

WASHINGTON COUNTY FORESTRY BOARD
MEETING MINUTES
February 4, 2026

Present: Greg Bartles, Mary Jo Bartles, Judy Niedzielski, Don Grove, Linda Grove, Doug Inkley, and Aaron Cook. Guests: Anna Twigg, Dave Hayes

Updates from Regional Forestry Board Secretary, Anna Twigg – Anna provided updates on the incorporation of County Boards as 501c3 Chapters under Maryland Forestry Foundation and the structure of the Western Region Forestry Board, which will have 8 appointed members. The County Boards will have a more informal application for membership via MFF. Anna pointed out that there are a lot of moving parts, but the goal is to have the transition occur on 3/31, with an April Regional Board Meeting. These meetings are likely to be virtual, some may be in person depending upon the wishes of those appointed to the board. A forestry board handbook is nearly completed. Anna remains available to answer questions and support the local boards. The spring statewide forestry board meeting will be at Tawes on March 26.

Treasury – Aaron communicated with Dawn Balinski regarding the transition and migrating the treasury to a new treasurer. Several options were discussed, but at this time it seems best to migrate to a new bank, if needed, and treasurer simultaneously with the transition of forestry board accounts to the MFF EIN. It seems the best first step is to add the new treasurer as a signer on the existing account. When things are ready, Nicole will provide trade names for each board under the MFF EIN. This will be used with the chapter agreement to open the new account as part of the MFF.

Greg Bartles offered to serve as treasurer. Aaron made a motion and the board voted, and unanimously agreed that Greg would become Treasurer effective immediately. Aaron will work with Greg to add him to the First United Account.

The board received pass through grant funding from MUCFC/ MDOT grants for community tree planting projects. Funds will need to be allocated to the various recipients.

Chair – Judy announced that she will be stepping back from the role of Chair. She will remain on the forestry board. There was discussion surrounding the duties/ job description of Chair after the transition. Anna will share an email with the board that highlights these duties, but they include serving as an appointed member on the regional board. Aaron mentioned that it may be helpful to encourage board members to serve in the role if there are defined terms, possibly adding a chair-elect to give members the chance to shadow into the role, both at the local and regional level. Terms may be identified in the regional board description. Aaron made a motion to have Judy's role as chair end effective 3/31 with the transition, the board will vote in a new chair at the March meeting.

30th Annual Flower & Garden Show (3/14-15) – Aaron has ordered tree seedlings to be delivered before the event, same species as last year. Aaron also compiled firewise and smokey bear trinkets to hand out, including the popular smokey posters. The display should be good to go, Aaron will print handouts, if needed. Greg has some sort of easel that may make handing out the seedlings a little tidier. If there is time, Aaron will prepackage some of the seedlings into individual bags. The board went through planning the staffing of the event. Aaron and Greg will meet at HCC on Friday, March 13th at 1pm to set up the display. Judy will take the Saturday morning slot, and Anna offered to help. Doug offered to take the Saturday PM slot, Aaron will see if there is anyone from the Forest Service who may want to join him. Don and Linda will take the Sunday morning slot, and Bob Schwartz will be speaking and agreed to help with the display. Aaron and Mary Jo will take the Sunday PM slot, and Greg will come to help tear down the display. This is a popular event, and HCC always looks forward to having us. Thanks for everyone's help with this event.

Big Tree – Doug outlined that there are 8 trees to be remeasured (4 private, 4 public). Aaron will need to visit one of the private properties to conduct an inspection for the landowner's forest management plan and can remeasure that tree while on the property. Doug, Don, and Linda know one of the other landowners. Doug will contact the remaining two private trees.

Doug informed the board that the statewide big tree committee is piloting a multi-stemmed big tree category with new measurement procedures. Washington County has not received nominations under this new category. Doug mentioned it will accommodate more people, there was discussion about bandwidth to add more trees to the volunteer measuring group. Doug added that he may have volunteered to stand up an ad-hoc committee to assess standardizing the measurement and recording of non-native trees. Aaron mentioned that it may be difficult, but that filtering out non-native invasive trees should be considered for the optics of things. Aaron mentioned that IPAC recently published a new list of plants prohibited from nursery sale in Maryland, with watch-list species that are also known bad actors; at the very least any plants on these lists should likely not be considered for recognition as big trees. Doug asked the board to relay any comments to him so he can elevate them to the BTC. Lastly, Doug mentioned there are some expenditures associated with the big tree program (mailing certificates, software, hardware, and mileage reimbursements). Some boards donate to the program, the program has a small budget for these expenses.

Invasive Plants Collaborative Workshop with ACWA – Aaron was contacted by ACWA after they saw the announcement for an invasive plants workshop, hosted by the Frederick board. They wanted to see if the Washington board was interested in partnering on a similar workshop. They received a large grant specific to tree planting and restoration in the Antietam watershed. Aaron thought it would be good to partner with them, the workload would be more balanced, and both groups would benefit from the exposure/ bring their strong suits to the agenda. If it can be kept simple, ACWA could explain how they are using the grant to support landowners, and the board could serve as subject matter experts on invasive plants and their control. Discussion about venues and timing. Aaron asked for board approval to continue conversations with ACWA, unanimous approval.

Other Business –Aaron brought up that MD Arbor Day is the first Wednesday in April, and that Easter is early this year. This means WCPS will be on spring break during Arbor Day. Aaron communicated with WCPS and they suggested that if they can have the trees delivered earlier, there will be time to get them to the students before spring break. The nursery was contacted, and they suggested the trees could be picked up earlier. Aaron will go down to get them and asked to schedule a packaging the week of March 23. The board voted to meet at the Grove Tree Farm on March 24th at noon to package the trees.

Don and Linda shared that UMD Extension Forester, Daniel Pratson, has been working with them to schedule a Tree Farm tour on their property in late April. All are invited; they will update with more information as they get it.

There being no other business, the meeting adjourned at 3:45 PM.

The next business meeting will be 2PM, March 4, 2026.