# Policy Committee Meeting Minutes

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

Other Councilors Present**:** Dicken Crane

DCR Staff Attendees: Matthew Perry, Paul Cavanagh

## Public Attendees: Eve Schluter, Jen Ryan

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

Chair Wilson welcomed the attendees and went over the meeting agenda.

## Approval of Minutes

Councilor Collins made a motion to approve the August 8, 2024 meeting minutes.

Councilor Wilson seconded.

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

Councilor Collins: Yes

Councilor Canedy: Abstain

Councilor Doherty: Yes

Chair Wilson: Yes

The April minutes were approved.

## Resource Management Plans

Chair Wilson reported that she and Council Chair Buckley met with Commissioner Arrigo about Resource Management Plans (RMPs). She said it was a good conversation about the importance of the program and the commitment to having a more agile and reliable approval process. Commissioner Arrigo made the commitment to reviewing and talking to staff to see how RMPs can be moved along to come before the Stewardship Council more frequently. He said that he would come back to the committee for a review of the discussions in a couple of months.

Chair Wilson welcomed Resource Management Planner Paul Cavanagh to the meeting and invited to him update the committee on RMPs.

Mr. Cavanagh thanked the committee. He said the Blackstone Complex, which has six RMPs, recently had a legislative meeting and a number of State Representatives and Senators attended. The drafts of the RMPs will be released tomorrow, September 25, and Director of Public Engagement Dan Cushing will be reaching out to the council with more details. Public comment for the plans starts on September 25 and runs until October 31. He said the plans will be before the Stewardship Council at the December meeting.

The Central Highlands RMPs will be under review by the “Core Team,” which Mr. Cavanagh has mentioned before as senior staff that will be reviewing the RMPs before they can move forward to the public. Deputy Commissioner Priscilla Geigis is reviewing the RMPs at the same time as the Core Team, and they have one month to review all the plans. The Erving Complex is the first set of RMPs from the Central Highlands, which is 11 plans total, and will be posted for the team to review on October 1. They will need to have comments back by October 31, and then the process will continue to move forward for that complex. The other complexes in the district will be brought before the Core Team through the end of the year with 30 days to respond.

Mr. Cavanagh told the committee that the RMP Dashboard was updated on September 17. He said that shifting the focus from the district level to the complex level will help to move information forward more efficiently.

Chair Wilson asked if changes will be made to plans after they have moved forward in the process.

Mr. Cavanagh said that he doesn’t anticipate doing any revisions to plans after they have moved through the process, and that they will finish them with the template that is being used for the district that they are in and consider making any changes to the next district being reviewed.

Councilor Collins asked if a shorter deadline for the internal comment process would help draw attention to the plans and if after going through this round of plans, can the amount of review time be adjusted?

Mr. Cavanagh clarified that the broad internal review of staff is one month and the Core Team then goes through the comments that their office or unit made. He said that if no one from their staff made comments, then the RMP moves forward. He said that there is a possibility to shorten the response period and that the first time through will be a test of how the process works.

Councilor Collins said that they should make sure that staff knows this is a less open ended processes and that it will be good if they are getting more attention and things are speeding up, and if its not working they can consider shortening the period with more notice.

Mr. Cavanagh said that since they haven’t been through this process before so they will learn the pitfalls while it is being tried out.

Chair Wilson thanked Mr. Cavanagh for his update.

## Be Kind Campaign

Chair Wilson said that the Be Kind Campaign is focused on changing behavior of patrons at the Middlesex Fells and the Blue Hills by promoting gentle cultural changes instead of chastising people with dogs off leash or not cleaning up after their dog. They receive a reminder to “Be Kind” as they enter the park. This campaign was based on surveys and investments of time and resources from friends groups and the state legislature. She said there has been frustration from legislators and some councilors that the campaign has been slow to be implemented and gives a pass on enforcement of these rules by DCR staff. She added that there is currently a dispute over whether or not rangers have the ability to ticket and that DCR is working through that. On September 16, Mayors, Town Managers, and other municipal staff from the towns and cities that include the Fells met at the Botume House for a “re-kickoff” of the campaign. They took signs with the messaging of the campaign to different trail heads around the fells to expand the Be Kind program.

Mr. Perry told the committee he has been working with his colleagues at DCR, Senator Jason Lewis’s office, and this group of municipal officials on the campaign. DCR printed the signs that were placed and the group has been moving forward with other ideas on how to expand the campaign.

Chair Wilson said that they also had a meeting with Senator Lewis, representatives from the Town of Winchester, and Mr. Perry and his DCR colleague Cindy Dalton about ways to improve enforcement in the fells. She said she also mentioned to Senator Lewis the lingering issue of Rangers at the State House as security. She said that they haven’t talked about this issue in a while, and that it ties in with looking for an overall strategy update with the Commissioner and what happened with the sprint items from the Strategic Readiness Initiative.

Councilor Doherty asked how many rangers are at the Fells and the Blue Hills.

Mr. Perry said he would find out and report back.

Chair Wilson said the Council received a presentation on the rangers that could answer that question.

Councilor Collins said that it would be good to get those numbers and have them broken down by position.

Councilor Doherty said that he feels like the State House Rangers could be used elsewhere by DCR.

Councilor Crane asked that if the State House Rangers are moved out of the State House, who would take over the security there? He noted that the state would need money to come from elsewhere for that.

Chair Wilson said that they should look at the presentation, see what their thoughts are as a committee, and see what the recommendations of the strategic readiness are.

## Rodenticide Use on DCR Property

Chair Wilson said that they had Director of Natural Resources Eric Seaborn at the committee’s last meeting to talk about DCR’s policy regarding Second-generation anticoagulant rodenticide (SGAR) use on DCR property. She said that it was an interesting and compelling conversation and something that they would like to have for the full council. She asked when the full council could get the full presentation.

Mr. Perry said that the November meeting would be the next opportunity.

Chair Wilson asked if there was anything else that they would like to discuss about SGARs.

Councilor Collins said that he and Councilor Crane will meet about the issue as the Conservation Committee. He said that they would pull something together with Mr. Seaborn.

## Councilor Comments

Chair Wilson said that they will need to turn back to Landscape Designations soon because it is past its ten-year renewal. She says that it ties into the RMP process and that the last time they spoke about Landscape Designations they were waiting for the public comments.

Councilor Crane said that the Forest Climate Committee came out supporting increasing the number of forest reserves and that he thinks the recommendation relates to landscape designations. He said that he has concerns about a permanent reserve status and asked what can be done to a reserve if conditions change. He said it would be helpful for the Scientific Advisory Board that was created as part of the Forests as Climate Solutions initiative to present to the Conservation Committee to learn more about this.

Councilor Collins said that at the last council meeting there was a question from Chris Egan of the Mass Forest Alliance about a forestry job in Mt. Washington. He asked if they knew how that contract was handled differently than the rest of the agency’s contracts.

Councilor Crane said that the concern is that someone in the public is offering money to change the designation of a piece of state-owned land to prevent the project. He said that they don’t want to see designations and RMPs be subject to someone with money that wants to change them.

Chair Wilson said that this is a good topic for the chair to talk to the Commissioner about.

## 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)