

**Maryland Environmental Trust
Board of Trustees Open Meeting Minutes
September 14, 2020**

Trustees Present:

Mary Burke
Gary Burnett
Toby Lloyd
Sarah Taylor-Rogers
Ken Montague
Lori Lynch
Tom McCarthy
Megan Benjamin
Jim Gilchrist
Julia Jitkoff
Mark Hoffman
Susanne Zilberfarb
Senator Eckardt
Megan D'Arcy

Trustees Absent:

Tom Prevas

Others Present:

John Turgeon, Director, Maryland Environmental Trust
Kelly Price, Maryland Environmental Trust
Wendy Hershey, Maryland Environmental Trust
Ann Carlson, Maryland Environmental Trust
Jon Chapman, Maryland Environmental Trust
Michelle Grafton, Maryland Environmental Trust
Talley Kovacs, Office of Attorney General

I. Call to order

Chair Mary Burke called the meeting to order at 4:04 pm via conference call due to the COVID-19 Pandemic.

II. Board Work Plan & Governance Topics

A. Adopting the Minutes

Ms. Burke moved for approval of the minutes of the June 1, 2020 board meeting. Ms. Taylor-Rogers motioned to approve the minutes. Ms. Jitkoff seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

B. Chair Report

Ms. Burke welcomed to the board the most recently elected MET trustees, Lori Lynch and Tom Prevas.

Ms. Burke announced that she is working on the process of restructuring the MET Board's committees. Ms. Burke is hoping that this would help streamline the meetings and better integrate the committees. She has been speaking with the various committee chairs, and has asked the Board for suggestions. She indicated that Ms. Zilberfarb, Ms. Benjamin and Ms. D'Arcy all volunteered to be a part of the Lands Committee (formerly named the Easement & Stewardship Committee).

Mr. Turgeon shared a graphic showing a proposed new committee structure. Ms. Burke gave a brief overview of the proposed changes to the committee structure and announced that with the help of Ms. Taylor-Rogers a new outreach committee would be formed. Ms. Taylor-Rogers has agreed to be the chair of this new committee. The Board's existing Land Trust Advisory Committee, Agricultural Advisory Committee, Legislative Committee, and Grant Committee would become sub-committees of the new outreach committee. Ms. Taylor-Rogers advised the Board that she would meet virtually with the chairs of these committees in mid to late October to further discuss the proposal. She also stated that a mission statement for the new outreach committee has yet to be drafted. Ms. Zilberfarb informed Ms. Taylor-Rogers that she has been involved in a similar situation with another organization and she would be happy to share materials from that process. Ms. Taylor-Rogers said a strategic plan for the outreach committee could be developed. Ms. Taylor-Rogers anticipated a vote on the outreach committee would take place at the November 2020 MET Board meeting.

Mr. Hoffman asked about the purpose of the Agricultural Advisory Committee. Mr. Lloyd responded that the Committee was more active in the past. Mr. Lloyd said that the Committee acted as the eyes and ears of the agricultural community regarding agricultural issues involving MET. Mr. Lloyd referred to the Committee as providing an advisory role for the Board. Mr. Turgeon explained to the Board that the Agricultural Advisory Committee was most recently instrumental in having the Board approve a policy that new MET easements require landowners to have soil conservation/water quality plans prepared for their properties. Language to this effect was also added to MET's model easement template. Mr. Turgeon also informed the Board

of the Committee's outreach to agricultural organizations in the state such as MALPF and the Farm Bureau. Ms. D'Arcy requested to serve on the Agricultural Advisory Committee.

Ms. Burke gave an update on the activities of the Forever Maryland Foundation (FMF). She said FMF is doing a great job and they are encouraging and helping with land conservation in Maryland. Ms. Burke announced that Wendy Stringfellow has been hired as the president of FMF. Ms. Burke stated that FMF will now be recruiting a director of development, and if the Board knows of good candidates for the position to have them contact Wendy Stringfellow. Mary also informed the Board that Jim O'Connell (a former MET trustee and board chair) is leaving the FMF board. Ms. Burke advised that FMF's liaison to MET's board will attend the November meeting. She said this person will help facilitate information sharing between the two organizations. Ms. Burke also stated that FMF is looking for individuals to help fund the Citizen Stewardship Grant, which is one of the MET Keep Maryland Beautiful (KMB) program grants. She asked the Board to forward names of individuals or businesses that might be interested in helping fund this grant to either her or Wendy Stringfellow.

Ms. Burke announced that on September 24th, MET's stewardship program will be hosting a training session on easement monitoring using aerial imagery. She said all board members are invited to attend.

Ms. Burke mentioned that she is drafting a letter to local newspapers urging support of proposed legislation to curb abuses of the federal tax incentives for donating conservation easements. She asked the board to review the draft of the letter and contact her with any concerns or questions.

III. Director Report

Mr. Turgeon informed the board that their statement on race issues, which at their June meeting the board approved issuing, was published in MET's e-newsletters over the summer. The board finalized the statement following the June Board meeting, and it was reviewed by the DNR's communications office, prior to being published. He stated that the Executive Committee is exploring training options for MET staff and board members for Diversity, Equity and Inclusion. Mr. Turgeon said that he has been in contact with DNR HR regarding this training.

Mr. Turgeon advised the Board that due to the adverse impact to the State's budget caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting stay-at-home order issued by the Governor to combat the spread of the virus, a hiring freeze was put in place by Governor Hogan for all State agencies beginning April 14, 2020. Thus, MET's staff recruitment efforts to fill the vacant Stewardship Planner position, the Easement Stewardship Specialist (long-term contractual position), and the Easement Program Manager position (in which Ann Carlson is currently serving in an "Acting" role) were placed on hold until further notice. Ms. Taylor-Rogers stated that the Board

appreciates all the hard work and dedication that the MET staff has put forth considering the unforeseen circumstances that have been placed upon us.

Mr. Turgeon informed the Board that in FY 2020, MET staff completed 16 new conservation easement projects in nine Maryland counties. He stated that these projects resulted in a total of 1,213 acres protected on privately owned properties. Mr. Turgeon was proud to say that this exceeds MET's Annual Work Plan goal of 1,000 new acres protected and that thirteen of these easements were co-held with non-profit land trusts.

Mr. Turgeon mentioned that for the second consecutive year, MET achieved its Annual Work Plan goal for easement monitoring. He stated that the FY 2020 annual monitoring goal was set at 500+ verified easement monitoring visits and that MET staff, volunteers and land trust partners monitored 559 easements in FY 2020. Mr. Turgeon explained that despite meeting the Annual Work Plan goal, this was a decrease from 802 easements monitored in FY 2019. He also reminded the Board that for the last couple of weeks of the FY 3rd quarter and most of the 4th quarter, easement monitoring efforts were greatly impacted by the COVID 19 virus.

Mr. Turgeon explained to the Board that FMF has taken on some of the roles that MET was responsible for in the past. He said that one item that they have done a tremendous job with was administering the KMB grant program on behalf of MET. He stated that the Foundation did a great job with the application process and the committee meetings, and that Kelly Price did a great job working with DNR on the grant payout process. Mr. Turgeon reminded the Board that the different partnerships involved with the grants has been a big task that they have put significant effort into and they are still working to finalize the MOU between the Department of Housing and Community Development and the Department of Natural Resources.

Mr. Turgeon stated that FMF should be commended for the 2020 Annual Land Conservation Conference as well. He said the virtual webinar sessions they offered went very well, and despite this being virtual, that they still had good attendance.

IV. Committee Reports

A. Governance and Nominating Committee

Mr. Lloyd informed the board that the committee, at its meeting four weeks ago, unanimously recommended Diana Conway for board membership. Mr. Lloyd gave background information on Ms. Conway. Mr. Montague motioned to approve Ms. Diana Conway as a MET Board member. Senator Eckardt seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Mr. Lloyd stated that there are two vacancies remaining on the board. He is hoping to get help from Senator Eckardt and Delegate Gilchrist to fill at least one of the vacancies, which needs a

nomination from the Speaker of the House. The other vacancy needs a nomination from the Governor.

Mr. Lloyd said that the committee is working on updating MET's bylaws and is formulating a plan to do so. Mr. Lloyd is working with Ms. Burke, and Mr. Turgeon, along with other committee chairs, and with Ms. Kovacs and Mr. Medoff from OAG, to review and make revisions. Mr. Montague offered to be part of the review process.

B. Finance Committee

Ms. Jitkoff updated the board on the FY 2020 year-end financial reporting for the board managed funds. Ms. Jitkoff also stated that as of August 31, 2020, the balance sheet of assets in MET's board managed accounts is approximately \$3.6 million. Ms. Jitkoff advised that Brown Advisory gave a summary of all board managed accounts at the Finance Committee meeting that was held on September 14, 2020. Ms. Jitkoff reviewed and gave a brief update on all accounts. Ms. Jitkoff said she will also share with the board a FY 2020 year-end profit and loss report.

C. Easement and Stewardship Committee

Mr. Burnett applauded Ann Carlson for her hard work and fabulous job in keeping up with the MET easement projects.

Ms. Carlson stated that since the beginning of FY21, MET has been able to complete four active easement projects protecting over 1,000 acres of land. Ms. Carlson gave a brief overview of the Easement that MET and Lower Shore Land Trust were able to complete protecting 1,067 acres in Somerset County.

Ms. Carlson is projecting that eleven more projects will close by the end of FY21. She stated that there is a long waiting list for land owners that would like to grant easements to Maryland Environmental Trust.

Ms. Carlson said that staff is working with the Office of Attorney General to revise the model easement conservation document. She is hoping to have the model document reviewed by the board in the near future.

Ms. Carlson informed the Board that MARBIDCO approached MET and other land trusts regarding the new small-acreage farmland conservation program MARBIDCO is launching. She said after reviewing the program with the Lands Committee, they have decided that MET will be working with MARBIDCO on this project.

Mr. Chapman advised the board that the stewardship program met its annual easement monitoring goal for the recently ended FY20. He is excited about the new satellite aerial imagery technology that is being introduced to the stewardship program for easement monitoring. He said that this will allow MET to compare current-year imagery with imagery from previous years to see if any land use changes need to be addressed with easement landowners.

Mr. Chapman informed the board about a company called Lighthawk. He said that this company consists of volunteer airplane pilots in training. He hopes to utilize the pilots so they can fly over easement properties that are problematic, and where the stewardship program could benefit from aerial views of these properties. These flights help the pilots receive flight hours needed to complete required training, while helping MET view easements in question.

Consent Calendar:

- a. Conservation Easement: 247.63± acres, H. James Watson, Jr. and Barbara H. Watson, Dorchester County, co-hold w/ the US Navy and Eastern Shore Land Conservancy

Ms. Jitkoff motioned to approve the consent calendar. Mr. Burnett seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

D. Agricultural Committee

Mr. Lloyd stated that there will be a new Ag committee and they will meet via tele-conference. Mr. Chapman has asked to be a part of the committee as MET Staff.

E. Land Trust Advisory Committee

Ms. Grafton reported that Mr. Turgeon and her have been working with the Office of Attorney General to revise MET's model cooperative agreement document. She anticipated that the updated model will be brought to the board for review at its next meeting in November. She stated that MET has not received any recent requests from land trusts to update their cooperative agreements with MET.

Ms. Grafton informed the board that MET's land trust assistance program is working with the Forever Maryland Foundation to launch the Keep Maryland Beautiful (KMB) grants program. The application period will open on October 1, 2020. Ms. Grafton stated that this year, the KMB program will be using new software (Submittable) to collect KMB grant applications and that the grant application portal will reside on the Foundation's website.

An open discussion took place regarding the local land trusts that co-hold easements with MET, the funds from MET's private-side budget to pay land trusts for their monitoring reports, and the appreciation that the board has for all the hard work and support that MET gets from them.

F. Grants Committee

Regarding the KMB grants program, Ms. Burke announced that \$312,500 is the total amount available to be awarded in FY21. Ms. Burke informed the board about the annual Land Trust Alliance Rally. This year's Rally, which is the Alliance's annual conference, will be held in October of this year and will be a virtual conference. Ms. Burke encouraged all board members to attend, and informed them that the cost to attend will be less because it is not an in-person event this year.

V. Adjourned Meeting

Meeting adjourned at 5:45 pm.