action today, to commemorate and remind ourselves that our history is about working together for a better tomorrow.

### Upcoming Fall River Events

On Saturday May 31 and Sunday June 1, there will be a reenactment of the Battle of Fall River taking place at Fall River Heritage State Park. This weekend-long historical event will include demonstrations and lectures, along with reenactors in authentic period clothing, and more.

Be sure to check out Fall River Heritage’s exhibit “The Road to Revolution: The Occupation of Boston” while you are there.

### Local Wood and Local Learning

Students from Pittsfield’s Taconic High School Carpentry Program recently used DCR-provided lumber to construct 30 picnic tables that will be installed at day use areas across the West Region. In March, DCR Management Forestry staff milled lumber from hemlock logs salvaged from the Butternut Expansion Project located at East Mountain State Forest. Taconic students used the 1,900 board feet of wood for the upper portions of the picnic tables, while Regional Operations and PSO staff provided hardware and pressure treated lumber for the students to construct the table legs. Commissioner Arrigo said that this is a great collaboration between Taconic High School and DCR that provides practical training and education to local students and necessary picnic tables to our parks and properties for visitors to enjoy.

### April Vacation Week

DCR held its annual April Vacation week programming from April 19 to 27 and had 70 programs at 18 DCR locations across the state. 1,500 people attended the programs over the course of the week. Highlights included the “South Cape Beach Scavenger Hunt.” Visitor Services Supervisor Jayne DiCandio said “the energy and enthusiasm on our beach walk for finding cool things was contagious. The kids and adults were great at spotting all sorts of fun nature treasures.” These events are popular every year and are a free way for kids and their parents to explore while school is on break.

### Councilor Questions and Comments

Chair Crane said that engagement with Park Serve Day and other activities seems to be growing in popularity and has a positive impact for both the agency and the public. He said that he hopes it can continue to grow because there are a lot of benefits that come out of it. He added that using logs harvested from DCR land for projects and schools seems like a great plan and he would like to see it continue and expand, adding that it is important for the public to see that things they use can come from the places that they live and the parks where they recreate as part of a circular economy.

Councilor Buckley said that he heard from someone recently about the DCR Senior Parking Pass and that the website says it can take 3 to 7 weeks and that it costs $10. He said that he got many years ago for free and that he was able to receive it through the mail and now it is only available through an app. He said that he worries with the barriers that they may be losing customers and money on this, and that they should look at making it available the same way that Fish and Wildlife makes available hunting and fishing licenses.

Commissioner Arrigo said that the time period does seem like a long time and that now most transactions can be done in the same day. He said that he is not too familiar with the whole process but will look at ways to make things simpler for people.

Councilor Buckley asked about DCR and EEA’s policy on usage of drones on DCR land. He said that they can be utilized for natural resource assessment and management and that the use of them should be at the discretion of the commissioner of each agency instead of EEA. He also asked for an update on the search for a new commissioner.

Commissioner Arrigo said that they’ve been working with the secretary’s office on using drones to be aware of concerns about them and work through those concerns. He said that he agrees that they can be an important tool and that they want to be sure they are using the technology to the best of their abilities.

He said that when it comes to the hiring of a new commissioner, they have been interviewing and going through the process to provide recommendations to the Secretary and Governor’s offices. He said he will provide more details as the process progresses.

Councilor Buckley asked if there has been any immigration enforcement at state parks.

Commissioner Arrigo responded that there was none that he was aware of, and that conversations about the issue were happening at a senior level and park staff is aware.

Councilor Wilson said that several communities were recently hit by a microburst and that when the 311 system is rolled out, it will be helpful when events like that happen. She said that people had information about damage on DCR property caused by the storm and that they need to make it easy for people to be the agency’s eyes and ears.

Commissioner Arrigo said that last week, he submitted the agency’s first 311 request, but as of right now they are still asking the public to continue to use the Mass Parks email address to report issues. He said that the 311 system will be centered on partners in the legislature and that they will be a focus group as the program is launched. He offered to involve the Stewardship Council and provide demos to show how it works internally. He noted that at the Leadership Academy they had a 311-breakout session to show how it will work to staff, and that it is launched and being used right now, but it is in beta-testing mode still.

Councilor Wilson asked if all legislators have access to it.

Commissioner Arrigo said that they are starting with legislators that already provide a lot of information about DCR properties and will have a session on using the tool with staff and legislators.

Councilor Wilsons said it would be helpful to know who is participating in the pilot.

Councilor Jasinski asked for an update on the letter to Secretary Tepper regarding the Commissioner search.

Mr. Perry said that he worked with Chair Crane to draft the letter and that it has been sent to DCR staff that works with the Secretary’s office to be delivered. He said he will send a copy to all councilors.

Councilor Smith said that in the aviation community there are concerns about drones and how they are used, and that training is required to operate one. He said he understands the reason why the Secretary’s office wants to be certain that anyone using a drone has the right training and is using it correctly.

Councilor Smiley said that she agrees with Councilor Smith.

Commissioner Arrigo said that they have had several requests for drone use and that they are following the process currently in place.

Councilor Buckley asked if there have been any earmarks on DCR line items in the budget process.

Commissioner Arrigo said that the houser has included a number of earmarks in the line item that’s meant for special programs and projects. He said the senate will likely include earmarks as well.

Councilor Buckley asked if they will backfill the funding.

Commissioner Arrigo said that there is one line item that all earmarks get put into and that DCR gets the money, and it passes through to communities.

Chair Crane said that he spoke with Senator Mark about filing an amendment to make the change to the Stewardship Council legislation that will shorten terms and stagger them. He said that Senator Mark has agreed to file it.

Mr. Perry said that he has worked with Western Legislative and Partnership Coordinator Mackenzie Greer to speak with Senator Mark’s staff and that he will be in touch once the amendment is filed.

Chair Crane said that if it is approved by the Senate, they can look into getting in touch with members of the house.

Councilor Buckley said that they can consider drafting a letter to the conference committee to ask for support.

Councilor Collins asked if this was addressing term lengths for the council.

Councilor Wilson said that in 2020, they looked at a number of different changes they could make and that this seemed like an easy place to start.

## Regular Business I

### Presentation on the DCR Volunteers in Parks Program – Matthew Perry, Manager of Stewardship Programs and Strategic Initiatives.

Mr. Perry gave a presentation on the DCR Volunteers in Parks program including the history of the program, where it is heading, and an overview of Park Serve Day.

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

Chair Crane thanked Mr. Perry and he said that there were a lot of things he talked about that connected volunteering to many other aspects of what DCR does. He said the initiatives that are being taken are well thought out and integrated into the agency and that the work is very exciting. He said that highlighting the potential links between DCR and the community and how they can be highlighted like the work that Commissioner Arrigo spoke about with the picnic tables being built at Taconic High School. He asked if part of the program can be donations from local businesses, like bark mulch or other materials that can be gotten local instead of at a box store. He said that businesses might want to take advantage of the recognition that they receive from working with DCR. He also said that in training volunteers, you can also include in the training why DCR and its work is so important.

Mr. Perry said that he has had conversations with the finance team about the potential to accept donations from groups that volunteer. He added that they do receive some donations from businesses, and that it is easier for friends groups to accept the donations, but the idea of in-kind donations of supplies is a good idea.

Chair Crane said that the new volunteer logo looks perfect for a shoulder patch and harkens back to the CCC days.

Councilor Buckley said that when he was chair, they looked at getting administrative help for the council and they were able to hire Mr. Perry because of that, and he thanked him for supporting the council and for the other things that he has done for the agency. He said that Mr. Perry has made a huge difference for the council.

Councilor Jasinski said that the Charles River Conservancy works with Mr. Perry on volunteers and that he has made communication with friend’s groups and DCR more streamlined which has led to more volunteer events. She said that she is glad to hear that an advisory board is being created for volunteering and because this is an area where there’s a lot of work with partners, she said that she’d like to see collaboration there or even a partner represented on the group because she knows that a lot of things mentioned like aligning volunteer activities with DCR goals is what partner groups are doing so having the space to talk about what works and ways to improve the program would be great. She said she’d also like to see some peer-to-peer learning from friend’s groups and that there are areas where we can all learn from each other.

Mr. Perry said that the friend’s groups are great to work with and to be able to work closer with them while rethinking the program would be great. He said that he would speak with Paul Fahey about what can be done.

Councilor Harper said that this is a good example of the type of content and direction that the council is looking for from friend’s groups and DCR staff that present to them. She said that Mr. Perry did a good job of laying out what he is doing, but there was also a lot of transparency about what the challenges are. She said that she also appreciates the focus on what is being learned and how the program is being changed and innovated based on that. She added that she likes the idea of the “Volunteer Corps” and branding it as larger than a single park or area to be agency wide. She said that recognizing volunteers can help elevate the whole story of volunteerism at DCR.

Councilor Smith said that the council is very lucky to have him, and that part of the problem in the past is that the position that Mr. Perry is in has been expected to do so many different things, and that he is now in the position and has the initiative to look forward to seeing how things can work better.

Mr. Perry said that he has made the Stewardship Council the top priority of his position, and that the reason it has taken so long to tackle the volunteer program is because he wanted to make sure things were in order and running smoothly with the council first, and that he feels they have gotten to that point where he can take on this task of the volunteers.

### Approval of Minutes

Councilor Collins said that he sent one minor revision to Mr. Perry to better represent something that he said.

Councilor Smith moved to approve the April meeting minutes as amended.

Councilor Buckley seconded the motion.

#### Roll Call on the Approval of the Minutes

Councilor Smiley – Abstain

Councilor Canedy – Yes

Councilor Jasinski – Yes

Councilor Smith – Yes

Councilor Wilson – Yes

Councilor Collins – Yes

Councilor Harper – Yes

Councilor Dooley – Yes

Councilor O’Shea – Yes

Councilor Doherty – Yes

Councilor Buckley – Yes

Councilor Crane – Yes

The April 10, 2025 meeting 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)

Chair Crane invited members of the public for comment. The following members of the public gave comments:

* Lawrence Tucker, Snowmobile Association of Massachusetts
* Chip Jones, Snowmobile Association of Massachusetts

## Regular Business II

### Committee Updates

#### Policy Committee

Councilor Wilson reported that the committee had a meeting at the end of April and went through the Strategic Oversight Plan to think about what has been accomplished and what can be worked on. The work has included the RMP process and transparency, understanding climate and biodiversity objectives, continuing to move forward with Landscape Designations and be ready when the agency has them for the council to consider. She noted that there are about 30 new RMPs heading the council’s way soon to be considered. They will be considered in groups and the committee will keep all councilors apprised of public meetings for them. She said that things the committee is currently working on include SGAR use on DCR property and unauthorized trails.

#### Stakeholders

Councilor Smiley reported that the committee met in early May. She spoke of her time at the Leadership Academy saying there was tremendous value in attending and that she hopes that the council can hold their meeting at the Academy in the future so all members can attend. She said that the committee reviewed partnership presentations and a meeting adjustment to June 26 to accommodate staff and the venue, and as a result a meeting change to July 24, which will be virtual. The following meeting will be in September at the Mount Holyoke Range in Amherst. She mentioned that Paul Fahey has been able to attend the committee’s meetings and that he is building out the partnership team.

#### Conservation Committee

Councilor Collins reported that he and Chair Crane spoke about a potential agenda for the conservation committee. He said that the biodiversity goals are imminent, and that they’d like to plan a joint meeting again with the Fish and Wildlife Board to see how the two agencies can work together on these goals. He said the other thing that they’d like to look at is management of DCR land with sensitive habitats.

Chair Crane added that they also spoke briefly on the state’s goals to increase the amount of land that is permanently conserved.

#### Finance

Councilor Buckley reported that he had a good conversation with John McMillen, DCR’s new CFO and that they are going to meet in the next month or so to see where the council may be able to help out and work with him. He mentioned that if any councilors were interested in joining the committee to let him know.

### Councilor Comments

Councilor Buckley encouraged Commissioner Arrigo to ask Secretary Tepper to respond to the letter sent to her regarding the hiring of the new commissioner. He said that constant changes in Commissioners has been a big problem with DCR and it would be nice to have the council’s thoughts incorporated into the process.

Councilor Collins said that he was at Regatta Park in Worcester to watch the New England Rowing Club Championships which was an amazing event at a great DCR property, and that while he was in that area he also visited Rutland State Park. He said it was a great day on two different properties and that he was impressed by the great diversity of people and activities happening at Rutland State Park.

## Adjournment

Councilor Collins moved to adjourn the meeting.

Councilor Harper seconded the motion.

Councilor Crane 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>