

Maryland Environmental Trust
Board of Trustees Open Meeting Minutes
June 3, 2024

Trustees Present:

Gary Burnett, Chair

Greg Bown, Vice Chair

Mark Hoffman, Treasurer

Megan D'Arcy

Megan Benjamin

Lori Lynch

Keith Colston

Nathan Volke

Julia King

Hillary Bell (representing the Governor of Maryland who is an ex-officio trustee)

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

Trustees Absent:

Thomas (Toby) Lloyd

Diana Conway

Craig Highfield

Crystal Chissell

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)

Kelly Price (MET Staff)

Matt Ludington (MET Staff)

Justyn Pinkney (MET Staff)

Talley Kovacs, Assistant Attorney General (Office of Attorney General)

Sophie Allen, Intern (Office of Attorney General)

I. Call to Order

Chair Burnett called the regular meeting of the MET Board of Trustees to order at 4:04 p.m.

II. Minutes of the May 6, 2024 Regular Meeting

Chair Burnett asked for a motion to approve the minutes of the regular meeting of the Board of Trustees held on May 6, 2024. Mr. Colston motioned to approve the minutes; Mr. Volke seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

III. Board Chair's Report

Chair Burnett thanked Tom Prevas and Susanne Richards for their service on the MET Board of Trustees. Mr. Burnett invited everyone to attend the outing scheduled on June 25, 2024 at American Chestnut Land Trust. The outing will consist of a hike on an easement held by MET on land owned by ACLT followed by a luncheon. The address is 676 Double Oak Road, Prince Frederick. More information will be forthcoming via email.

IV. Director's Report

Mr. Turgeon announced that MET's Easement Program Manager Ann Carlson will be leaving her position on July 5, 2024 to pursue a nursing degree at the University of Maryland. Ann began her nearly 17 year career with MET as an Easement Planner in 2007 and was promoted to Easement Program Manager in 2019. Mr. Turgeon stated that Ann is the leading expert and practitioner on donated conservation easements in the state of Maryland. She has been instrumental in protecting close to 19,000 acres, through 129 projects, in every part of Maryland. That equates to approximately 13% of all MET's protected acres. Mr. Turgeon went on to say that it has been an honor working with Ms. Carlson and that she will be tremendously missed.

Ms. Carlson stated that it has been a true honor to work at MET and to help the citizens of Maryland protect their land. She is grateful for the opportunity to have worked with such wonderful people throughout the years.

Chair Burnett said that Ms. Carlson's depth of knowledge is incredible and he has learned so much from her. He thanked her personally and on behalf of MET. Mr. Hoffman also offered congratulations to Ms. Carlson. Ms. Kovacs said she would miss Ms. Carlson's collaboration and knowledge. She stated that Ann has embraced her work in a personal

way and has been a great influence to people in the conservation community throughout the entire state.

Mr. Turgeon referred to the draft FY 2025 Annual Work Plan that was distributed in the Board packet prior to the meeting. He stated that most of the tasks outlined are carried over from one year to the next as key business operations. He mentioned that if the Land Trust Revolving Loan Fund and the 40 x 40 grant programs are funded in the FY 2026 budget MET will be working on setting up practices for those programs. Mr. Turgeon stated that MET will be transitioning Easement Stewardship Program staff and volunteers to using the newly released field data collection tool for monitoring easements. He pointed particularly to a few policies and processes that will be updated such as the development of an easement violation policy, delegation of board authority to the Lands Committee or Director, and a new intake process for handling and tracking inquiries and requests from easement landowners and the general public. He noted that LT Assistance staff will be making revisions to the Cooperative Agreement template. He also mentioned that LT Assistance staff will continue working with Stewardship staff to connect easement landowners with opportunities for implementing enhanced stewardship activities (restoration projects such as tree planting or wetland restoration). A number of those outreach events are coming up in July. Mr. Turgeon informed the board that MET will again partner with the Chesapeake Bay Trust to administer the Keep Maryland Beautiful grants program.

Mr. Turgeon asked for a motion to approve the FY 2025 MET Work Plan as distributed in the board packet. Chair Bowen made the motion to approve; Mr. Hoffman seconded. All voted in favor.

V. Committee Reports

A. Lands

Ms. Benjamin offered congratulations to Ann and acknowledged her accomplishments at MET.

Consent agenda - Committee recommendation to approve a new conservation easement to MET

- a. 111.08 +/- ac in Talbot County with Eastern Shore Land Conservancy from Frank E. Mason III

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

Ms. Carlson informed the board that MET will finish FY 2024 by recording 10 conservation easements, protecting 1,083 acres (six are co-held with local land trusts). Seven conservation easements were straight donations while two were bargain sales with funding coming from the Department of Defense. The final one was the result of a consent decree. Ms. Carlson stated that there are still a number of projects in various stages and is confident that MET will be able to meet its protected acreage goal in FY 2025.

Ms. Markline provided the board with statistics for the Stewardship Program's FY 2024 accomplishments. She indicated that there are 27 documented violations, 48 potential violations, and 22 requests were processed in calendar years 2023 and 2024. She further stated that since May of 2021 MET has conducted 134 easement monitoring visits with new successor owners. She reported there are 35 more successor landowners still to visit. Thus far in FY 2024, 450 total visits have been conducted by staff, contractual employees, volunteers and co-holding partners. Ms. Markline expects the number to increase by the end of this fiscal year as the new monitoring tool will be in place, the remote monitoring tool, Lens, will continue to be used, and MET anticipates its co-holding partners to submit their remaining monitoring reports.

Ms. Markline mentioned that Justyn Pinkney's last day is June 15th and thanked him for his assistance in monitoring, organizing records, mapping, and easement interpretation.

B. Land Trust Outreach

Mr. Turgeon mentioned that MET co-hosted an in-person workshop with Forever Maryland titled "State of the State of Maryland's Conservation Programs". He recognized Ms. Michelle Grafton for her work in organizing the event. Representatives from the state's land conservation programs (MET, Rural Legacy, POS Stateside, POS Localside, MALP, and Marbidco) were invited speakers at the event. The panelists discussed the state of their programs as well as new developments and goals. Mr. Turgeon reported that there were 63 people in attendance representing 38 conservation organizations across the state.

C. Governance

Mr. Turgeon mentioned that the Governance Committee met in May and made a few recommendations to present to the full board. Mr. Turgeon and Mr. Hoffman noted that the Lands and Finance Committees are in need of members. Delegate Ziegler stated that she would like to be considered for the Lands Committee.

Mr. Turgeon asked for a motion to elect Thomas (Toby) Lloyd to serve as Board Secretary for a term of two years. Chair Burnett made the motion; Mr. Bowen seconded. All voted in favor.

Mr. Turgeon asked for a motion to approve the MET Board Committees Roster for FY 2025 as provided in the board packet. Mr. Hoffman made the motion; Mr. Volke seconded. All voted in favor.

Mr. Turgeon asked for a motion to approve adding Mark Wallis to MET's list of recommended Trustee candidates. Chair Burnett made the motion; Mr. Volke seconded. All voted in favor.

Chair Burnett asked for a motion to approve Delegate Ziegler to serve on the Lands Committee. Mr. Colston made the motion; Chair Burnett seconded. All voted in favor.

D. Finance

Mr. Hoffman reported that MET's invested assets totaled about \$3,600,000 as of the end of April and that MET has utilized about \$78,000 of the \$140,000 board-approved allotted funds in FY 2024.

Mr. Hoffman asked for a motion to approve the financial statements as provided in the board packet. Chair Burnett made the motion; Mr. Volke seconded. All voted in favor.

Mr. Hoffman noted that one major change in the budget is that MET plans to shift funds previously allotted for funding the Salesforce database to increase the internal funds appropriated for the KMB grant program.

Mr. Hoffman asked for a motion to approve the proposed FY 2025 budget for MET's Board-administered funds as provided in the Board packet. Chair Burnett made the motion; Mr. Volke seconded. All voted in favor.

Mr. Hoffman asked for a motion to approve submitting a letter (provided in the Board packet) from MET to Governor Moore requesting the funds for the three MET managed programs outlined in the Maryland the Beautiful Act of 2023 (SB470/HB631) be included in the FY 2026 budget. Vice Chair Bowen made the motion; Chair Burnett seconded. The majority voted in favor. One Trustee abstained from voting.

Ms. King informed the Board that she would like to serve on the Finance Committee.

Chair Burnett asked for a motion to approve Julia King to serve on the Finance Committee. Mr. Hoffman made the motion; Chair Burnett seconded. All voted in favor.

VI. Other Business

Chair Burnett thanked everyone for a good year and expressed his appreciation to the MET staff and Trustees. He reminded Trustees to attend the MET Board and staff outing on June 25.

VII. Adjourn Meeting

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

The meeting adjourned at 5:06 p.m.

The next regular meeting is scheduled for September 9, 2024.