

Montgomery County Forest Conservancy District Board



Minutes for the Montgomery County Forest Conservancy District Board Meeting – 8 April 2025

This meeting was called to order by Board Chairman Jim Harris at 1:39 PM.

The minutes pertaining to the last meeting that occurred on 14 January 2025 were approved with minor corrections at 1:43 PM.

Chair's Report (1:43 PM)

Board Chairman Jim Harris reported that he, Board Member Lee Derby, and Assistant Board Chairman Dan Landry have interviewed ninth grader Gideon Ott as part of his application to attend the upcoming session of the Natural Resources Career Camp (NRCC). Jim mentioned that Gideon was a strong candidate, and Jim thanked Dan for his time and effort to organize the interview. Jim noted that there had been some issue with disbursing funding to grant applicants, however he and Board Treasurer Joli McCathran are working together to resolve the problem.

Board Chairman passed around an email to all attending board members that summarized recent updates for the State of Maryland's Department of Natural Resources 2025 legislative session. The email cited links to the status of three bills pertaining to pesticide and pest control, the Chesapeake Bay Legacy Act, and the establishment of an off-road vehicle oversight board. Jim then passed around an article written by the AP that summarized the U.S. Forest Service's decision to terminate a \$75 million grant to the Arbor Day Foundation. The grant money would have been used to fund tree planting in underserved and equity areas. Guest Attendee Jack Pond added that grant funding has been reduced to plant street trees in Montgomery County. Jim finally passed around a poster for NRCC to all attending board members, and he mentioned that the board will soon interview another student named Grace Chai to attend this year's session of the camp.

Treasurer's Report (1:57 PM)

Treasurer Joli McCathran was not present for this meeting; however, she disclosed the Treasurer's Report in an email correspondence with Board Chairman Jim Harris and Board Secretary Chris Barger. Account activity since the prior board meeting that occurred on 11 March 2025 included credits and debits corresponding to funding disbursed to grant applicants (Nature Forward, St. Bartholomew's Church, and Friends of Seneca Creek & Patuxent River State Parks). All credits and debits were equivalent in magnitude, however, and so the net account balance has not changed since the prior board meeting. The former and current combined account balance is \$7,582.12. The Treasurer's Report was approved by all board members at 2:00PM.

Legislative Report (2:00 PM)

No legislative report was given at this meeting, however Chairman Jim Harris mentioned some details regarding the State of Maryland's Department of Natural Resources 2025 legislative session during the Chair's Report (see above).

DNR Report (2:00 PM)

No DNR report was given at this meeting.

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New Business (2:01 PM)

At 2:01 PM, Board Member Vince Fillah mentioned that he had been out measuring County Champion Trees trees with Board Treasurer Joli McCathran and Board Members Carole Bergmann and Joe Howard. These included new measurements and ten-year re-measurements. Vince mentioned that Joli had met with the new director of the National Big Tree Program at the University of Tennessee to further coordinate big tree program details.

At 2:05 PM, Board Member Natasha Shangold mentioned that she had been conducting biannual maintenance inspections for the City of Rockville, and that she will encourage the city's new Forest Conservation Planner to attend a future board meeting.

At 2:05 PM, Board Member Paula Perez mentioned that she had been focusing on the city's Arbor Day seedling giveaway. The city's Arbor Day celebration and seedling will be held at Twinbrook Elementary School in Rockville, Maryland 20851 on Thursday, 10 April 2025.

At 2:08 PM, Guest Attendee Jack Pond mentioned details regarding Montgomery County Department of Transportation's seedling giveaway at Greenfest. Jack noted that the county will be giving away seedlings including yellow buckeye, American hornbeam, and cranberry bush viburnum. Jack added that Harry Plunkett with Bartlett Tree Experts will be contributing seedlings of American hazelnut, chokecherry, and arrowwood viburnum.

At 2:14 PM, Board Secretary Chris Barger mentioned that Sandy Spring Bank, the board's financial institution, will be merging with Atlantic Union Bank. There will be no expected changes to business operations otherwise. Chris thanked the board members for their participation in judging for the three best submissions for this year's Fifth Grade Arbor Day Poster Contest, organized by the State of Maryland Department of Natural Resources Forest Service.

At 2:18 PM Board Member Lee Derby mentioned that he had been participating in a tree and shrub planting at Twinbrook Elementary School in Rockville, Maryland 20851. Lee mentioned that an Earth Day celebration will be held at Rolling Terrace Elementary School in Takoma Park, Maryland 20912 on 22 April 2025. Lee also mentioned that the GreenKids grant-funded educational outreach partnership with Nature Forward will be having a 20-year anniversary celebration. Lee added that the A. Mario Loiderman Middle School of Silver Spring, Maryland 20906 will be holding an event at its one-acre urban farm for Arbor Day on 26 April 2025.

At 2:21 PM, Board Member Andrés Ovalle mentioned that he is preparing for an Arbor Day celebration to celebrate ten years of the Tree Montgomery shade tree planting program. Andrés mentioned that there is much grant funding that the program can use, and that he and other program managers are working to decide how to best use the funding during the allotted funding period. Andrés added that he is also getting ready for Greenfest, and he emphasized his excitement about the county's champion tree program in general.

At 2:26 PM, Board Member Norman King III remarked on concern for funding to support arborists planting trees. He mentioned that so far, he has not experienced any shortage of funding to plant trees at Arlington National Cemetery.

Chairman Jim Harris adjourned this meeting at 2:30 PM.

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The next meeting is scheduled for Tuesday, 13 May 2025 at 1:30 PM. The meeting will be located at the Lathrop E. Smith Environmental Education Center's library at 5110 Meadowside Lane in Rockville, MD 20855.

Attendance:

Jim Harris, Board Chairman
Chris Barger, Board Secretary
Lee Derby, Board Member
Vince Fillah, Board Member
Norman King III, Board Member
Andrés Ovalle, Board Member
Paula Perez, Board Member
Jack Pond, Guest
Natasha Shangold, Board Member