

Maryland Environmental Trust  
Board of Trustees Open Meeting Minutes  
May 6, 2024

**Trustees Present:**

Gary Burnett, Chair  
Greg Bowen, Vice Chair  
Mark Hoffman, Treasurer  
Megan D'Arcy, Secretary  
Thomas (Toby) Lloyd  
Megan Benjamin  
Diana Conway  
Tom Prevas  
Lori Lynch  
Craig Highfield  
Keith Colston  
Nathan Volke  
Hillary Bell (representing the Governor of Maryland who is an ex-officio trustee)  
Julia King  
Crystal Chissell

**Trustees Absent:**

Susanne Richards  
Delegate Natalie Ziegler (representing the Speaker of the Maryland House of Delegates who is an ex-officio trustee)

**Others Present:**

John Turgeon, Director, Maryland Environmental Trust (MET Staff)  
Ann Carlson (MET Staff)  
Josette Markline (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)  
Charlie Perry, Chief of Staff, Office of Delegate Natalie Ziegler  
One person from the public attended in person

**I. Call to Order**

Chair Burnett called the regular meeting of the MET Board of Trustees to order at 4:02 p.m.

**II. Minutes of the February 5, 2024 Regular Meeting**

**Chair Burnett asked for a motion to approve the minutes of the regular meeting of the Board of Trustees held on February 5, 2024. Mr. Lloyd motioned to approve the minutes; Mr. Bowen seconded the motion. All voted in favor.**

**III. Board Chair's Report**

Dianna Rose, Senior Natural Resources Specialist at Montgomery County Parks gave a presentation on meadow restoration and management procedures, evaluation for success, and applicable resources for stewardship reference. At the end of the presentation Ms. Rose concluded by stating that there are close to 2,000 acres of meadow under management in Montgomery County. For more information on the Montgomery Parks meadow restoration program Ms. Rose can be reached at 301-962-1346 or at [Dianna.Loesch@MontgomeryParks.org](mailto:Dianna.Loesch@MontgomeryParks.org).

**IV. Director's Report**

Mr. Turgeon gave an update on the plan being designed by the Smart Growth Subcabinet (defined in the Maryland the Beautiful Act) which outlines how the state will meet the ambitious land conservation goals defined in the Act. A draft of the plan has been reviewed by the Secretaries of Planning, Natural Resources, and Agriculture, as well as MET's board chair and vice-chair. An updated draft will be submitted to Governor Moore for his review. The Smart Growth Subcabinet seeks to approve a final draft of the plan at their June meeting ahead of the July 1st deadline. Mr. Turgeon gave a summary of the number of acres protected in Maryland as of the end of 2023. He noted that Maryland has already met the 30 x 30 goal, which is indicated in the draft plan. He further noted that the plan indicates that if the level of land conservation activity in Maryland over the past five years is sustained, the state will reach 93% of the goal to conserve 40% of land in Maryland by 2040.

Mr. Turgeon discussed some of the ongoing short-term, and long-term recommendations in the draft plan with relevance to MET. A detailed outline can be found in the Director's report that was distributed prior to the meeting.

Mr. Bowen stated that the plan was comprehensive and was close to the goal. He feels that the state will strive to achieve international standards of 50% of land conserved in

Maryland beyond the 2040 goal. Mr. Burnett expressed that he would like to see new and innovative ways of conserving land to not only meet Maryland's land conservation goals, but to surpass them. Ms. Bell countered that the people involved in drafting the plan will continue to look at ways to excel, for example, the state recently expanded the CREP program, which will be highlighted in the plan. Mr. Turgeon said that the plan also stresses the need for stewardship funding.

Mr. Turgeon reported that the Keep Maryland Beautiful grants were disbursed to recipients on March 20, 2024. A breakdown of grant type distributions is outlined in the Director's report. Mr. Turgeon indicated that MET will collaborate with the Chesapeake Bay Trust (CBT) to streamline the application process based on feedback from applicants and to begin drafting the RFP for the FY2025 grants round. This is the first year CBT managed the program.

Mr. Turgeon stated that MET is close to securing funding through the state budget to pay for MET's database product, Locate. The application uses Salesforce cloud-based software and is designed for land conservation management. Historically the database has been funded by board-administered funds.

Mr. Turgeon reported that MET has been assisting the MD Forest Service as a part of the state's goal to plant 5 million trees on public and privately owned lands. Through various outreach efforts MET's easement landowners are provided with the resources to pursue opportunities to conduct tree planting on easement properties. He stated that MET and the Forest Service recently partnered with Catoctin Land Trust to host a landowner outreach event where they met with around 40 attendees to discuss planting opportunities. It was noted that MET Trustee Craig Highfield was present at the event presenting on behalf of Alliance for the Chesapeake Bay where he works.

Mr. Highfield gave an overview of the 5 Million Tree Program, where the trees come from, and how the projects are distributed throughout the state. He stated that this spring more than 360 acres of trees were planted through the Alliance's Healthy Forest Healthy Waters program and the demand is continuing to grow.

Mr. Turgeon gave an overview of a panel discussion that he participated in for LEAD Maryland Class XIII. He reported that there are 23 LEAD fellows participating in the program. Mr. Turgeon mentioned that MET Trustee Megan D'Arcy is a previous graduate of the program.

Mr. Turgeon stated that the 31st Annual Maryland Land Conservation Conference hosted by Forever Maryland will take place on September 4-5 at the Crowne Plaza hotel in

Annapolis (same location as last year). More information and registration can be found at <https://forevermaryland.org/2024-mlccannapolis>. Once again Mr. Turgeon and Ms. Grafton are participants of the conference planning committee. MET is a recurring Founding Sponsor of the Conference.

Mr. Turgeon reported that MET staff is working on finalizing the FY2025 Annual Work Plan and corresponding budget from the MET board-administered funds. It is anticipated that both documents will be submitted to the board for review at their June 3rd regular meeting.

## V. **Committee Reports**

### A. **Lands**

Ms. Benjamin reported that she recently attended the Smart Growth Summit in Annapolis and noted that MET Trustee Lori Lynch was a panelist in the Agriculture Environment and Natural Resources breakout session. She mentioned that several local land trust partners were in attendance and also noted that MET was mentioned several times throughout the event.

Ms. Benjamin stated that the Lands Committee met on April 24, 2024.

#### Consent agenda - Committee recommendations to approve new conservation easements to MET.

- a. 43.23 +/- ac in Queen Anne's County with Eastern Shore Land Conservancy from Jeff and Beth Horstman
- b. 103.459 +/- ac in Worcester County from Lower Shore Land Trust
- c. 42.06 acres in Cecil County with Cecil Land Trust from Kimberly Loman
- d. 217.483 in Queen Anne's and Caroline Counties from Katherine Merrick

#### **Ms. Benjamin made a motion to move the Consent Agenda for approval. Mr. Burnett seconded the motion. All voted in favor.**

Ms. Carlson stated that she and Easement Planner Matt Ludington have visited 12 potential easement properties in the past few months, 4 of which are on the consent agenda. She reported that MET has surpassed its goal of conserving 1,000 acres in FY2024 by 83 acres.

Ms. Markline reported that after approximately 3 years of collaboration between MET and Maryland’s Department of Information Technology (DoIT), the field monitoring application has successfully and officially been launched. Staff has been utilizing the application and have already seen positive results in capturing more data than in previous years. DoIt has invited MET Stewardship Program staff to return as a speaker at the Towson State University GIS conference in August to present on the application.

Ms. Markline reported on the in-person roundtable event hosted by MET held on April 30th. 21 people from various organizations with interest in land conservation were in attendance. It was an informal setting where topics of stewardship challenges and successes among land conservation groups were discussed. The idea was born from brief breakout sessions at the Land Trust Alliance Rally and Forever Maryland’s concept of on-line happy hours. This in-person event offered the opportunity for groups who specifically hold land interests in Maryland to collaborate in a light environment. Ms. Markline hopes to continue hosting these meetings at least once per year as she received exceedingly positive feedback from the attendees.

Ms. Markline reported that MET staff, with assistance from the firm Upstream Tech, hosted a Lens (remote easement monitoring) training session for a few land trusts who are interested in utilizing that technology.

Ms. Markline stated that Stewardship Program staff have been busy addressing violations and correcting mapping inadequacies.

Ms. Markline informed the board that MET’s Chesapeake Conservation Climate Corps member, Justyn Pinkney, has accepted a permanent position with Cecil County Planning and Zoning as a Planner I. As a result Mr. Pinkney will leave his position with MET a little earlier than expected.

**B. Land Trust Outreach**

Vice Chair Bowen reported that thus far in FY24 6 land trusts have renewed their cooperative agreements with MET, and 3 currently are being drafted for renewal..

Mr. Bowen informed the board that a roundtable event hosted by MET and Forever Maryland is scheduled on May 30th. The event titled “The State of the State of Maryland’s Conservation Programs” will include discussions on Maryland’s key

conservation programs, the outcomes of the 2024 legislative session, and challenges that threaten the work of land conservation. For more information and registration please visit <https://dnr.maryland.gov/met/Pages/roundtables.aspx>.

The LTOC staff continues its review of monitoring reports conducted by MET's land trust partners in calendar year 2023. 522 reports have been submitted thus far.

Mr. Bowen encouraged Trustees to ensure they are receiving MET's email publications and to contact Michelle Grafton at [michelle.grafton@maryland.gov](mailto:michelle.grafton@maryland.gov) if they are not.

### **C. Governance**

Mr. Lloyd welcomed Ms. Crystal Chissell to MET. He reported that Ms. Natalie Ziegler has been appointed as the ex-officio Trustee representing the Speaker of the House of Delegates. Mr. Lloyd reported that Ms. Ziegler has an extensive background in environmental and agricultural areas.

Mr. Lloyd announced that Trustees Tom Prevas and Susanne Richards are stepping down from their positions on the Board. He thanked them for their service and wished them the best.

#### Committee recommendations to re-elect Trustees

- a) Trustee Megan Benjamin to a second four-year term
- b) Trustee Lori Lynch to a second four-year term
- c) Trustee Keith Colston to serve first four-year term

Trustees Benjamin, Lynch and Colston excused themselves from the meeting.

**Mr. Lloyd asked for a motion to approve Trustees Benjamin, Lynch, and Colston to renew their terms as stated above. Mr. Volke made the motion; Mr. Burnett seconded the motion. All voted in favor.**

Trustees Benjamin and Colston returned to the meeting.

#### Committee recommendations to elect officers for a second two-year term

- a) Trustee Gary Burnett to a second two-year term as Board Chair
- b) Trustee Greg Bowen to a second two-year term as Board Vice Chair

Trustees Burnett and Bowen excused themselves from the meeting.

**Mr. Lloyd asked for a motion to approve Trustees Burnett and Bowen to renew their terms as stated above. Mr. Colston motioned to approve; Mr. Volke seconded. All voted in favor.**

Trustees Burnett and Bowen returned to the meeting.

**D. Finance**

Mr. Hoffman reported that MET's budget of board-approved funds is about \$140,000 (FY2024). MET has utilized about \$75,000 through the end of March. Mr. Hoffman noted that the financial market is faring well so our funds are growing. He stated that the Finance Committee is finalizing the FY2025 budget with an approximate projection of \$155,000.

**Mr. Hoffman asked for a motion to approve the MET Financial Statements that were distributed prior to the meeting. Mr. Lloyd made the motion; Chair Burnett seconded. All voted in favor.**

Mr. Hoffman stated that MET is drafting a letter to the Secretary of Maryland's Department of Budget and Management and other interested parties requesting funding for the three MET managed programs outlined in the Maryland the Beautiful Act. The draft letter will soon be distributed to Trustees for review and presented for discussion and approval at the next regular meeting on June 3rd.

**VI. Other Business**

Chair Burnett requested suggestions for the next off-site gathering in June. Mr. Lloyd offered to host the gathering at his property (with which MET holds an easement on). Ms. Foster suggested visiting a meadow in Montgomery County to follow up on Ms. Rose's earlier presentation.

**VII. Adjourn Meeting**

**Chair Burnett asked for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Mr. Lloyd motioned to adjourn; Mr. Volke seconded. All voted in favor.**

The meeting adjourned at 5:27 p.m.

The next regular meeting is scheduled for June 3, 2024.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Gary Burnett', is written over a horizontal line. The signature is stylized and cursive.

Gary Burnett, MET Board Chair

These minutes from the May 6, 2024 regular MET Board meeting were approved by the Board of Trustees on June 3, 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.*