# **October Meeting Minutes**

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

Council Members Absent: Dennis Smith

DCR Staff Attendees: Matthew Perry, Gerald Autler, Amanda Lewis, Amber Christoffersen, Ellen Huffman, Gianni Hill, Stella Lansing, Zach Crowley, Chloe Gotsis, Ilyse Wohlberg, Kerry Harrison, Libby Knott, Nick Connors

Public Attendees as Registered**:** Buzz Constable, Chris Redfern, Chuck Anastas, Elizabeth Roche, Denis Laforce, Mike Duclos, Sarah Freeman

## Call to Meeting, 9:00am – Chair Jack Buckley

Chairman Buckley welcomed attendees and did a roll call of councilors. He spoke about new director of Outdoor Recreation, Paul Jahnige, and asked that he speak to the council at an upcoming meeting. He also noted that Commissioner Arrigo is sick and was unable to make the meeting. He thanked Nick Connors for his work at DCR and wished him well in the future. Chair Buckley thanked Councilor Wilson and the Policy Committee for their work on the Strategic Oversight Plan, and Councilor Smith for his work on the Nominating Committee. He asked that new senior staff at DCR come before the council to introduce themselves, and spoke about the possibility of having another joint meeting with the Department of Fish and Wildlife Board to have a joint presentation discussing landscape level cooperation. He concluded his comments and asked Mr. Perry

## DCR Report – Matthew Perry, Manager of Stewardship Programs and Strategic Initiatives

Mr. Perry thanked Chair Buckley and the Council. He then gave an update on recent activities at the agency.

### Welcome New Staff

Mr. Perry introduced the new Director of Administration & Finance, Kerry Harrison and new Deputy Commissioner of Policy, Public Affairs and Administration Zach Crowley.

Kerry comes to DCR from Citizens Bank where she served as the Senior Vice President and Director of Public Affairs in the New England Region, managing community engagement and philanthropic investments in Connecticut, Massachusetts, Rhode Island, and Vermont. Prior to her time at Citizens, Kerry had an extensive career in public service for the Commonwealth, most recently serving as Deputy Chief of Staff to the President of the Massachusetts State Senate.

Zach has nearly two decades of service on and around Beacon Hill. He has staffed  offices in both houses of the Legislature, served in multiple state agencies, and worked in a variety of policy spaces including Health and Human Services; Labor and Workforce Development; Education; and the Environment. He played key roles on the teams that passed into law the Student Opportunity Act; Paid Family and Medical Leave; Tobacco Age 21; and the Global Warming Solutions Act, among others.

Mr. Perry gave them both the opportunity to introduce themselves to the council.

He then thanked departing Deputy Commissioner of Policy, Public Affairs and Administration Nick Connors for his many years of service to DCR and wished him the best in his future endeavors.

### Forests as Climate Solutions Update

The Committee of experts that was convened by EEA for the Forests as Climate Solutions Initiative, the Climate Forestry Committee (CFC), held its third in-person group meeting on October 12 to go over the missions and goals of DCR, the Division of Water Supply Protection, and the Department of Fish and Wildlife as they relate to forestry practices.

Deputy Commissioner of Conservation and Stewardship Priscilla Geigis, Director of the Division of Water Supply Protection John Scannell, and Director of Forest Stewardship Peter Church joined DFW’s Deputy Director Eve Schluter at the meeting to answer any questions the committee had.

In addition, EEA shared this update for the Council.

Through the Forests as Climate initiative, the state is seeking to protect and manage forests in a way that achieves resilience to projected disturbances from climate change and ensures stable carbon sequestration and storage for climate change mitigation.

The CFC has been making progress on development of the guidelines.

A public input session was hosted on September 12, from 6pm to after 9pm. The session highlights the significant amount of interest in this topic – the session had over 250 attendees, 49 oral commentors, and over 100 written comment submissions. EEA prepared three framing questions to guide the session and heard a lot of key themes in response to those questions and on subject matter beyond those questions, which included:

The role of humans in optimizing carbon and advancing other ecosystem services, with a range of perspectives on the extent of intervention

Interest in forest reserves, with varying perspectives on the definition of reserves and the type of management activities within.

Several opinions on which management approaches make forests more resilient, and address forest vulnerabilities. This included opinions on passive management, mixed active and passive management, management for biodiversity, and management for disturbances and mitigations.

Commenters also spoke to topics that included wood products, sources of scientific information, guideline development and the CFC, and timber harvesting.

In addition to development of guidelines, the Administrative is advancing a few other “branches” of work.

Internal teams are thinking about how to accomplish these parallel objectives.

Reduce Forest Land Conversion Increase Permanent Forest Land Conservation.

This includes strategic conservation of additional forest land to permanently preclude conversion to other uses and improve land use to minimize forest loss.

Pursue new focus on and investment in public and private forest reserves.

Incentives to Support Forest Landowners, Businesses, & Rural Communities.

This includes expansion of incentives and programs to protect private and municipally-owned forests, to encourage landowners to manage them using climate-oriented forestry techniques, and to help forestry businesses improve their technology and business practices.

Data to Integrate & Make Public Best Science, Research, & Management Practices

This includes acquiring more field data, systematically integrating research into conservation & management practices, & making information public.

### Executive Order Announcements

On September 21, Governor Healey signed Executive Order 619: Eliminating the Purchase by the Executive Department of Single-Use Plastic Bottles.

The order states that executive offices, including DCR, can no longer purchase beverages in a sealed rigid plastic bottle having a capacity of 21 fluid ounces or less including water, soda, or juice.

As we continue to face the climate crisis, and its impacts become more and more apparent, this is a small step that we can take together to help reduce plastic waste, prevent litter on our properties, and set an example for the rest of the Commonwealth to follow.

In addition, Governor Healey also signed a new biodiversity executive order which directs the DFG to conduct a review of existing biodiversity conservation efforts and establish goals and strategies to achieve a nature-positive future for Massachusetts in 2030, 2040, and 2050. Goals will focus on sustaining a full array of Massachusetts plants, animals, and habitats to survive and flourish while providing equitable access to nature and ensuring a climate-resilient landscape for the future.

Currently, there are over 430 species listed under the Massachusetts Endangered Species Act. Protecting biodiversity is a long-term investment in the health, economy, and climate resilience of Massachusetts.

### Watertown Dam Tour

On Tuesday, September 26, Commissioner Arrigo joined DFG Commissioner O’Shea, members of the Charles River Watershed Association (CRWA), and other stakeholders for a tour of the Watertown Dam on the Charles River.  He said it was interesting to learn about the dam’s history and how its proposed removal would affect the river and its wildlife. DCR is currently working with CRWA on a feasibility study to assess the potential impacts of the dam’s removal and provide scientific and engineering data to ensure we can make an informed decision.

### Boston Harbor Islands Trip

Commissioner Arrigo took a trip around the Boston Harbor Islands with Boston Harbor Now, the National Parks Service, the Stone Living Lab and legislators from the Joint Committee on Environment and Natural Resources and the House Committee on Climate Change and Global Warming.

The groups introduced the legislators to our organizations and the park, to lend awareness and demonstrate the impacts of climate change on DCR infrastructure and the natural topography of the park’s landscape.

### Environment and Natural Resources Committee North Shore Day

On September 22, Commissioner Arrigo joined the Legislature's Environment and Natural Resources Committee’s North Shore Day in Revere and Lynn.

The day was focused on improving water quality, environmental justice, and access to outdoor recreation areas, things that DCR cares about very much. It was a great opportunity to visit with members of the Legislature, who care about our natural resources, and the Commissioner was excited to show off DCR’s great properties.

### Big E

From September 15 to October 1, DCR staff attended the Big E fair in West Springfield and worked at the booth in the Massachusetts building, that the agency shares with the National Parks Service and MDAR.

Commissioner Arrigo went out to the fair twice, the first on Massachusetts Day where he was joined by Governor Healey, Lt. Governor Driscoll, Secretary Tepper, and others where they celebrated the Commonwealth and all the great things it has to offer. That day also featured DCR’s Climate Resilience Team, Universal Access Program, and Wildland Fire Fighters who also had booths and shared their work with the public.

The Commissioner also worked at our booth with MDAR Commissioner Ashley Randle. He enjoyed meeting people, answering questions, and handing out maps and tote bags to everyone who stopped by.

### DCR Stewardship Corps

On September 21, DCR staff were excited to launch the new Stewardship Corps at Lawrence Heritage State Park. The program is focused on teaching a group of about 20 students from middle and high schools in Lawrence, Tewksbury, and Methuen about DCR’s mission as the state’s conservation and recreation leader.

The program is funded through a $20,000 Hearts of Stihl grant from the STIHL Corporation. The students will participate in eight afterschool sessions and two field trips this fall to expose them to various fields within DCR including climate resiliency, design and engineering, park operations, cultural resources, aquatics, urban forestry, and more. Staff hopes that these hands-on activities and interaction with DCR professionals will encourage the students to pursue careers in conservation and recreation.

The Stewardship Corps is part of DCR’s ongoing commitment to workforce development in the conservation and recreation field by exposing young people to the agency’s work. This program focuses on students aged 13-17, while DCR’s Conservation and Leadership Fellowship program is focused on college students, and DCR’s Historic Preservation Corps and Conservation Corps is focused on young people ages 18-27.

### Climate Week

DCR celebrated Climate Week from September 17 - 23.

The celebration included a soft launch of the new “Climate Cart,” a new interpretive program to teach visitors about the impacts of the climate crisis on our coastal communities.

We also released our new interactive Decarbonization Map and featured social media posts and videos highlighting DCR’s efforts to reduce its climate impact.

As the state’s largest landowner, DCR has an obligation to be a leader in the state’s work to fight climate change.

Climate Week provided a great opportunity to highlight the importance of DCR’s year-round efforts to mitigate the effects of climate change.

### Golf Courses

Commissioner Arrigo wanted to address the request by the council for more information about the two DCR golf courses including their maintenance and capital plans. Staff are working to get the team at the golf courses to give a presentation at an upcoming Council meeting so the council can learn more and ask any questions they may have.

### Arborway

DCR is adding a temporary car lane to a small portion of the Arborway while maintaining an on-road bike lane for cyclists. This temporary lane is intended to address local concerns about traffic as DCR continues to work with the community and stakeholders on the Arborway Improvement Project, which is intended to improve bike and pedestrian access to the Arborway.

In the plan, DCR has retained the buffered bike lane along the entire length while removing some on-street parking.

The new vehicular travel lane is being added to a 500-foot outbound section of the Arborway from Murray Circle to the main entrance of the Arnold Arboretum.

This short-term improvement is in advance of construction for the Arborway Improvement Project.

Throughout the planning stages of the project, DCR engaged with the community and stakeholders through a public process, including several public meetings over several years, and made several changes to design plans based on public input.

### Capital Consultant Update

DCR has hired Auribus, a management consulting firm based in Boston to assist with the capital planning and project delivery process redesign. The Auribus team was selected because of their established track record of serving Massachusetts state agencies. They bring together a skilled team equipped with significant experience in stakeholder engagement, business process redesign, capital planning, IT system procurement and implementation.

The team kicked-off the effort last week with Auribus and are working to design a robust stakeholder engagement process involving the stewardship council, park partners, legislative and municipal partners and the public. Over the next couple of months, the team will be reaching out to get the Stewardship Council’s input on how we can improve the efficiency and transparency of DCR’s capital planning and project delivery system.

### Councilor Questions and Comments

Chair Buckley asked about an article in the Boston Globe about a new climate initiative from Governor Healey, asking about a comment from the Nature Conservancy about changing the permitting requirements in salt marshes. He compared it to the permits required to remove dams and asked if the administration is looking at other permitting frameworks and how they can be changed for projects that benefit the environment.

Chair Buckley also asked for an update on a question from the previous meeting regarding walk-in camping at DCR campsites.

Councilor Wilson asked what policies there are concerning this topic in other surrounding states and how they compare to what is being done in Massachusetts.

Councilor Smiley asked for clarification about why golf courses were brought up.

Mr. Perry said that Councilor O’Shea had asked about them and they are working to get a presentation.

Councilor Ortiz thanked Mr. Perry for the update on the Arborway project and said she was happy to have the clarification on the project. She asked that in the future, Councilors receive information about projects like this in advanced.

Chair Buckley agreed with Councilor Ortiz.

Mr. Perry clarified that the announcement from DCR about the Arborway was that a lane of traffic was being added and there was never any plan to close off the bike lane.

## Regular Business I

### DCR Trails and Greenways Presentation – Gerald Autler, Director of Trails and Greenways, Amber Christoffersen, Trails and Greenways Planner, Stella Lensing, Senior Project Manager, and Amanda Lewis, MassTrails Director

The members of the Trails and Greenways team at DCR presented to the council about their work.

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

Chair Buckley said they gave a great presentation and thanked them for their work.

Councilor Smiley thanked the team for their presentation and asked if there was anyone who was currently filling in for Paul Jahnige who left the trails team to become the Director of the Office of Outdoor Recreation.

Mr. Autler said that there is no one person filling in for Paul, but that everyone has worked to pick up his workload.

Councilor Smiley asked about moving from natural surface trail to pavement and how that may limit users. She asked if there was a decision point to when that change is made.

Mr. Autler asked what she meant by limiting user groups.

Councilor Smiley said that she has heard from some trail users that pavement would be limiting to their use of the trails.

Mr. Autler said that the only groups he has heard of that have objections are equestrians, but that in general, paved trails are fully accessible and often the best choice even if not the most aesthetically pleasing. He said that it is done on a case by cases basis based on the setting and use and the preferences of user groups that weigh in.

Councilor Smiley asked what the team’s frequency was of looking to other states about their trail networks.

Mr. Autler said that it is something that they want to do more of. He said that because of their line of work, they will often visit trials and greenways when visiting other states but that he would love to do it on a more professional and systematic level.

Councilor Wilson said that it was a great presentation and that she learned a lot from it. She asked about the Student Conservation Association (SCA) that help with the trails and what the requirements and accessibility were for the program.

Trail Planner Ellen Huffman responded that the SCA is a national program that is separate from DCR and that they don’t oversee the applications for it. Ms. Huffman said that there is an annual contract that DCR has with SCA for the trail work and that DCR maintenance staff sends applications for trail repair through SCA to Ms. Huffman who coordinates to have the students sent to do the work.

Councilor Wilson asked about the cost of design and engineering when working with the Department of Transportation and whether its because they are going through two different review processes. She asked if there were opportunities to advocate for streamlining the process.

Ms. Lansing responded that DCR works with MassDOT to receive federal funding and administer construction, and that in certain parts of the design there is a federal review that is required but that because of this, there are double the comments and submissions than what is normally done at DCR. She said that this is a product of a predominantly highway organization reviewing projects that are intended for pedestrian use which adds costs for additional permissions meant for highways.

Councilor Collins thanked everyone for their presentation. He asked if there was collaboration with MassDOT to look at the priority trails network vision and bicycle commuter use and how it plays into the state’s climate goals and how that can help inform local decision making. Councilor Collins said that in his community, there was reluctance to connect to a larger trial network, so how could they communicate the larger vision and how it will help achieve larger goals to encourage communities.

Mr. Autler said that MassDOT is preparing methodology that can help better predict trails and land use. He said that most of the trails team was at the Moving Together conference recently and discussed projects that make roads multimodal, but that those projects didn’t take into account comfort and land use. He said that land use is a longer term change, and that there is lots of opportunities for multimodal infrastructure.

Ms. Lansing said that when looking at greenways, they look at them holistically as linear parks, stormwater management, and what the vegetation and landscape are. She said that they need to raise awareness that they are able to do these things when greenway corridors or trail networks are built.

Councilor Collins encouraged the team to work with MassDOT and others to communicate the broader vision so locally, people see it as a vision and not just a local decision.

Councilor Crane said that it was a great conversation and presentation. He said that the scope of what is involved when most people go out to hike on a trail that they don’t know about is overwhelming. He asked if there was a website or dashboard to see the scope of all of the planning, past, current, and future.

Mr. Autler said that Councilor Crane was correct that they could make this information more readily available and digestible to the public and that they aspire to do that. He added that the priority trail network is a start for that.

Ms. Lewis said that the MassTrails resources and website were a way to see what work has been done, and that the MassTrails conference allows for the sharing of information. She said that there is grant funding for regional planning agencies to put together the back end data for a statewide trail map, but that is a couple years away.

Councilor Ortiz said it was great to see the presentation and to see those who have worked on the Neponset Greenway. She said that the bike community wants to share opportunities for people to bike and that when events like a red line closure happen, information should be shared about bike paths and alternative modes of transportation. She said that they should make sure that they are making those connections and letting folks know that there are greenways that can be used not just for pleasure, but also for commutes.

Mr. Autler said that they were very engaged during the Orange Line closure and the Southwest Corridor was used as an alternative route.

Chair Buckley asked about the $24 million in ARPA funding that will be used and whether it is for new trails or maintenance of current trails.

Mr. Autler said that it is $15 for new trail construction, $3 million for maintenance and repair, and $6 million for the MassTrails program.

Chair Buckley asked about data that is collected on the trails, how it is used, and if it can be shared with the general public and legislature.

Ms. Christofferson said that this was used for the Southwest Corridor action plan and temporary counters from MassDOT were used during the summer to get a sense of how they might realign or redesign the path system. MassDOT has ongoing counts going at the Northern Strand, Minuteman, Cape Cod Rail Trail, and Norwottuck Rail Trail. The Esplanade Association currently has three counts going. All of the data is shared into a portal and the data should be able to be shared. It is a lot of data, and they would like to share that there are a lot of people out on the trails.

Chair Buckley said that if 50% of applicants get grants through the MassTrails program, that means 50% also didn’t get it. He said that this is a situation where there is a group willing to make a 20% match and work with the state, and they should try to get the acceptance number up. He added that they need to look at permitting and what can be done to streamline projects that are in line with climate goals. He said that these projects should not be put through the same routine as something that is being built that is destructive to the environment.

Councilor Harper said that the Stakeholders Committee would be interested in the data and to partner on how it can be used.

### Approval of Minutes

Councilor Wilson made a motion to approve the minutes from the September 14, 2023 Stewardship Council meeting.

Councilor Canedy seconded the motion.

### Roll Call on Approval of Minutes

Councilor Harper: Abstain

Councilor Canedy: Yes

Councilor Wilson: Yes

Councilor Ortiz: Yes

Councilor Crane: Yes

Councilor Collins: Yes

Councilor Smiley: Abstain

Councilor Dooley: Yes

Chair Buckley: Yes

The September 14, 2023 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)

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

* Sarah Freeman, Jamaica Plain

## Regular Business II

### Discussion and Approval of the 2023-2025 Strategic Oversight Plan

Councilor Wilson thanked the council for their help putting together the plan. She said it is a robust plan that all the committees participated in putting together and were thoughtful in their approach. She said that there was great public comment from individuals and groups that made the document better.

Councilor Smiley thanked Councilor Wilson for the hard work and thanked Councilor Harper for the help with the stakeholder’s portion.

Councilor Wilson said it was a lot of people who made the plan happen and thanked Councilor Collins for all of the work he did.

### Approval of Strategic Oversight Plan

Councilor Collins made a motion to approve the 2023-2025 Strategic Oversight Plan.

Councilor Canedy seconded the motion.

### Roll Call on Approval of the Strategic Oversight Plan

Councilor Harper: Yes

Councilor Canedy: Yes

Councilor Wilson: Yes

Councilor Ortiz: Yes

Councilor Crane: Yes

Councilor Collins: Yes

Councilor Smiley: Yes

Councilor Dooley: Yes

Chair Buckley: Yes

The plan was approved and [the final version](https://www.mass.gov/doc/dcr-stewardship-council-strategic-oversight-plan-2023-2025/download) and [public comments](https://www.mass.gov/doc/2023-strategic-oversight-plan-public-comments/download) are available on the Stewardship Council website.

### Discussion of 2024 Meeting Dates

Mr. Perry shared a list of dates on the screen for 2024 Stewardship Council meetings.

The proposed February meeting is a joint meeting with the Department of Fish and Wildlife board. The meeting would include a joint presentation on landscape level cooperation between the agencies followed by each board meeting separately.

The dates are the second Thursday of each month, and Mr. Perry will work with the Stakeholders Committee to determine locations for the in-person meetings and times. The Stakeholders Committee will then come to the full council with a recommendation at the November meeting.

Councilor Smiley asked if it would be possible to have a joint meeting with the MassDOT board. Chair Buckley said that he would look into it and see if there was anything that they could do. He mentioned it might also be good to meet with DEP.

### Committee Updates

Policy

The Policy Committee met with Resource Management Planner Paul Cavanagh to receive an update on the progress of RMPs. The Southcoast RMPs should be presented to the council at the November meeting and considered for adoption at the December meeting. In addition, now that the Strategic Oversight Plan is done, the committee will start working on ways to execute it.

Councilor Crane apologized for missing the last Policy Committee meeting and asked about progress on the Natural Resources Committee.

Councilor Collins said that at the next committee meeting they can finalize the language and get the proposal out to the council.

Chair Buckley said that it can be taken up at the next Council meeting.

The next Policy Committee meeting is on October 31, 2023 at 8am.

Stakeholders

The Stakeholders Committee has been focused on the Strategic Oversight Plan. They haven’t had any applicants from stakeholders and friends groups to present and they encourage people to apply. They would like to learn more about the planning of a Friends and Partners meeting in the spring.

Councilor Harper added that if the committee is taking up the 2024 schedule, they should consider topics and conversations that they would like to hear next year.

Councilor Wilson said that they should also aspire to use the matrix that was created as part of the Strategic Oversight plan.

The next Stakeholders Committee meeting is on November 3, 2023 at 8am.

Finance

The committee would like to meet with the new Director of Administration and Finance Kerry Harrison and understand how the finance department at DCR is now structured. They would also like to focus on the operational budget and learn more about the work being done with the capital planning.

### Councilor Comments

Councilor Wilson thanked Mr. Connors and wished him well.

Councilor Ortiz thanked Mr. Connors for everything.

Councilor Crane commented that since the Governor’s budget is subject to the legislature, it is important to communicate to allies about what the council sees going on and how they can ask them to help to support budgetary goals that the council comes up with.

Councilor Smiley asked how they can know about public comment sessions.

Mr. Perry said that he can have her added to the DCR Updates list.

Mr. Crowley sent a link to join the email list in the meeting chat.

Chair Buckley thanked Mr. Connors and wished him the best and said that it was a great presentation from the Trails Team today.

## Adjournment

Councilor Smiley made a motion to adjourn.

Councilor Ortiz seconded the motion.

The Council adjourned until their next meeting on November 9, 2023.

Please check the DCR Stewardship Council webpage for notice of upcoming meetings. <https://www.mass.gov/service-details/dcr-stewardship-council>