

**Maryland Environmental Trust
Board of Trustees Open Meeting Minutes
November 1, 2021**

Trustees Present:

Mary Burke, Chair
Gary Burnett, Vice-Chair
Julia Jitkoff, Treasurer
Megan D'Arcy, Secretary
Mark Hoffman
Greg Bowen
Senator Adelaide Eckardt (Senate President's representative)
Delegate Jim Gilchrist (House Speaker's representative)
Tom McCarthy (Governor's representative)
Susanne Richards
Nathan Volke

Trustees Absent:

Ken Montague
Tom Prevas
Lori Lynch
Toby Lloyd
Diana Conway
Megan Benjamin

Others Present:

John Turgeon, Director, Maryland Environmental Trust (MET)
Wendy Foster, MET staff
Josette Markline, MET staff
Kelly Price, MET staff
Ann Carlson, MET staff
Jon Chapman, MET staff
Michelle Grafton, MET staff
Talley Kovacs, Asst. Attorney General, Office of the Attorney General (OAG)
Roger Medoff, Asst. Attorney General, OAG
Phil Hager, Asst. Secretary for Department of Natural Resources (DNR)

I. Call to Order

Board Chair Mary Burke called the meeting to order at 4:05 pm.

A. Lands Committee item

Request for approval of easement amendment to permit different sized subdivision on MET easement in Queen Anne's County.

This item was moved from the Lands Committee section of the agenda to the beginning of the meeting to accommodate the easement landowner, James Wood, and his daughter Olivia, who attended the meeting via conference call. Mr. Chapman gave a brief overview of the easement property located in Queens Anne's County. Mr. Chapman stated that Mr. Wood is requesting to utilize one of two subdivision rights for minimum sized lots per zoning (2 ac) to be used for a larger 13 acre subdivision, surrounding the historic primary residence on the property. (A third subdivision right allows a 40 to 60 acre parcel to be created). The new 13 acre parcel would be conveyed to Ms. Woods and her husband. Mr. Chapman advised the Board that the Lands Committee recommended approval of the request for the amendment with conditions, to ensure that sufficient conservation value would be gained to justify the amendment. Per MET's amendment policy, an amendment must significantly enhance conservation value, and thus the staff memo suggested possible concessions that would likely be sufficient to justify the amendment and to ensure that no impermissible gain would result. Mr. Woods requested presentation of his request to the Board without agreement to any particular concessions. An open discussion took place on alternative suggestions potentially yielding sufficient conservation gain. After hearing from the landowner and his refusal of any of the recommended concessions, and the extended Board discussion, the matter was tabled, and returned to the Lands Committee for review if any follow-on proposal is received from Mr. Wood.

II. Board Work Plan & Governance Topics

A. Adopting the Minutes

Ms. Burke asked for a motion to approve the minutes of the September 13, 2021, MET Board meeting. *Senator Eckardt motioned to approve the above minutes; Mr. Volke seconded the motion. All voted in favor.*

B. Chair Report

Board Chair Ms. Burke discussed the following topics:

- New MET trustee Nathan Volke was introduced.
- Ms. Burke provided an update on MET's strategic planning process.
- Proposed legislation to address the MET board selection process is being drafted in-house by the Governance and Outreach Committees. Mr. Hoffman stated that a draft is completed and being reviewed internally. It will then be vetted with Senator Eckardt and Delegate Gilchrist before submitting to the General Assembly in the upcoming legislative session.
- The Governance Committee is nearing completion of revisions to the board's bylaws, and has been working with OAG on this effort.
- Forever Maryland is focusing on fundraising and organizational sustainability.
- The annual Maryland Land Conservation Conference will be hosted by Forever Maryland on June 1 and 2, 2022, on Kent Island at the Beach Club.
- Ms. Burke is working with state legislators regarding an heirs property bill to be submitted in the upcoming legislative session. Ms. Burke gave a brief overview of the heirs property issue.

III. Director's Report

MET Director Mr. Turgeon reported to the board on the following matters:

- Ann Carlson recently gave a presentation to landowners in Baltimore County about the MET easement program.
- Mr. Turgeon and Mr. Bowen gave a presentation at a Chesapeake Bay Alliance forum regarding watershed and conservation goals for the southern Maryland region.
- Mr. Turgeon and MET consultant Don. Owen presented at a Heart of Maryland Conservation Alliance partners meeting hosted by Catoctin Land Trust. The presentation focused on a stream and wetland restoration project being proposed on an MET easement.
- Ms. Markline participated in a landowner outreach event in Frederick County regarding stream and wetlands restoration projects on MET easement lands.
- The 2022 Keep Maryland Beautiful grants application period will close on November 15, 2021. Forever Maryland administers the grants program on behalf of MET. Total grant funding available this year is \$320,000.
- MET is partnering with the non-profit Blue Water Baltimore on a street tree planting project in Baltimore City that will help with water quality.
- Mr. Turgeon introduced MET's new Americorp funded staff person, Shannon Taylor. She will assist Wendy Foster with the volunteer easement monitoring program.

IV. Committee Reports

A. Governance Committee

No report. Ms. Burke also gave an overview of the Committee's activity in her Chair report.

B. Finance Committee

Ms. Jitkoff gave an overview of the recent financial statements for the accounts managed by MET's board. There were no questions from the board on these documents. *Ms. Burke motioned for approval of the statements presented; Mr. Volke seconded the motion. All voted in favor.*

Ms. Jitkoff advised the board that Brown Advisory is changing the firm that holds our operating account as custodian. They would like to have Fidelity Investments assume the role that Wells Fargo Clearing Services has held. Fidelity will take over performing all the services for our operating account and streamline the service.

Mr. Turgeon gave an overview of the money that is owed to Land Preservation Trust (LPT) from MET due to co-held easements that were purchased with Rural Legacy program funds in the Piney Run Rural Legacy area in Baltimore County. He and Ann Jones of LPT have worked together to come to a 50/50 split of the total stewardship funds for these easements that was previously paid unevenly into MET's Rural Legacy account and also paid to LPT. Funds due from MET's Rural Legacy account were recommended to be disbursed --\$20,641.93 --to the Land Preservation Trust, which will bring about the 50/50 split of stewardship funds, correcting the previous imbalance, and is consistent with Rural legacy program policy. *A motion was made*

by Ms. Burke to pay \$20,641.93 from MET's Rural Legacy fund account to LPT. Ms. Jitkoff seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

C. Lands Committee

Ms. Carlson informed the board about the interviews for the vacant easement planner position in her program that have taken place, and she is hoping to have a new staff person hired in December 2021. She said that she has drafted an easement manual for Mr. Turgeon's review to help with the on-boarding process for the new planner. Ms. Carlson informed the board of forums she has attended over the last couple of weeks briefing landowners and land trusts on MET's easement program. Ms. Carlson updated the board about two projects the easement program has been working on that should be completed by the end of calendar year 2021.

Mr. Chapman said that the Stewardship program is making great progress with monitoring. He said that they are doing on the ground monitoring and aerial imagery with the Lens program. Mr. Chapman also announced new technology that MET is having built to replace the KOBO easement monitoring tool, which will help with on-the-ground monitoring. He stated that the State's Department of IT (DoIT) and the GIS firm ESRI are working on creating this new tool and the project completion date is projected to be at the end of December.

Mr. Chapman is requesting Board approval for the Harwood properties in Baltimore County, which are adjacent farms owned by the same family members. The information on these properties was provided in the Board packet prior to the meeting for their review. Mr. Chapman gave a brief overview of the parcels and the easement language. Ms. Jitkoff motioned to approve the transfer on the previously encumbered land. Mr. Bowen seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

D. Outreach Committee

No report.

- a. Land Trust Advisory sub-Committee – Mr. Bowen announced that the next MET land trust roundtable is going to be held virtually. Mr. Bowen advised that there is new content on the MET's website. He said that LTAC met last week and had a guest speaker, Ms. Carlson, who gave an update on MET's easement program.
- b. Legislative sub-committee – Mr. Hoffman briefed the members on efforts to draft legislation that would modify the process by which Board members are selected – in response to the bill which passed the House of Delegates last session. He said the Governance Committee and Legislative Subcommittee have been working on this, and have a draft which needs to be reviewed by the full Board, and then our legislative ex-officio members for potential filing.
- c. Grants sub-Committee – No report.
- d. Agricultural sub-Committee – No report.

V. Other Business

Mr. Hager stated that he is happy to be still able to connect with MET. He is ready to assist in any way he can.

VI. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 5:47p.m.