
Maryland Environmental Trust
Board of Trustees Open Meeting Minutes
February 5, 2024

Trustees Present:

Gary Burnett, Chair
Greg Bowen, Vice Chair
Mark Hoffman, Treasurer
Thomas (Toby) Lloyd
Megan Benjamin
Diana Conway
Susanne Richards
Tom Prevas
Lori Lynch
Craig Highfield
Keith Colston
Nathan Volke
Julia King

Trustees Absent:

Hilary Bell (representing the Governor of Maryland who is an ex-officio trustee)
Megan D'Arcy

Others Present:

John Turgeon, Director, Maryland Environmental Trust (MET Staff)
Ann Carlson (MET Staff)
Michelle Grafton (MET Staff)
Josette Markline (MET Staff)
Kelly Price (MET Staff)
Wendy Foster (MET Staff)
Cindy Hoffmann (MET Staff)
Kevin Bull (MET Staff)
Matt Ludington (MET Staff)
Justyn Pinkney (MET Staff)
Talley Kovacs, Assistant Attorney General (Office of Attorney General)

I. Call to Order

Chair Burnett called the regular meeting of the MET Board of Trustees to order at 4:01 p.m.

II. Minutes of the November 6, 2023, Regular Meeting

Chair Burnett made a motion to approve the minutes of the regular meeting of the Board of Trustees held on November 6, 2023. Mr. Lloyd motioned to approve the minutes, Mr. Hoffman seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

III. Board Chair's Report

Chair Burnett made a motion to approve the appointment of Andrew Szwak, Mid -Atlantic Program Manager, Land Trust Alliance, to MET's Advisory Council. Mr. Colston approved the motion; Mr. Hoffman seconded. All were in favor.

Ms. Kelly Dudek from the organization Cultivate and Craft gave a presentation on value-added agriculture. They cultivate an environment where value-added agriculture producers, startups, operators and growers innovate and thrive through education and guidance, unity and advocacy. Ms. Dudek can be reached at kelly@cultivateandcraft.com or 410-830-9741 for more information.

Chair Burnett gave a summary of the Keep Maryland Beautiful grants program documents provided in the Board Packet prior to the meeting. All the proposed grant awards have been reviewed by a technical review committee organized by Chesapeake Bay Trust, which administers the grant application and award process for MET.

Applicant Pool:

- In FY2024, KMB received 56 grant applications requesting \$471,183
- 35 Community Stewardship applications totaling \$177,740
- 15 Janice Hollmann applications totaling \$128,475
- 3 Aileen Hughes applications totaling \$15,000
- 3 Tree Planting on Agricultural Land applications totaling \$149,968

Technical Review Committee results:

- In FY 2024, 19 grants, totaling \$236,276 are proposed to be awarded

- 1 Aileen Hughes award totaling \$5,000
- 8 Community Stewardship totaling \$34,439
- 7 Janice Hollmann totaling \$46,869
- 3 Tree Planting on Agricultural Land totaling \$149,968

Mr. Bowen excused himself from the meeting prior to the vote.

Chair Burnett called for a motion to accept the proposal of grant recipients and funds to be distributed for the Aileen Hughes, Community Stewardship and Janice Hollmann grants. Mr. Lloyd moved the motion; seconded by Mr. Hoffman. All voted in favor.

Mr. Bowen returned to the meeting.

The technical review committee made great efforts this year to provide awardees with the full amount of funds requested. The awardees will be publicly announced on March 20, 2024.

IV. Director's Report

Mr. Turgeon referred to the Maryland the Beautiful Act (Senate Bill 470), which Governor Moore signed into law in May of 2023. He discussed the Smart Growth Subcabinet which has an objective to create and revitalize sustainable communities across the state. The subcabinet has been tasked with designing a plan, to be published by July 1, 2024, that outlines how the state will meet the ambitious land conservation goals defined in the Act. Mr. Turgeon noted that he is part of a workgroup whose goal is to develop the plan. A draft plan will be provided to MET Board Leaders in the coming weeks with the intention of the Board to approve MET's portion of the plan at the regular meeting on May 6, 2024.

Mr. Turgeon pointed to the statistics in the Director's Report in reference to Maryland's land conservation goals.

Mr. Turgeon gave an overview of the Southern Maryland Conservation Alliance (SMCA), of which MET is a member, and their recent success in protecting a 537 acre, entirely forested, tract of land. This land had the potential of being developed into a 500+ unit residential area. The land was purchased by M-NCPPC Prince George's County Parks and Recreation. The park will be called Charles Branch Stream Valley Park and will be managed by Prince George's County Parks as a conservation park. Mr. Turgeon noted that there is potential for an adjacent (approximately 150 acre) property to be

purchased. Mr. Turgeon and Mr. Bowen are founding members of the SMCA organization.

V. Committee Reports

A. Lands

Ms. Benjamin reported that the Lands Committee met on January 24, 2024.

Consent Agenda

Actions on existing MET easements.

Request to approve establishing a forest buffer mitigation bank on an existing easement located at 2234 Stringtown Road, Sparks, Baltimore County.
(MET Easement file# 0472KNO98.BACO)

Ms. Benjamin made a motion to move the Consent Agenda for approval. Mr. Bowen moved to approve; Mr. Burnett seconded. All voted in favor.

Ms. Carlson introduced Matt Ludington; a Conservation Easement Planner recently hired by MET. Mr. Ludington will focus on acquiring new conservation easements in the Coastal Zone counties of Maryland.

Ms. Carlson reported that thus far in FY2024 MET has completed 8 conservation easements, adding 961.918 to its portfolio.

Since the November Board meeting, MET has recorded four conservation easements, protecting 248.07 acres:

- West easement (106.55 ac) in Kent County co-held with ESLC
- Green Point Farms easement (75.82 ac) in Kent County co-held with ESLC.
- Bowden easement (32.36 acres) in Baltimore County
- Carter easement (33.44 acres) in Caroline County.

Ms. Carlson reported that there are 6 upcoming site visits for potential new projects.

Ms. Markline introduced Kevin Bull and Laural Paterini, two new Easement Stewardship Specialists with MET. Mr. Bull gave a brief overview of his background.

Ms. Markline noted that the Stewardship team has been working toward reducing their backlog of meeting new/successor easement landowners. They have also been reviewing and following up on potential easement violations.

B. Land Trust Outreach

Ms. Grafton reported that MET received a Cooperative Agreement request from The Nature Conservancy. Ms. Grafton pointed out the standard agreement language was modified to allow either organization to terminate the Agreement. The Agreement will be in effect for a period of two years.

Ms. Grafton asked for a motion to move the request to approve signing The Nature Conservancy's Cooperative Agreement. Mr. Bowen moved the motion; Mr. Burnett seconded. All voted in favor to approve the Agreement.

Ms. Grafton stated that thus far in FY 2024 five land trusts have either renewed or signed new Cooperative Agreements (The Nature Conservancy noted above will make the sixth). She noted that MET is presently working with three organizations to renew their Agreements.

Ms. Grafton reported that MET has received more than 300 monitoring reports during the second half of CY2023 from local land trust partners. The reports are currently being reviewed and processed by MET staff.

Ms. Grafton shared that the MD Department of Planning, MD Department of Natural Resources and MET have been working on a project to collect and map the most comprehensive local land trust and NGO land conservation data. The data will feed into the Maryland Protected Lands Dashboard <https://maryland.maps.arcgis.com/apps/dashboards/0f3ffd3350b24b17bd3b8e1705af3df5>, MERLIN Online <https://dnr.maryland.gov/pages/Merlin.aspx>, and several other mapping applications to assist with the work being done in an effort to obtain the State's 30 x 30 and 40 x 40 land conservation goals. The three organizations will be hosting a workshop on March 1, 2024, to discuss the goals of the project and to assist non-profit partners in understanding what data is needed from them and how they can provide that data.

Ms. Grafton announced that the 2023 Stewardship Newsletter was recently distributed. Paper copies of the newsletter were mailed to MET easement landowners while a digital version is available to the public. The newsletter has been posted on the MET website. chrome-extension://efaidnbmnnnibpcajpcglclefindmkaj/https://dnr.maryland.gov/met/Documents/PDFs/2023-Stewardship-Newsletter_online.pdf

C. Governance

Mr. Lloyd welcomed and introduced Ms. Julia King, the newest Trustee to the MET Board.

Mr. Lloyd reported that Crystal Chissell was recently recommended by the Speaker of the Maryland House of Delegates for one of the vacant MET trustee positions. Ms. Chissell has a background in nonprofit organizations and has government-related environmental experience.

Mr. Lloyd reminded the Trustees that the annual financial disclosures for Maryland State Ethics Commission are due April 30th. Trustees can contact John Turgeon or Kelly Price with questions.

D. Finance

Mr. Hoffman referred to the financial statements (for MET's board-managed gift funds) provided to the Trustees prior to the meeting and gave an overview of MET's financial status as of the end of December 2023. Mr. Hoffman noted that he also provided a copy of MET's Profit and Loss Budget vs. Actual document. Further he provided MET's section in the Department of Natural Resources' Budget Request, which was submitted to the General Assembly. He noted that the request includes an allowance for fulfilling a long-term contractual position.

Mr. Hoffman reported that the funds collected from the state Transfer Tax are expected to be substantially lower than in years past. This is due to under attainment in the past two fiscal years and low anticipated revenue in the next fiscal year.

Mr. Hoffman asked for a motion to accept the financial statements as provided. Mr. Bowen moved the motion; Mr. Colston seconded. All voted in favor.

VI. Other Business

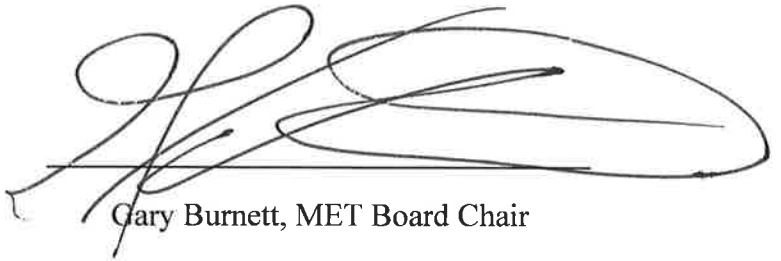
Mr. Turgeon stated that some Trustee's first terms are coming to an end. He encouraged Trustees to reach out to Mr. Lloyd to indicate interest in remaining on the Board.

VII. Adjourn Meeting

Chair Burnett made a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Colston moved to adjourn; Mr. Volke seconded. All voted in favor.

The meeting was adjourned at 5:18 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of several loops and a long horizontal stroke, positioned above the name Gary Burnett.

Gary Burnett, MET Board Chair

These minutes from the February 5, 2024 regular MET Board meeting were approved by the Board of Trustees on May 6, 2024.

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.