

Maryland Environmental Trust
Board of Trustees Open Meeting Minutes
September 12, 2022

Trustees Present:

Gary Burnett, Chair
Greg Bowen, Vice Chair
Mark Hoffman, Vice-Treasurer
Julia Jitkoff, Treasurer
Megan Benjamin
Diana Conway
Delegate Jim Gilchrist (representing the Speaker of the House)
Thomas (Toby) Lloyd
Megan D'Arcy, Secretary
Tom McCarthy (Governor's representative)

Trustees Absent:

Lori Lynch
Nathan Volke
Senator Adelaide Eckardt (Senate President's representative)
Ken Montague

Others Present:

John Turgeon, Director, Maryland Environmental Trust (MET)
Ann Carlson (MET Staff)
Jon Chapman (MET Staff)
Michelle Grafton (MET Staff)
Cindy Hoffmann (MET Staff)
Josette Markline (MET Staff)
Michael Mingus (MET Staff)
Kelly Price (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 4:04 p.m.

II. Minutes of the June 10, 2022 Regular Meeting

Chair Burnett called for a motion to approve the minutes of the regular meeting of the Board of Trustees held on June 10, 2022. Ms. Benjamin motioned to approve the minutes; Mr. Hoffman seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

III. Chair's Report

Chair Burnett welcomed everyone to the meeting. He expressed how important it is to have strong attendance and participation at the meetings. He informed everyone that, during the Strategic Planning sessions, it was noted that some people would like a better understanding of and would like to learn more about the role MET and local land trusts play in land conservation. He stated that, at each meeting, he would like to have a presentation or discussion that would help solidify the Board's understanding of what MET and other land trusts do to protect land.

Chair Burnett referred to the list of MET committees that was sent to each board member ahead of the meeting. He expects everyone to have a certain level of participation with these committees. He asked everyone to review their role for the committee(s) they are currently a part of and determine if there is another area they would like to be involved with. There are currently several Chair and Co-chair vacancies needing to be filled. Chair Burnett invited members to contact himself or Mr. Turgeon to discuss the opportunities within all of the committees. They will also be reaching out to members to begin these conversations.

Chair Burnett reported that he will be attending Forever Maryland's (FM) board meeting on September 13, 2022. One topic of discussion at the meeting is the approval of FM's Strategic Plan. He feels that the proposed plan better defines their role and that it aligns with MET's goals of land conservation. He is hopeful to provide MET's board with a copy of the FM plan in the near future.

Chair Burnett would like to offer more training and information to board members on the actions of MET and the topics surrounding land conservation in general. He asked for trustees to volunteer to assist with this project. He encouraged members to view the webinar series "Building a Better Board" sponsored by Forever Maryland. There are five sections, each one approximately one hour. He indicated that the webinars are very well put together and the

information they provide is very good. He will send a link to access the videos. As new training opportunities arise he will be sure to pass them on.

Vice Chair Mr. Bowen - Presentation on land conservation goals for Maryland.

To leadoff Chair Burnett's goal of providing education to board members on land conservation material, Mr. Bowen shared a Powerpoint presentation entitled "What Lands Does Maryland Need to Conserve?" In the presentation he described various impacts on natural resources surrounding climate change around the globe. He also gave details of what Maryland has done to become a leader in protecting its natural resources. In particular he noted *The Maryland Climate Solutions Now Act of 2022 (SB528)*, which calls for Maryland to reduce greenhouse gasses by 60% (compared to a 2006 baseline) by 2031, and for the Maryland economy to reach net-zero emissions by 2045. Mr. Bowen also noted that Maryland has already almost reached its land conservation goal of the 30 x 30 Initiative. He gave an overview of development sprawl in Maryland and what areas are most affected. Vice Chair Bowen raised the question of what types of lands Maryland should be focused on protecting. Agriculture? Urban Areas? Infrastructure? Wildlife Habitat and Corridors? The presentation ended with Mr. Bowen's opinions on what Maryland needs to maintain its status as a leader in conservation.

IV. Director's Report

Mr. Turgeon referred members to MET's proposed Five Year Strategic Plan that was provided in the meeting packet. He briefly reviewed the planning process and outlined the three main goals:

1. Maintain MET as Maryland's flagship land trust by continuing to pursue best practices in governance, conservation, stewardship and management.
2. Clarify roles and responsibilities with Forever Maryland to ensure complementary services to the land trust community.
3. Encourage easement landowners to pursue enhanced stewardship to contribute to restoring the Chesapeake Bay and to addressing climate change.

Mr. Turgeon feels that this is an effective and realistic strategic plan that builds on MET's core programmatic strengths.

There was some discussion of the entirely online format used for the board and staff planning meetings. It was determined that in-person would have been a better format. An all virtual format was chosen due to the lingering effects of the pandemic. Despite the issues experienced by some meeting participants with the online meeting format, we still managed to produce a good plan.

A question was raised about the need to implement a system to measure board and staff progress of the plan. Chair Burnett commented that members are responsible for knowing what is in the plan. Ms. Jitkoff suggested specific events, such as periodic review meetings.

Mr. Turgeon asked for a motion to approve the Five Year Strategic Plan. Mr. Hoffman motioned to approve the plan; Ms. Benjamin seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Mr. Turgeon summarized the memo he submitted with his Director's Report that highlighted MET's outstanding accomplishments for the recently ended Fiscal Year 2022. He specifically highlighted the increase in the number of easements monitored. He attributed this success to a few key points, namely, the use of LENS (remote monitoring), the increased number of volunteers recruited and the number of visits assigned, and the submission of reports by local land trust partners. He commended the Stewardship program for their hard work. Mr. Turgeon projects that MET will process upwards of 1,000 reports by the end of the new fiscal year 2023. He also called attention to the accomplishments of Easement Program staff for which MET has reached a record high of protecting over 1,400 acres in fiscal year 2022. He credited Ms. Carlson for her efforts in this success as, for half of the year, she was the sole staff member in that program.

Mr. Turgeon also reported that this week he, Ms. Markline and Mr. Mingus will be attending the Land Trust Alliance's Annual Rally in New Orleans, Louisiana. They are excited about the opportunity to collaborate with colleagues in land conservation around the county and to report at the next meeting in November.

V. Committee Reports

A. Governance

Mr. Lloyd noted that in July the Governance Committee received a list of nominees from the Office of the Governor for the purpose of filling one vacant MET trustee position , previously held by Mary Burke. The Governance Committee reviewed all of the nominees and is recommending Keith Colston be elected by the full board as a trustee to serve the remainder of the term.

Mr. Lloyd made a motion for the board to elect Keith Colston r as an MET trustee. The motion was seconded by Mr. Bowen. All voted in favor.

Mr. Lloyd also reported that the revised MET Board Bylaws are being drafted with the help of OAG. The board's committees are in the process of drafting and approving their

respective charters, which will be included in the bylaws. The entire Bylaws package (draft) will be submitted to the full board for review in the next board meeting packet. A vote to adopt the Bylaws is expected to be placed on the agenda of the November 7, 2022 regular meeting,

B. Finance

Ms. Jitkoff pointed to the financial statements regarding MET's board-managed funds, which were emailed to the board prior to the meeting. She noted that the market declined causing a significant decrease of approximately \$427,000 in the value of the funds, which are held with Brown Advisory. At this time MET is not advocating a change in investment allocation. Ms. Jitkoff reported that, as of June 30, 2022 the total value of the funds was \$3,325,607.

Ms. Jitkoff asked for a motion to approve the balance sheet, the profit and loss budget versus actual statement, and the profit and loss by class statement for fiscal year 2022. Mr. Hoffman moved to approve the statements and Ms. Benjamin seconded the motion. All voted in favor of approving the statements.

Ms. Jitkoff informed the board that the Finance Committee has an interest in pursuing electronic bill pay. Mr. Hoffman and MET's bookkeeper, Mona Rudnicki, are researching reputable and safe programs. She reminded the attendees that MET has a policy in place that requires two signatures on checks in the amount of \$2500 or greater. That policy will remain in place with the electronic system.

C. Lands

Mr. Turgeon reported that the Lands Committee met on August 31, 2022. The committee voted on recommending Ms. Benjamin as the new Chair of the Lands Committee to fulfill the vacancy left by Chair Burnett as a result of his new position of Board Chair.

Mr. Turgeon called for a motion to name Megan Benjamin as Chair of the Lands Committee. Mr. Gilchrist approved the nomination; Mr. Hoffman seconded. All voted in favor.

1) Consent Agenda

Mr. Turgeon called attention to the Consent Agenda which outlines five new conservation easement projects and one stewardship project (amendment request). The Committee reviewed these projects at the August 31st meeting and recommended them to the Board for approval.

- a. Proposed 91 +/- ac conservation easement in Kent County with Eastern Shore Land Conservancy from Green Point Farms L.L.C.
- b. Proposed 77.7 +/- ac conservation easement in Kent County with Eastern Shore Land Conservancy from Green Point Farms L.L.C.
- c. Proposed 205.74 +/- ac conservation easement in Kent County with Eastern Shore Land Conservancy from Green Point Farms L.L.C.
- d. Proposed 13.5 +/- ac conservation easement in Howard County from William Sapp, Jr. and Lee Hamilton
- e. Proposed 60 +/- ac conservation easement in Caroline County from Estate of Leland T. Short Jr.
- f. Request to amend existing MET easement in Baltimore County (MET file# 0978HAC08.BACO)

Mr. Turgeon called for a motion for approval of the consent agenda as presented. Mr. Bowen motioned to approve; Mr. McCarthy seconded. All voted in favor.

Mr. Chapman echoed Mr. Turgeon, noting that the Stewardship program had a banner year, making great strides in all areas. He attributes this success to the use of the LENS system, the dedication of staff and volunteers, the improvement of processes such as providing a more efficient means for local land trusts to provide easement monitoring reports, and continuing to provide local land trusts with a monetary incentive for report submission. He indicated, however, that only about half of our local land trust partners are monitoring on an annual basis. Staff is working with the Office of the Attorney General to come up with a plan to rectify this. One strategy is to assist low capacity land trusts with assigning the stewardship responsibilities to MET or another local land trust in the area.

Mr. Chapman discussed the need for a regular full-time Volunteer Coordinator. For the past couple of years MET relied on temporary employees assigned through Volunteer Maryland's Americorps program. The plan was to follow that route again. However, there were not enough candidates interested. This solidifies the need for a full-time position. He stated that Mr. Turgeon has been working with the Department of Natural Resources and the Department of Budget and Management to promote this need.

Ms. Carlson reported on the following Easement Program activities:

- 1) One August 31, 2022 the Board of Public Works approved the Riekhoff easement. The easement was recorded in the land records on September 2, 2022. This project protects 144 acres of forest in St. Mary's County along the Potomac River.
- 2) The Masonville Cove easement is not yet recorded – still in the Baltimore City Clerk's office who reports a 8 to 12 week backlog in processing items for recordation. Mr. Mingus is checking in regularly for status updates.
- 3) There are 26 active projects being managed. In addition, staff continue to field calls and make site visits on other potential projects. Many hours were spent over the past few months drafting conservation easements.
- 4) Last week MET staff and the Office of Attorney General met to review MET's model conservation easement document. These meetings are held twice a year to review the model easement in light of any changes in the IRS/legal landscape as well any other items that arise. This effort is to ensure that the easement document is always up to date. Any recommendations for significant changes to the model that come from these meetings will be brought through the Lands Committee for vetting and then to the Board for approval.

D. Land Trust Advisory Committee

Mr. Bowen reported that, since the last board meeting, the committee met on June 28th and July 26th. The following matters were among the topics on the agenda:

- updating the committee's charter
- providing assistance with monitoring to the Stewardship Program
- planning a joint workshop with Forever Maryland on succession planning for land trusts scheduled for November 30, 2022
- updating MET's Stewardship Program web pages

Mr. Bowen also noted that Ms. Grafton and Mr. Turgeon have been collaborating with members of the Southern Maryland Conservation Alliance. More information will be forthcoming about those discussions.

Mr. Bowen explained a recent scenario where a very small land trust went through staffing changes and needed assistance in re-establishing themselves. He commended Ms. Grafton on her efforts and her expertise in getting them back up to speed. Mr. Turgeon remarked that Ms. Grafton has set up a more efficient system for requesting and receiving local land trusts' monitoring reports, which has proven very effective this year. He also mentioned that the cooperative agreement has been modified to require land trusts to conduct annual monitoring visits.

VI. Other Business

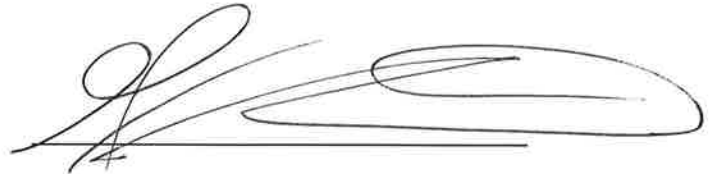
Chair Burnett again emphasized the importance of participation at the meetings and the committees. He thanked those that attended the meeting today. The next meeting is scheduled for November 7, 2022.

VII. Adjourn Meeting

Chair Burnett motioned to adjourn the meeting; Mr. Bowen approved and Ms. Jitkoff seconded the motion. All voted in favor of adjourning the meeting.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:36 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of several loops and a long horizontal stroke, positioned above a solid horizontal line.

Gary Burnett, MET Board Chair

These minutes from the September 12, 2022, regular MET Board meeting were approved/revised by the Board of Trustees on November 7, 2022.

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.