# **September Meeting Minutes**

Council Members Present: Jack Buckley, Ted Dooley, Vivian Ortiz, Dennis Smith, Jeff Collins, Kevin O’Shea, Jennifer Wilson, Dicken Crane

Council Members Absent: Melissa Harper, Ann Canedy, Phil Doherty, Susan Smiley

DCR Staff Attendees: Matthew Perry, Nick Connors, Gianni Hill

Public Attendees as Registered**:** Chris Egan, Denis Laforce, Sarah Freeman, Shawn Cote, Ted Benford

## Call to Meeting, 5:00pm – Chair Jack Buckley

Chair Buckley did a roll call of members. He highlighted the work of DCR and DFG wildland firefighters who traveled to Montana and Quebec over the summer to assist with wildfires in those areas. Chair Buckley said he had the opportunity to attend the Forests as Climate Solutions public input session on September 12, 2023, and he commended the Secretary’s office for undertaking this important work. He stated that he supports the work of the forestry initiative and urges the secretary’s office to not neglect increased funding for parks and infrastructure. He noted that there is a new director of the Office of Outdoor Recreation at EEA, former DCR staff member Paul Jahnige. He asked Mr. Perry to invite him to present at a future Stewardship Council meeting. Chair Buckley said that it has been a pleasure working with Commissioner Arrigo and that the Governor made a great choice in choosing him to lead the agency. He said he is committed to the agency and that his background as mayor helps him in the position.

## DCR Report – Brian Arrigo, Commissioner

Commissioner Arrigo was unable to attend in person because of a prior commitment, but he recorded a video update for the councilors.

### Welcome New Staff

Commissioner Arrigo introduced two new members of the DCR staff, Mila Berrera and Gianni Hill. Mila joined DCR this summer as my new executive assistant. She came to DCR from the Massachusetts Competitive Partnership, where she helped launch a statewide transportation initiative, the Massachusetts Mobility Hub, as a research and public policy fellow. Giannirecently joined us at DCR as deputy chief of staff. Gianni worked with the Commissioner at Revere City Hall, where he served as policy director, overseeing all municipal boards and commissions and acted as the liaison between the Mayor’s Office and the City Council.

### Ponkapoag Golf Course

Commissioner Arrigo updated the council on an incident of alleged racial profiling by a DCR seasonal employee at Ponapoag Golf Course against Mr. Patterson, a Black patron who frequents golfs at the course.

He stated that this conduct does not reflect our mission at DCR of ensuring that all of our properties are welcoming places to everyone regardless of race, income, gender, or ability and said that after Mr. Patterson reached out to let DCR know about his experience, an investigation began immediately into the incident, which is ongoing. The employee has been placed on administrative leave pending the outcome of the investigation. The Commissioner also spoke with Mr. Patterson about his experience last week and said that he was determined to create a positive outcome from this negative experience. Commissioner Arrigo said that they plan to work together to make this a learning opportunity to make all DCR properties more accessible to people of color.

### Fire Fighters to Montana

DFG Commissioner O’Shea and Commissioner welcomed home 19 wildland firefighters – 17 from DCR and two from DFG – from Montana. The crew battled the Bowles Creek Fire for two weeks, constructing and strengthening fuel breaks along roads and other valued areas. Hotter temperatures and dryer conditions have really led to this being a summer marked by intense wildfires that have raged across the country and internationally. DCR firefighters have stepped up to help the communities affected by the intense wildfires this summer. This was the third crew DCR has sent out of state to help partners battle these blazes. Commissioner Arrigo said that he is so proud, and that we are all so lucky to have such dedicated and hardworking crews at DCR.

### DCR Waterfronts Closed for the Season

Waterfront services ended for the season on Labor Day, including lifeguard services at agency-managed inland and coastal beaches and wading pools across the Commonwealth. Spray decks will remain open through Sunday, September 17 for those who are looking for a way to cool off during the late summer heat.

### DCR Skating Rinks Open for the Season

With the end of the swimming season comes the beginning of the skating season. DCR skating rinks opened for the season for permitted use and will remain opened until April, with public skating hours set to begin in November.

### Crossing Guards

DCR crossing guards started in September as students made their way back to school. DCR guards are at crosswalks on agency parkways near schools in the Greater Boston Area to ensure students get to and from school safely.

### DCR Conservation Fellows

On August 25, seven fellows from Salem State University that were part of our 12-week inaugural fellowship program graduated from the program after giving final presentations of their individual projects. This partnership with Salem State University exposed the fellows to all aspects of DCR through hands on learning and leadership seminars.  This is an excellent initiative to promote stewardship for the next generation.

### Storrowing Campaign

In order to prevent trucks from hitting bridges on Storrow Drive, Memorial Drive, and Soldiers Field Road, the DCR COMMS Team decided to try a different approach and ran a hilarious public awareness campaign on social media to help prevent “Storrowing” incidents as students returned for the school year and new residents moved into the city. Digital Strategist and Photographer/Videographer Ryan Hutton became the face of the agency’s social media and an instant hit on Twitter with a hilarious video that included Sarah McLachlan’s Angel, also featured in the familiar ASPCA videos, as the background music with black and white shots of “Storrowed” trucks. With well-over half a million views, the video broke DCR’s social media records, quickly becoming the most viewed video on our pages and garnering coverage from every major news outlet in Boston. In addition, DCR’s design and engineering team installed a new more visible and durable “CARS ONLY” sign at the entrance to Storrow Drive at Mugar Way and Mt. Vernon Street.  The campaign was ultimately successful in preventing “storrowing” incidents during Move-In week this year, although there was one incident the following week.

### Summer Nights

The Summer Nights program ended on August 20, closing out an awesome summer of expanded programming for young people across the state. Commissioner Arrigo said Summer Nights is one of the most rewarding and exciting programs offered at DCR because you can see the direct impact it has on kids across the state. This year’s program had 85 partners, 125 locations, and almost 2,000 events across the state.  The commissioner thanked staff who hosted Summer Nights partners at our parks, as well as Julie Martin, Hilary Treat, and Mike Sidoti for their hard work putting the program together.

### Girl Scouts

DCR held the annual Girl Scouts Love State Parks program at 15 parks around the state with hundreds of girl scouts attending. In honor of the Girl Scouts, DCR made parking free for all visitors at DCR parks statewide. The program provides opportunities for the scouts to earn their Eco Friend Brownie badge and the Eco Camper Junior Badge and other nature-based badges.

### Southern Pine Beetle at Manuel F. Correllus Forest

In July, DCR foresters identified an active infestation of Southern Pine Beetle in a patch of declining and dying pitch pine trees at Manuel Correllus State Forest in Edgartown. The forest team has created a response plan for suppression of the outbreak which includes cutting infested trees. This will decrease the beetle population and disrupt the chemicals that cause the beetles to aggregate and attack trees.

If left unchecked the outbreak will expand, and the beetles could spread to other pitch pine stands in the forest or adjacent private lands. These mitigation actions are also going to increase park safety and reduce wildfire risk. Because the State Forest is designated as a Reserve, an area where active forest management is not intended and nature is usually left to take its course, the suppression plan was approved by the Forest Reserve Science Advisory Committee, which was specifically created to consider when such an exception is warranted.

### Elm Zigzag Sawfly

The Forest Health team also recently found evidence of a new invasive insect species called the elm zigzag sawfly in Massachusetts.  The invasive species was first identified in Becket and additional populations have been found in Berkshire and Hampton counties.  The bug has been confirmed in only seven states in the U.S. and the Forest Health team is still working to identify how it was introduced into Massachusetts.

### King’s Beach

Commissioner Arrigo addressed water quality issues at King’s Beach in Lynn which Councilor Dooley asked about at the previous meeting. He said that this summer DCR worked hard to get the word out about unsafe swimming conditions statewide and also to educate the public on how they can keep our waters swimmable. He noted that several popular swimming areas were closed to swimming for long periods of time this summer because of high levels of bacteria caused by the extreme rainfall. DCR worked with the Department of Public Health to create the Interactive Beach Water Quality Dashboard which gives water quality updates for all beaches in the state including the test results. DCR tests all waterbodies across the state weekly and Boston area waterfronts daily during the summer and provides up-to-date water quality information through the DCR park alerts dashboard. Following water quality test results, flags and signage are posted at waterfronts that fail testing, alerting beach visitors to the water quality issues and urging them to stay out of the water. Now that the testing season is over, new signs are being installed at King’s Beach to warn about the water quality issues experienced there. This is an ongoing issue that DCR will continue working with partners to address.

*After Commissioner Arrigo’s update finished, Mr. Perry and Mr. Connors gave additional updates to the council.*

*Mr. Perry gave Gianni Hill who was present at the meeting the opportunity to introduce himself to the council.*

### Forest as Climate Solutions

A public listening session for the EEA Forest as Climate Solutions initiative was held on Tuesday, September 12, featuring Undersecretary Stephanie Cooper, Assistant Secretary Kurt Gaertner, Assistant Secretary Caroline Higley, and Susan Podziba from Podziba Policy Mediation who moderated. The session as well attended with over 220 attending and over 50 speaking. Framing questions were given, and Undersecretary Cooper remarked on how thoughtful all of the comments given were. Assistant Secretary Gaertner gave an update at the beginning saying that the project is continuing on pace and the plan is to resume forest project reviews in December.

### Environmental Seat

Mr. Perry gave an update on the council’s open Environmental Seat. After receiving the nomination letter from Councilor Collins, Commissioner Arrigo sent the letter to Secretary Tepper’s office who then relayed it to the Governor’s office for review. This was done in early August. The nominations are still with the Governor’s office for review, and DCR has reached out for an update on a timeline for the appointment of a 13th councilor.

### Leominster Flooding

The DCR Office of Dam Safety team was on the ground in Leominster the night of Monday September 11 through late Tuesday September 12 working closely with emergency management officials to inspect and assess the safety of over half of the dams in the city following the intense flooding from Monday’s rainfall. The team identified that the Barrett Park Dam suffered serious damage due to overtopping and coordinated with the city to quickly find solutions to repair the damaged embankment. Commissioner Arrigo joined Governor Healey, Secretary Tepper and officials from MEMA on Tuesday to visit the damage caused by the flooding in Leominster. The dam is owned by the city and it’s important to note it did not fail. DCR owns one dam at Leominster State Forest, but it was not affected by the flooding. The Commissioner and the Office of Dam Safety are continuing to monitor the situation and to offer help and guidance however they can. As part of the Healey Driscoll Administration’s statewide emergency and resilience planning, DCR is working closely with the Department of Fish and Game to examine the safety of the state’s dams and to address priority dams for repair or removal based on expected precipitation as the climate crisis brings more extreme rain and flooding. DCR is also partnering with the Massachusetts Emergency Management Agency and local emergency management officials to ensure we respond effectively, safely and with the proper notification procedures if a high hazard or significant hazard dam is at risk of breaching of failing.”

### Riverbend Park in Cambridge

After the state’s COVID-19 public emergency was lifted, DCR returned to the Riverbend Park schedule established by state law, which allowed for closures of Memorial Drive on Sundays for a certain period of the year. DCR’s prior decision was based on uncertainty surrounding our legal authority to close the road for extended periods of time. DCR is committed to ensuring that the surrounding community has access to recreational opportunities. Commissioner Arrigo is in the process of meeting with the City Council, city manager, and Cambridge delegation and is working to determine a plan for meaningful community engagement.

### Stearns Building in Dorchester

Mr. Connors gave an update about the Stearns Building, 98 Taylor Street, in the Port Norfolk neighborhood of Dorchester. DCR has removed it from the agenda of the city’s Conservation Commissions meeting and is now working with a non-profit partner for assessment.

### Councilor Questions and Comments

Chair Buckley asked if the council could receive a presentation from DCR about its golf courses. Councilor O’Shea had asked for this several months ago and Chair Buckley asked Mr. Perry to look into it.

Chair Buckley also asked about the suggestion from Mass Conservation Voters to split the $14 million to convert contractors to fulltime employees over two years.

Mr. Connors said that the topic was part of an ongoing conversation between DCR’s finance department and EEA.

Councilor O’Shea noted that the closure of waterfronts, there was confusion about whether there was no swimming allowed at all or if it was swim at your own risk. Mr. Perry and Mr. Connors said that they would look into it and provide the council with an answer.

Councilor O’Shea also commented that he lives near a school and DCR crossing guards are stationed near by and do great work. He noted that outside of the hours that they work, there is still a need for increased pedestrian safety along Columbia Road because of traffic on the road.

Mr. Connors said that they can bring that back as a suggestion.

Councilor Collins said that he appreciates the update from the Commissioner and that the video was awesome. He commented that the Southern Pine Beetle discovery on Martha’s Vineyard is the first this far north on the East Coast, and that Mass Audubon is also monitoring for it on Nantucket. He said that management of pitch pine forest is important and that he hopes that the forest can be maintained in a sustained condition. Councilor Collins also said that following the presentation that the council received from the Office of Dam safety at its May meeting, he would like to have a presentation from the Depart of Fish and Game Office of Ecological Restoration which oversees dam removal.

Chair Buckley said that the Office of Dam Removal was invited to present, and that they will try again to get them on the agenda.

Councilor Collins said that it is important to find ways to remove dams that are hazards.

Chair Buckley agreed but said that permitting standards can make removals expensive. He added that with the forestry issues on Martha’s Vineyard, he thinks it shows that the forestry review by EEA should be dynamic and have flexibility when issues arise and to prevent fires.

Councilor Dooley asked if the Stacy Brook sign is permanent year-round, and if not, it is something to consider because the weather stays warm through the fall. He also asked if there is a way to extend water quality testing at the beaches impacted by bacteria on the North Shore.

Councilor Wilson commented that the Summer Nights program is a great way to engage youth who may not have other things to do over the summer, and asked how a program like that can continue outside of the summer months.

Mr. Connors commented that Julie Martin, Director of Visitor Experience and Programming could present on it.

Chair Buckley said that he enjoyed the video from the Commissioner, and that the person who made it should be allowed to make more about the agency.

Mr. Connors said that EEA has given DCR more leeway and that they are looking at ways to do more.

Chair Buckley commented that Commissioner Arrigo makes a point to mention people that work at DCR more than he has heard in the past, and that he finds that really positive.

## Regular Business I

### Community Rowing Inc. Presentation – Ted Benford, Executive Director CRI

Mr. Benford gave a presentation on CRI and its relationship with DCR.

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

Councilor Ortiz said that her work at the Safe Routes to School program brought her to the Mildred School in Mattapan where she saw the rowing machines from CRI. She said the kids there were very excited to row.

Councilor O’Shea asked how CRI’s relationship is with DCR in terms of its long-term lease.

Mr. Benford said that CRI is currently in year 15 of a 30-year lease and that DCR has been great to work with. He said that he has to meet with the Commissioner annually and that he looks forward to meeting Commissioner Arrigo. He said they have some great community partnerships within the city of Boston and that DCR has been a consistent and strong partner.

Councilor Wilson asked where the funding for CRI comes from.

Mr. Benford said that they are a $5 million non-profit and that 70% of the money comes from fees with an additional $1.5 million fundraised. He said that they are successful where they are, but they want to grow to deepen the experience for those who participate.

Councilor Crane asked if popularity of rowing has increased because of the book, *Lessons in Chemistry* by Bonnie Garmus.

Mr. Benford commented that it is a great book, saying the relationship the character in the book had with rowing is very funny. He said it is a pretty accurate depiction of the relationship with the sport, and that the sport is not for everyone. He said the program tries to emphasize that and they realize that even if participants don’t stick with it, they at least get to experience something they otherwise wouldn’t have.

Councilor Collins commented that his daughter participated in the program for four years and that she is interested in pursuing rowing in college. He praised the program and also the accommodations that have been made at the CRI building for biking and walking between the river and the park, noting that some boathouses are not designed with that in mind.

Mr. Benford thanked Councilor Collins and said that access is very important to the work that they do.

Councilor Wilson said that it is often thought of as a country club sport, but the ability to bring it to youth in the city of Boston and to let them have the chance to sit on the water is great. She said that even if the students hate it, they still get to have the experience.

Mr. Benford agreed, saying that how many kids stick with rowing is not how the organization measures success.

Councilor Collins brought up that the parking lot at the boathouse was in rough shape a couple of years ago.

Mr. Connors said that it is on the list to get paved, but there are limited funds in the capital budget for paving and it is currently behind other projects.

### Approval of Minutes – July 13, 2023

Councilor O’Shea made a motion to approve the minutes from the July 13, 2023 meeting.

Councilor Collins commented on a section that he had a change for.

Councilor Wilson said that she has already sent the same change to Mr. Perry which will be made.

Councilor Dooley seconded the motion.

### Roll Call on Approval of Minutes

Councilor Smith: Yes

Councilor Wilson: Yes

Councilor Ortiz: Yes

Councilor Crane: Yes

Councilor Collins: Yes

Councilor Dooley: Yes

Councilor O’Shea: Yes

Councilor Buckley: Yes

The July 13, 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:

* Denis Laforce, Sutton
* Chris Egan, Mass Forestry Alliance

## Regular Business II

### Committee Updates

Policy

The committee met on August 29. The Southcoast RMPs are expected to go before the Council very soon. The committee has continued working on the Strategic Oversight plan and Councilor Wilson thanked everyone who commented for their good feedback. She said that the committee will be looking at changes at their meeting on Tuesday, September 26 with the plan to advance it to the council at the meeting on October 12 where they will ask for approval.

Chair Buckley commented that Paul Cavanagh, Resource Management Planner at DCR, did a really good job at the public meeting for the Southcoast RMPs.

Stakeholders

The committee was unable to meet this month.

Finance

The Finance Committee did not meet but plans to resume meeting in October. Councilor Crane asked how the search for a capital consultant is going. Mr. Connors said that they may have found one and will look into it.

### Councilor Comments

Councilor Crane asked about the status of his proposed Natural Resources Committee saying he thinks it will be important for the council, the public, and the agency.

Chair Buckley noted that the Policy Committee has discussed its creation.

Councilor Wilson said that the Committee thought it was a good idea but worried about capacity. She said it will be discussed at the committee’s next meeting.

Chair Buckley asked if Mr. Perry can get the committee an update on walk-in camping at DCR parks.

Councilor Collins said that in the future, in-person meetings should be at locations that are easy to access.

Chair Buckley said that the council should be more strategic in its locations, and that the State House is a good place to meet.

Councilor Wilson commented that the attendance may be low because of the 5pm start time.

Councilor Smith agreed, saying that they haven’t had the success that he expected with the 5pm time.

Chair Buckley said that he is going to speak with Steve Sears about the possibility of another joint meeting between the Stewardship Council and the Fish and Wildlife Board.

Councilor O’Shea said that there may be other agencies with boards that they may want to meet with as well.

Councilor Wilson asked about councilor biographies, saying it is important to have information available on the website for the public.

Mr. Perry said he will post the biographies to the website.

Chair Buckley said that he was thinking about Fish and Wildlife because of the EEA forestry initiative and how it will impact the two agencies.

## Adjournment

Councilor O’Shea made a motion to adjourn.

Councilor Dooley seconded the motion.

The Council adjourned until their next meeting on October 12, 2023.

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