

Maryland Environmental Trust
Board of Trustees Open Meeting Minutes
May 1, 2023

Trustees Present:

Gary Burnett, Chair
Greg Bown, Vice Chair
Julia Jitkoff, Treasurer
Mark Hoffman, Vice Treasurer
Megan D'Arcy, Secretary
Thomas (Toby) Lloyd
Megan Benjamin
Lori Lynch
Diana Conway
Susanne Richards

Trustees Absent:

Tom Prevas
Nathan Volke
Craig Highfield
Keith Colston

Others Present:

John Turgeon, Director, Maryland Environmental Trust (MET Staff)
Jon Chapman (MET Staff)
Michelle Grafton (MET Staff)
Josette Markline (MET Staff)
Ann Carlson (MET Staff)
Michael Mingus (MET Staff)
Kelly Price (MET Staff)
Wendy Foster (MET Staff)
Cindy Hoffmann (MET Staff)
Talley Kovacs, Assistant Attorney General (Office of Attorney General)

I. Call to Order

Board Chair Gary Burnett called the regular meeting of the MET Board of Trustees to order at 4:29 p.m. Mr. Burnett called for a motion which was approved by Ms. Jitkoff and seconded by Mr. Lloyd. All members in attendance voted in favor.

II. Minutes of the February 6, 2023 Regular Meeting

Chair Burnett called for a motion to approve the minutes of the regular meeting of the Board of Trustees held on February 6, 2023. Mr. Hoffman motioned to approve the minutes; Mr. Lloyd seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

III. Chair's Report

Chair Burnett discussed the changes that occurred with Forever Maryland. He announced that they have scaled back their operation and that going forward there will be a staff of one, Josh Hastings. He stated that local land trusts have agreed to collaborate in assisting Forever Maryland by taking over some of its programs and filling Board positions. He noted that Sarah Knebel was elected Chairperson. Forever Maryland will continue its advocacy work for land conservation and will continue to support the Maryland Environmental Trust. Chair Burnett will continue to act as a liaison to Forever Maryland's board on behalf of MET and has asked Forever Maryland to reciprocate with a named liaison on their end.

Chair Burnett recognized and thanked MET Treasurer Jitkoff for her great work as Treasurer and noted that she will be greatly missed. Mr. Turgeon presented Treasurer Jitkoff with a Governor's Citation for her service to MET. John Chapman thanked Ms. Jitkoff's contributions to the Lands Committee and recognized her knowledge in the area of agriculture. Ms. Jitkoff expressed her appreciation for the knowledge she gained working with board members and MET staff.

IV. Director's Report

Mr. Turgeon referred to his Director's Report and a copy of the Maryland the Beautiful Act bill that were distributed prior to the meeting. He detailed the contents of the Maryland the Beautiful Act bill and how it will impact MET. He recognized Forever Maryland's role in getting the bill passed. He noted that the bill passed on April 10, 2023 and it is expected to be signed by Governor Moore in the near future. There was some discussion surrounding the new funding outlined in the bill. It was noted that the earliest funding would be distributed would be July of 2024. Mr. Turgeon pointed out the statewide land conservation goals noted in the bill. He indicated that the state's Smart Growth

Subcabinet <https://msa.maryland.gov/msa/mdmanual/08conoff/cabinet/html/smart.html> is responsible for developing plans to meet this goal.

Mr. Turgeon discussed MET's plan for managing the Keep Maryland Beautiful grants in the wake of Forever Maryland's reduction of staff. Previously Forever Maryland administered the grants on behalf of MET. MET is seeking to partner with the Chesapeake Bay Trust for this task and is in the process of drafting a cooperative agreement with the Trust. He expects to have a draft ready for approval at the June regular meeting of the Board of Trustees. He mentioned that MET is also meeting with the Maryland Department of Agriculture to discuss their commitment to funding for the grants program.

V. Committee Reports

A. Governance

Mr. Lloyd commented that the Governance Committee recently met and voted to recommend the re-election of MET Trustees Gary Burnett, Greg Bowen, Megan D'Arcy, Nathan Volke, and Craig Highfield. All of whom are eligible for re-election to 4-year terms. He noted that the committee also recommended the election of Mr. Hoffman as MET's Treasurer. He asked Trustees Mr. Burnett, Mr. Bowen, and Ms. D'Arcy to excuse themselves from the meeting in order for the remaining members to vote. Mr. Burnett, Mr. Bowen, and Ms. D'Arcy left the meeting. Mr. Volke and Mr. Highfield were not in attendance at this meeting. **Mr. Lloyd motioned to approve the following Trustees to serve their next terms.**

Gary Burnett

Greg Bowen

Megan D'Arcy

Nathan Volke

Craig Highfield

Mr. Hoffman approved the motion; Ms. Jitkoff seconded. All voted in favor.

Mr. Burnett, Mr. Bowen, and Ms. D'Arcy returned to the meeting. Mr. Lloyd and Ms. Conway congratulated the re-elected members and thanked them for their continued service.

Mr. Hoffman left the meeting.

Mr. Lloyd motioned to approve that Mark Hoffman be elected to serve as Treasurer. Ms. Conway approved the motion; Ms. Jitkoff seconded. All voted in favor.

Mr. Hoffman returned to the meeting and Mr. Lloyd congratulated him on his new role. Mr. Lloyd gave an update on vacant trustee positions and asked members to offer recommendations for consideration. He indicated that he and Mr. Turgeon will be conducting an educational outreach program with legislators over the summer to educate them on MET's role in land conservation. He welcomed any member who may be interested to join.

Mr. Burnett acknowledged that the Vice Treasurer position is open and asked interested members to submit their information to Mr. Lloyd for consideration by the Governance Committee.

B. Finance

Ms. Jitkoff reported that MET's total assets are down from last year at this time due to the stock market's performance. She indicated that there is nearly \$50,000 in the FY23 budget that has not yet been spent as of the beginning of this quarter. Ms. Jitkoff said that the FY24 budget will be proposed at the June regular board meeting for approval and Mr. Turgeon said that he will present the corresponding annual work plan. Ms. Jitkoff gave a report on the Brown Advisory account. She referred to the budget sheets provided in an email prior to the meeting.

Ms. Jitkoff asked for a vote to approve the balance sheet and the profit and loss budget vs. actual sheet. Mr. Lloyd moved the motion and it was seconded by Mr. Burnett. All voted in favor.

C. Lands

Ms. Benjamin noted that the Lands Committee met on April 19, 2023 and were apprised on the current projects and related goals of the Easement and Stewardship staff. Four projects were reviewed and placed on the Consent Agenda for approval by the full Board.

Consent Agenda

- a. **Conservation Easement of 340.767 acres donated by Still Waters, L.L.C.** in Talbot County to be co-held with Eastern Shore Land Conservancy, Inc.
- b. **Conservation Easement of 32.36 acres donated by The Andrea Rose Bowden Revocable Trust** in Baltimore County to be solely held by MET.

- c. **Conservation Easement of 450 acres donated by Deeley Farms LLC** in Somerset County to be co-held with Lower Shore Land Trust
- d. **Request to Approve Exercise Reserved Right on Conservation Easement Property, Riveredge, LLC (MET file number 0955RIV08.CECI).** Exercise reserved right to subdivide a new 20-acre parcel from parcel 9 of tax map 48 of the Easement and combine it with the adjoining unencumbered parcel (tax map 48, parcel 89) owned by the same landowner.

Ms. Benjamin motioned to approve the Consent Agenda; Mr. Lloyd seconded. All voted in favor.

Mr. Mingus briefed the Board on the present projects of the MET Easement Program. He noted that ten conservation easements have been recorded in FY2023 protecting over 1,200 acres. The Crownsville Hospital Easement (MET File number 1172AAC23.ANNE) donated by Anne Arundel County which protects 158 acres of forest has been recorded. The conservation easement is co-held with Scenic Rivers Land Trust. Mr. Mingus informed the Board that there are twenty-four active easement projects being worked on.

Mr. Chapman reported that the Stewardship Program staff has received nearly 700 monitoring reports for FY 23. 60% of those reports were completed by MET staff, volunteers or paid interns. The majority of the reports were conducted utilizing the Lens aerial imagery system. The remaining 40% of reports received were conducted by land trust partners, most of which were conducted on the ground.

Mr. Chapman stated that staff continues to process multiple easement amendments that were approved by the Board last year. The GIS mapping system has recently been updated with boundaries for easements recorded in CY22. He pointed out that they continue working with DNR's Forestry Service regarding the Five Million Trees initiative noting that they have had a fair number of responses from landowners that are interested. Mr. Chapman reported that Stewardship staff is working with DNR's Chesapeake and Coastal Services unit who will provide an analysis of land-use land-cover information on MET conservation easement properties. Discussions have been initiated to obtain an analysis of ecosystem services based on those land uses. Staff continues to work with the Maryland Department of Information Technology on finalizing the new easement monitoring tool.

D. Land Trust Outreach

Mr. Bowen reported that there has been one new and four renewed cooperative agreements with local land trusts signed in FY23. He stated that over half of the

conservation easements held by MET are co-held with land trust partners who provide regular monitoring visits of the properties and assist MET in permanently upholding provisions of the easements on those properties. More than 450 monitoring reports conducted by land trust partners were shared with MET during FY22 and have been reviewed and processed or flagged for stewardship concerns.

MET is planning its next land trust roundtable event for June 28, 2023 and will be held in the conference center at 100 Community Place, Crownsville MD 21032. More details will be forthcoming. In late February Ms. Markline and Ms. Grafton coordinated the mailing of postcards to conservation easement landowners with information on DNR's Five Million Trees Initiative

<https://dnr.maryland.gov/Documents/5MillionTreesPlease.pdf>.

The Land Trust Outreach Committee, formerly the Land Trust Advisory Committee, met on March 28 and on April 18 to discuss the committee charter, potential goals and committee members.

VI. Other Business

Mr. Turgeon informed the Board that he and Mr. Burnett will be attending a Leadership Development seminar in Nebraska hosted by the Land Trust Alliance. This is the second half of a two-part program, called the Wentworth Program. Mr. Turgeon attended part one last year in Santa Fe, New Mexico.

Ms. Conway raised the question of MET's potential risk of liability for the exposure of PFAS present on properties in which MET holds a conservation easement. Ms. Kovacs mentioned that she has heard of a workgroup forming around this topic. Ms. Markline indicated that if PFAS chemicals were identified they would be treated like other hazardous materials found on properties. MET would likely report the information to the Maryland Department of the Environment.

VII. Adjournment

Chair Burnett called for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Hoffman approved the motion; Ms. Jitkoff seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

The meeting adjourned at 5:39 p.m.