

Maryland Environmental Trust
Board of Trustees Open Meeting Minutes
June 7, 2021

Trustees Present:

Mary Burke, Chair
Gary Burnett, Vice Chair
Julia Jitkoff, Treasurer
Delegate Jim Gilchrist
Lori Lynch
Thomas Lloyd
Megan D'Arcy
Susanne Richards
Gregory Bowen
Mark Hoffman
Megan Benjamin
Senator Addie Eckardt
Tom Prevas
Tom McCarthy
Diana Conway

Trustees Absent:

Ken Montague

Others Present:

John Turgeon, Director, Maryland Environmental Trust
Wendy Foster, staff, Maryland Environmental Trust
Josette Markline, staff, Maryland Environmental Trust
Ann Carlson, staff, Maryland Environmental Trust
Jon Chapman, staff, Maryland Environmental Trust
Michelle Grafton, staff, Maryland Environmental Trust
Talley Kovacs, Asst. Attorney General, Office of the Attorney General (OAG)

I. Call to order

Chair Mary Burke called the meeting to order at just after 4:00 pm via video conference call due to the COVID-19 Pandemic.

II. Board Work Plan & Governance Topics

A. Adopting the Minutes

Ms. Burke asked for a motion to approve the minutes of the May 3, 2021, MET Board meeting. Mr. Hoffman motioned to approve the above minutes; Mr. Lloyd seconded the

motion. All voted in favor.

B. Chair Report

Ms. Burke discussed the following topics with the Board:

- Ms. Burke informed the Board that committee assignments will be circulated to all prior to the September 13th Board meeting.
- Ms. Burke asked for a motion to approve Ms. D’Arcy as the Executive Committee’s Secretary and also Board member Greg Bowen as the Executive Committee’s At-large member. *Ms. Jitkoff motioned to approve both of the above appointments. Mr. Burnett seconded the motion. All voted in favor.*
- Ms. Burke provided a brief overview on the efforts to review and revise MET’s by-laws.
- She reminded Board members that the process for developing MET’s next five-year strategic plan will begin in the fall.
- The annual Maryland Land Conservation Conference is being held in person this July 13th and 14th in Aberdeen and hosted by Forever Maryland. Ms. Burke urged Board members to register and attend the conference.
- Ms. Burke provided several updates on Forever Maryland including: the organization dropped the word “Foundation” from its name; Nick Dilks is the new Chair of the Forever Maryland Board of Directors; and Michelle Boyle, FM’s Vice President of Advancement is working on several fundraising projects, with a goal of raising \$1 million in major gifts by March 2022. Forever Maryland’s Board has also approved the second \$70,000 payment to MET in accordance with the two-year grant agreement between the two organizations, which expires at the end of this month. There was discussion of seeking a new memorandum of understanding between FM and MET, which should address joint fundraising opportunities, collaboration on strategic plans, and on-going administration of the Keep Maryland Beautiful grants program.

III. Director’s Report

MET Director Turgeon reported on the following matters:

- He reviewed his recent memo on MET’s activities for the month of May and provided an update on the State’s ending of its mandatory work from home policy that was set in place in March of 2020 in response to COVID-19. Mr. Turgeon described the process of staff transitions during the month of June. He shared there will be potential for staff to develop a hybrid work schedule and we await further information and updates from the Dept. of Natural Resources.
- Mr. Turgeon shared that 11 candidates were interviewed for the Records and Technology position that is currently vacant. The top three of the eleven candidates were given second interviews. DNR Human Resources is currently processing the paperwork and handling the offer. We do hope to have the new staff person on-board by early July. Mr. Turgeon added that he is still working on the Hiring Freeze Exemption (HFE) for the vacant Easement Planner position.
- Mr. Turgeon asked the Board if they had any questions, comments or concerns on the Fiscal Year 2022 Annual Work Plan shared in last month’s meeting. As there were none, he asked for a motion to approve the FY22 Annual Work Plan. *Mr. Burnett made*

a motion to approve the FY22 Annual Work Plan; Mr. Bowen seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

- Mr. Turgeon further discussed recent efforts to coordinate the launch of the Southern Maryland Conservation Alliance. He described similarities with the previously launched, Western Maryland group, the Heart of Maryland Conservation Alliance. Mr. Turgeon had shared the new Alliance's draft Charter with all board members last week. He asked for any Board input. After brief discussion, Mr. Turgeon asked for a motion to approve. Mr. Hoffman made a motion to approve the draft Charter for the Southern Maryland Conservation Alliance. Ms. Richards seconded the motion. All voted in favor. Ms. Burke thanked both Mr. Turgeon and Mr. Bowen for all their efforts getting this accomplished.

IV. Committee Reports

A. Governance Committee

Committee Chair Mr. Lloyd shared that we will be in touch with all board committee chairs over the next few weeks and working with them to update charters for each individual committee. Mr. Lloyd shared that the Governance Committee expects to have revised by-laws for the Board's review at its September meeting. Mr. Lloyd said he will be reaching out to other board members regarding recruitment to fill current vacancies.

B. Finance Committee

Regarding MET's Board managed accounts, often referred to as MET's "Private Side" accounts, Committee Chair Ms. Jitkoff stated she has sent three quarterly financial documents to board members for their review. She shared that the most noteworthy item is the total value of the Board managed accounts is up from last year despite the grants MET made to Forever Maryland. This is in large part due to a continued strong stock market. She asked if any members had questions or needed further detail on the proposed FY22 Private Side budget. As there were none, she asked for a motion to approve the proposed budget. Mr. Hoffman made a motion to approve the proposed FY22 budget. Mr. Burnett seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

C. Lands Committee

Committee Chair Mr. Burnett deferred to Easement Program Manager, Ann Carlson, to provide an update from the recent Lands Committee meeting. Mrs. Carlson provided the following update:

- MET has reached its FY21 acreage goal of protecting at least 1,000 acres. Thus far, a total of 1,212 acres were protected with four new conservation easements. Two additional new easements may be completed by the end of the fiscal year. The Conservation Easements Program completed a total of seven conservation projects thus far in FY2021 including two amendments of existing MET easements that strengthened restrictions on 213 acres.
- MET has a full pipeline of new projects. Since the last board meeting Mrs. Carlson has touched 22 projects moving each closer to completion.
- The Nature Conservancy invited Ms. Carlson to participate with their Coastal Resilience Easement Template Working Group. This is part of TNC's Resilient Coasts Program. TNC cited MET's leadership in this realm.
- After several conversations with MARBIDCO (Maryland Agricultural & Resource Based-

Industry Development Corporation) regarding the Small Acreage Next Generation farm program and MARBIDCO's interest in having MET hold agricultural easements, it was determined that the Department of Agriculture's Maryland Agriculture Land Preservation Fund (MALPF) is most likely a much better partner. MET will continue to work with MARBIDCO to find ways to collaborate on potential easements where our priorities, processes, and timing fit.

- Ms. Carlson and Ms. Markline are organizing project files and filing recent easement acquisitions.
- Ms. Carlson continues to work on a Conservation Easement Program Manual.

Ms. Burke and Mr. Burnett offered sincere congratulations and thanks to Ms. Carlson for all her efforts and success over the past year. All in attendance echoed the sentiment with "virtual" applause.

Following Ms. Carlson's report, Ms. Conway inquired of Ms. Carlson if she was familiar with Montgomery Countryside Alliance's Labor Link and Land Link programs, and its Re-Leaf program. Ms. Conway provided a brief description of the programs and website information (www.mocoalliance.org) for anyone interested in learning more.

Mr. Chapman provided an update on MET's Stewardship Program activity including an update on easement monitoring. To date, 657 monitoring visit reports have been processed and reviewed. Mr. Chapman spoke of the impact COVID 19 has had on monitoring both solely held and co-held easements. He noted that aerial image comparisons using Upstream Tech's "Lens" system has been very helpful during this pandemic, noting that Stewardship staff is trying to develop a schedule for monitoring that incorporates Lens aerial image reviews and meets *Land Trust Standards and Practices*. He did ask that if any Board members are interested in Lens training to please let him know. Mr. Chapman also stated that one downside of Lens reviews is that there is no landowner contact. Mr. Chapman iterated the importance of easement landowner contact and building good relationships. He stated he is working on an approach for telephone calls to landowners and asked for volunteers to make calls to landowners whose properties are scheduled for Lens aerial image reviews. Mr. Chapman provided further details regarding the FY22 Private Side budget request for developing a web-based easement monitoring tool. He estimated the timeline for development to be one year.

D. Land Trust Advisory Committee

Committee Chair Bowen read highlights from the May 25th Committee meeting including:

- MET has received over 400 easement monitoring reports from 17 local land trusts that co-hold easements with MET.
- Two new cooperative agreements have been signed with local land trust partners in May.
- MET continues communicating monthly with e-newsletters.
- DNR Communications office issued a press release regarding their recently awarded Nature Conservancy Grant to MET and Lower Shore Land Trust for implementing the Lens aerial monitoring system.

E. Outreach Committee

Nothing to report.

V. **Other Business**

Ms. Conway inquired if anyone could provide an update and some insight into the recently passed Forest Conservation legislation. Mr. Hoffman provided in depth detail on the original bill implications, issues and concerns of the early bill. Mr. Hoffman provided details on the ways the newly passed Act addresses those inconsistencies, funding issues etc. Senator Eckardt echoed Mr. Hoffman's comments dealing with the past and current issues with funding the Forest Conservation Act

VI. **Adjourn Meeting**

Meeting adjourned at 5:15 pm.