

Maryland Environmental Trust  
Board of Trustees Meeting Minutes  
December 5, 2016

Maryland Environmental Trust (“MET”) Board of Trustees (“Board”) Chair James W. Constable called the meeting to order at 6:50 p.m. at 100 Community Place, Crownsville, Maryland 21032. Trustees in attendance were James Constable, David Greene, Steve Quarles, Judge Jay Plager, Connie Lieder, Tom McCarthy, Doris Blazek-White, Geb Byron, Gary Burnett, C. Richard D’Amato, Julia Jitkoff, Mary Burke, Del. Dana Stein and Sarah Taylor-Rogers. Assistant Attorney General Kristen Maneval attended. MET staff Bill Leahy, Jon Chapman, John Turgeon, Dave Minges, Michelle Grafton and Tanya Mekeal attended. Kevin Chesley of MD DNR attended.

Mr. Constable welcomed Mr. D’Amato who was attending his first meeting as a trustee. Mr. Constable recognized the recent passing of former employee John Hutson who worked for MET from 1989-2014. He described Mr. Hutson as wonderful, interesting person who was devoted to what he was doing.

I. Board Work Plan and Governance Topics

A. November 7, 2016 Board Meeting Minutes: *Dr. Taylor-Rogers moved approval of the minutes and Judge Plager seconded. MET Board unanimously approved and adopted November 7, 2016 Board Meeting Minutes.*

B. Chairman’s Report:

Mr. Constable updated the Board about DNR leadership’s proposal to Department of Budget and Management.

DNR proposed that (1) over three to five years, functions and staff associated with MET’s land trust assistance and training would spin off to a nonprofit corporation with new board. With approval of State Ethics Commission, MET’s director would be allowed to spend State time on getting the nonprofit up and running and eventually might transition to employment by the nonprofit corporation; and (2) it would create a contractual position (three to five years) to act as a liaison among all of the DNR land units, to include between Land Acquisition and Planning and MET. MET would otherwise remain unchanged. Initial signals from DBM are that the plan is acceptable but MET will know more at the end of December. Mr. Constable pointed out that establishing the nonprofit corporation also entails determining its mission and governance structure. It would need an ambitious fundraising program so that it can be self-reliant. The Board is considering contractual services from Bob Carter who would help design the nonprofit to be attractive to potential donors.

Mr. Constable asked all trustees to donate to MET as grantmakers routinely look for 100% participation and Mr. Leahy reiterated the request, pointing out that a significant part of MET’s ability to do what it does is through private support.

C. Director’s Report:

Mr. Leahy updated the Board on his meetings with Daryl Anthony and Emily Wilson of DNR. MET and DNR's Land Acquisition and Planning Unit already work together and the role of the (contractual) liaison would be to promote and document this while finding new areas of collaboration.

Mr. Leahy then discussed the status of the Strategic Vision Plan. The Strategic Planning Committee met to discuss an updated draft plan. The Committee agreed that the plan should not be a place to outline every step from start to finish but is to define an end goal and required vehicle to get there. The latest draft incorporates our new thinking around the role of the Foundation and its relationship to MET. The third draft of the plan will be sent back to the Strategic Planning Committee for comment. Mr. Constable said that the Board may be asked to vote to approve it via email, which would require unanimity and subsequent ratification.

Several trustees will meet with Bob Carter this week to discuss what services he would provide to MET and at what rate. Mr. Leahy said that Mr. Carter's scope of work would include meeting with 20-30 donor prospects and possible new board members for the nonprofit corporation.

Mr. Leahy referred to his Director's Report. Wendy Stringfellow has been focusing on helping Mr. Leahy implement the annual campaign. In connection with its "Clean and Green" / Keep America Beautiful initiative, Department of Housing and Community Development is interested in providing \$20,000 to MET for grantmaking in urban areas, but would like MET to match this amount with cash or staff time. MET has an intern from University of Maryland who is working on database cleanup and profiles of Keep Maryland Beautiful grantees. Mr. Leahy will present to the Association of Baltimore Area Grantmakers tomorrow. Mr. Constable complimented Mr. Leahy on the breadth of activity described in the Director's Report and said it indicates significant forward momentum for MET.

Mr. Turgeon presented maps and data about the Easement Program. MET is trying to close nine new easements by the end of December for a total of approximately 800 acres this calendar year (as compared to approximately 1100 in calendar year 2015). The average easement size this year is 71 acres, down from 110 acres last year. Projects such as Belmont (closed) and Oldfield Point (pending) consumed significant staff time this year. There may be a decrease in numbers of donated easements, but this doesn't necessarily correspond to a decrease in average acreage per easement. Mr. Leahy pointed out that small easements in urban locations may impact more people than larger ones in rural locations, and that MET's focus on signature landscapes may yield more donated easements. Ms. Burke informed everyone that the Land Trust Alliance 2015 census data is now available for those who would like to see statistics on other land trusts.

Volunteer Coordinator Mr. Minges presented to the Board. He is working to build a stable corps of local volunteers who are recruited / trained locally through an institution of higher learning. He recently partnered with a professor at St. Mary's College to train nine students. Patuxent Tidewater Land Trust, Inc. was the local partner. Students will work in pairs, accompanied by PTLT, to monitor MET/PTLT co-held easements in St. Mary's County. This

initiative cost MET approximately \$1,500. Trustees had positive feedback and encouraged partnering with community colleges.

## II. Committee Reports

### A. Easement & Stewardship Committee:

Mr. Chapman reported that there are no items for consideration this evening.

### B. Finance Committee:

Ms. Blazek-White presented the Statement of Activities, Actual vs. Budget through October 31, 2016 for MET-Administered Funds. MET is under budget on expenses. Regarding line 8620, MET has not yet begun spending the amount set aside for technology software. She next presented the object summary report of State funds through November 29, 2016. MET should come in close to budget.

C. Land Trust Advisory Committee: Ms. Grafton announced that the 2017 land trust conference will be on June 8 in Reisterstown and that the Committee will meet this month to discuss its strategic vision for the year.

Ms. Grafton presented Charm City Land Trusts, Inc.'s request to enter into a Cooperative Agreement with MET, with an effective date of July 2014. This request for a retroactive Cooperative Agreement is the first such request (there are no regulations on MET's issuance of cooperative agreements so MET can use its discretion in evaluating the request). She explained that the group had previously been in a cooperative relationship with MET. Due to the serious illness of the group's president, it fell behind on its personal property tax filings and State Department of Assessments and Taxation forfeited its charter, restoring it to good standing in June 2014. Staff met with Charm City's staff. It operates on a very small budget, does not hold easements and focuses on urban food plots and meditative gardens for City of Baltimore residents. Its work is in furtherance of MET's urban strategic vision. Due to its lack of Cooperative Agreement status with MET, it was ineligible for property tax relief from the City and faces thousands of dollars of back taxes; a retroactive Cooperative Agreement would enable it to apply to the City for relief from taxes from July 2014 through present, though the ultimate decision on eligibility still rests with the City.

*Judge Plager moved approval of entering into a Cooperative Agreement with Charm City Land Trusts, Inc., Mr. McCarthy seconded. During discussion, the Board probed why the retroactivity was justified and the concern that an approval not set precedent for other organizations. The Board approved the motion with the stipulation that it not set precedent for other organizations.*

D. Agriculture Committee: Mr. Greene noted that the Committee met today, joined by new trustees Mr. Burnett and Dr. Taylor-Rogers. The Committee meets every other month and Mr. Greene invited others to attend. The Committee is working with Future Harvest/CASA to link those who are new to farming to available properties. It may prepare an article for the MET newsletter regarding new technology on farms. The Committee plans to meet with Farm Bureau leadership. The Committee is monitoring proposed legislation in Baltimore County Council regarding solar farms; Del. Stein is aware of a proposed bill on a similar topic in the Maryland General Assembly.

E. Governance Committee & Nominating Subcommittee:

Judge Plager updated the Board on today's organizational meeting of the Governance Committee. The Committee reviewed future actions and approved its charter; the latter will be presented to the Board at the February meeting for ratification. Mr. Leahy is working on a 1-2 page summary of the charter. The Committee is working on an orientation manual. The manual will contain important MET documents (policies, bylaws, statutes, biographies of trustees). All trustees should submit short and long versions of their biography to be published on the MET website and in the orientation manual, respectively. Mr. Powell, Ms. Taylor-Rogers, Mr. Burnett and Mr. D'Amato should think about which trustee they would like as a mentor; they will also meet with Mr. Leahy and Judge Plager for a brief introduction and orientation discussion. New trustees will receive a checklist of committee meetings they should attend, staff members they

should meet with, etc., over the course of a year. Unless new trustees have a clear preference for a committee assignment at this time, such assignments will be made after the new trustees have a chance to sample the work of several committees. Judge Plager asked all committee chairs to draft a charter within the next few weeks.

The Governance Committee and Nominating Subcommittee are already beginning to gather names for submission to the Governor, Speaker of the House and President of the Senate for the election of trustees to be held in May. Mr. Leahy asked trustees to keep an eye out for potential trustees and submit ideas to him. The Committee will also focus on officer succession planning.

Judge Plager asked for a sense of the Board on possible election of former MET trustee / Board chair James O'Connell to the status of trustee emeritus. Mr. Byron has spoken to Mr. O'Connell and confirmed that Mr. O'Connell would be unlikely to seek reelection to the MET board (a criterion for election to emeritus status). Anyone with objections should contact Mr. Leahy; otherwise the Governance Committee will present this at the February meeting.

V. Adjourn: The Board voted to adjourn the meeting at 8:33 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



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James W. Constable  
Chair

These minutes were approved/revised by the Board of Trustees on February 6, 2017.

Attachment(s):

*Please note that for most attachments listed and that are considered regular meeting handouts (like Stateside Budget/Finance, MET Administered (non-State) Funds Budget/Finance and Director's reports), a copy is stored with Handouts and MET Board Packets for the meeting at which that information was distributed to the Board. In that case, a duplicate copy will not be attached here.*