# November 26, 2024 Policy Committee Meeting Minutes

Committee Members Present: Jennifer Wilson, Jeff Collins, Phil Doherty

Other Councilors Present**:** Jack Buckley, Dicken Crane

DCR Staff Attendees: Matthew Perry, Dan Cushing, Paul Cavanagh

## Public Attendees: Chuck Anastas, Alexis, Joe N., Jun Seung Lee, Deborah Simmons

## Call to Order and Welcome – Committee Chair Jennifer Wilson

Chair Wilson welcomed the attendees and went over the meeting agenda. She apologized for ending the last meeting early after becoming aware of a unintentional posting error that provided the incorrect link to the public.

## Resource Management Plans

Resource Management Planner Paul Cavanagh joined the committee to discuss the progress of RMPs.

Mr. Cavanagh said that the Blackstone RMPs public comment period ran through the end of October, and because of an issue with the mail, it was extended to Friday, November 22. Fifteen people attended the public meeting that was held, and there were 29 total respondents to public comment. The property that received the most comments was the Southern New England Trunkline Trail (SNETT), followed by Upton State Forest, and Douglas State Forest. Purgatory Chasm State Reservation did not receive any comments.

Chair Wilson asked if Mr. Cavanagh anticipates that these RMPs will come before the council in January.

Mr. Cavanagh said yes.

Councilor Crane asked Mr. Cavanagh about Forest Management Plans and whether there are any managed areas through these plans in the parks in the Blackstone Complex. He mentioned a recent public comment at a Stewardship Council meeting that said DCR is required to have Forest Management Plans for all of its properties. He asked how Forest Management Plans relate to Resource Management Plans.

Chair Wilson said that she has asked Council Chair Buckley if someone from DCR’s legal office could speak with the committee or council on statutory language.

Mr. Cavanagh said that the Forest Management Plans exist for only a few properties and that Peter Church, Director of Forest Stewardship would be the person to talk to about them.

The Conservation Committee and Policy Committee will work to meet jointly to hear from legal and forestry about Forest Management Plans and Landscape Designations.

Mr. Cavanagh said that the Wachusett Complex is currently under review and is moving forward to the Core Team. He said that they have 21 days to review the plans and if they are not heard from, it is taken as approval.

Councilor Collins asked how the process moves forward after the Core Team review.

Mr. Cavanagh said that the Core Team goes through revisions from staff in their departments. After that, all senior staff have to sign off on the plans on the Signature Authorization Form that says they have looked at it and it is approved. If anything comes up in the future, their signature and approval is documented.

Councilor Buckley said it would be helpful to hear from the Commissioner on how he plans to use RMPs to make decisions.

Chair Wilson said the plans can be a tool not just for the agency, but also for friends groups and municipalities.

Councilor Collins asked what the tenor of comments about the SNETT were like.

Mr. Cavanagh said generally positive. He said that there was one that was looking for specific operations details, and that it is important to set expectations on RMPs that they are not maintenance plans. He said that the property has a very organized user group and lots of dedicated users, but because of geography, it doesn’t have the awareness in the agency like other properties do.

Chair Wilson thanked Mr. Cavanagh for his update.

## Landscape Designations

Mr. Perry updated the committee on Landscape Designations saying they are progressing now that the Forests as Climate Solutions initiative has wrapped up.

Councilor Crane asked how the Forest Reserve Science Advisory Committee (FRSAC) plays into Landscape Designations. He noted that they were referenced in EEA’s comments about the Forest Climate Committees report which mentioned adding additional members to that committee. He said it would be consistent with EEA for that committee to be part of the process.

Councilor Collins said that he and Councilor Crane are looking to get in touch with the Chair of FRSAC, Bob Leverett.

Chair Wilson said that there is an intersection between Forest Management Plans, Landscape Designations, and Resource Management Plans, noting that when they approve RMPs, they may involve something that may or may not have been approved by the council previously.

Councilor Buckley said that when looking at the whole process or management of state lands and how decisions are made, it is a quagmire. He asked what the standing of Forests as Climate Solutions is going forward.

Mr. Perry said that he will speak with Mr. Church about presenting to the committee about Landscape Designations.

## Rodenticides

Chair Wilson asked about the presentation about rodenticides that the committee asked for from Eric Seaborn, Director of Natural Resources.

Mr. Perry said that he reached out to Mr. Seaborn and that he would like to speak again to the committee about the progress being made on this issue before presenting to the full council.

Chair Wilson said that the committee hopes to give DCR the opportunity to let the public know that as an agency, they are working on addressing this issue and they are looking to support it however they can.

Councilor Collins said that he would reach out to Mr. Seaborn.

Councilor Crane asked if other states have policies about this and gave the example of what New York City is doing to address rodent issues. He said it might be useful for the council to know.

## Safe Streets/Vision Zero

Councilor Collins brought up the issue of Vision Zero and said that it seems like the agency has not adopted this as a goal yet. He explained that Vision Zero is an accepted concept in some places that means zero cyclist deaths from cars by making changes to prevent them. He asked if DCR has metrics on road safety and if they are reacting to them with funding. He said he would like an update from the agency on this issue and would like to see Vision Zero not just be an aspiration for the agency, but a policy that is being worked towards.

Councilor Buckley said it is worthwhile to ask those questions and noted that there is some frustration within the biking community towards DCR because the agency has not articulated the plan for bikes and its vision moving forward.

Councilor Crane agreed and said that based on recent public comments it is a good thing to discuss.

Chair Wilson asked Mr. Perry if he knew who would make this presentation.

Mr. Perry said that he would contact Jason Santos, Director of Transportation Engineering.

Councilor Collins said that it might be multiple conversations because it is a complex issue.

Councilor Buckley said that after the last council meeting, Councilor Collins gave suggestions for DCR Staff presentations going forward including telling the council how their work fits into the agency’s organizational chart.

## Councilor Comments

Chair Wilson asked about frustration from a public commenter about not hearing back from DCR after speaking at a council meeting.

Mr. Perry let the committee know that he was writing a response letter with other members of the DCR staff and will send it to her prior to the next council meeting.

Chair Wilson said that at a previous meeting, they were taking about DCR’s ranger program and Mr. Perry sent out a presentation that was shown to the council to everyone to refresh them. She said that she was struck by how many rangers were at the state house which reminded her of the Strategic Readiness Initiative. She asked if Fran Blanchard, the new Director of Strategic Readiness will be presenting to the council.

Mr. Perry said that he has met with Fran and that she is getting a presentation together to show to the council soon.

Councilor Collins asked about the other citizen advisory committees that relate to DCR and what their roles are. He said he’d like to know where the agency is also receiving public input.

Councilor Crane noted that the public comment policy does not allow the council to respond but asked if it is an outright lie if they can correct the person speaking.

Councilor Buckley said that he thinks facts should be checked and the truth should be articulated, but he is not sure if it’s the role of the council to do that and that the responsibility falls to the agency. He said the council is the venue, but the comments are directed at the agency.

Chair Wilson said that the committee should take a look at the policy on public comments to see if they have any changes.

## Public Comment

Chair Wilson asked if any members of the public attending had comments to make. Public comments were made by the following attendees:

Jun Seung Lee, Jamaica Plain

## Adjournment

Chair Wilson thanked everyone for their attendance 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*](https://www.mass.gov/service-details/dcr-stewardship-council)