

Maryland Environmental Trust  
Board of Trustees Open Meeting Minutes  
May 5, 2025

**CONFIDENTIAL**  
**INCLUDES MINUTES FROM CLOSED SESSION**

**Trustees Present:**

Gary Burnett, Chair

Thomas (Toby) Lloyd, Secretary

Lori Lynch

Keith Colston

Nathan Volke

Julia King

Diana Conway

Megan Benjamin

Crystal Chissell

Alice Chalmers

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:**

Mark Hoffman

Megan D'Arcy

Craig Highfield

**Others Present:**

John Turgeon, Director, Maryland Environmental Trust (MET Staff)

Josette Markline (MET Staff)

Wendy Foster (MET Staff)

Cindy Hoffmann (MET Staff)

Kelly Price (MET Staff)

Matt Ludington (MET Staff)

Michelle Grafton (MET Staff)

Dan Skalos (MET Staff)

Kevin Bull (MET Staff)

Roger Medoff, Assistant Attorney General (Office of Attorney General)

Cynthia McCann, Assistant Attorney General (Office of Attorney General)

One person from the public attended online

**I. Call to Order**

Chair Burnett called the regular meeting of the MET Board of Trustees to order at 4:05 p.m.

**II. Minutes of the February 3, 2025 Regular Meeting**

**Chair Burnett asked for a motion to approve the minutes of the regular meeting of the Board of Trustees held on February 3, 2025. Mr. Lloyd motioned to approve the minutes; Ms. Benjamin seconded the motion. All voted in favor.**

**III. Board Chair's Report**

Chair Burnett (and others throughout the meeting) spoke about Greg Bowen, immediate past Vice Chair of MET's Board. It was mentioned that Mr. Bowen was always looking ahead at "big picture" issues such as climate change and cleaning up the Chesapeake Bay. He was a leader in the conservation community, always welcoming in the next generation, and anyone in general, who was interested in conservation. Mr. Bowen dedicated nearly 50 years of public service over his lifetime. All agreed that Mr. Bowen will be remembered as an incredible conservation steward and will be greatly missed.

Mr. Burnett invited the Trustees and MET staff on a site visit to the Royce Hanson Conservation Area (formerly named the Broad Run Conservation Area) in Montgomery County. Mr. Hanson was a former MET Trustee and Chair of MET's Board (2000-2006). He was also instrumental in creating Montgomery County's agriculture reserve area. The project manager will be on-site to give the group a tour of the property. Lunch will follow at a local restaurant. Ms. Conway, who is a founding member of the Montgomery Countryside Alliance, where Mr. Hanson is a former board member and current Chair of the Advisory Committee, commented that she welcomes the Trustees and staff to this event. She offered that Caroline Taylor, Executive Director of the Montgomery County Countryside Alliance would be thrilled to meet the group and provide a bit of history on the project. Three dates have been reserved for the event, June 25, 26 or 27. Email Mr. Turgeon with your preferred date of attendance. Once the replies are collected, a notice will be posted with the final date selection.

Mr. Burnett stated that MET's Committees do a lot of work in preparation for the Regular Board Meetings. In order for MET to continue moving forward it is vitally important that there is sufficient Board representation on its committees so that work can be done effectively. Mr. Lloyd invited Trustees to attend a few upcoming committee meetings of interest. (Note: the schedule of committee meetings is on the MET website [CY 2025 MET Committees & Meeting Dates](#)). Chair Burnett encouraged all Trustees to serve on at least one committee. A list of the standing committees, showing current members and vacancies was provided in the board packet. Email inquiries to John Turgeon.

#### **IV. Director's Report**

Mr. Turgeon referred to an article in the New York Times that recognized Maryland's recent accomplishments of meeting the "30 x 30" goal five years ahead of schedule.

Mr. Turgeon reported that the KMB grants, totaling \$238,751, were disbursed to the twenty recipients on March 20, 2025. A copy of the report prepared by the Chesapeake Bay Trust (managing partner of the KMB Grant Program) was provided with Mr. Turgeon's Director's Report. This report contains detailed information about the grant recipients and their projects. Mr. Turgeon stated that MET will propose an increase of MET's Board managed funds towards the Program in FY26.

Mr. Turgeon gave an overview of the Graham property, which was previously conserved by an easement donated to MET by its landowner in 2015. The MD Board of Public Works recently approved the Maryland Department of Natural Resources to purchase the property which will ultimately become the first State Park in Wicomico County. Mr. Turgeon mentioned that MET played a key role in connecting the landowner with the MD DNR.

Mr. Turgeon commented on the work that MET staff has been doing, particularly the Easement and Stewardship programs. He mentioned that staff is currently putting together the FY26 Annual Work Plan, and preparing the FY26 budget for the Board managed funds scheduled to be voted on at the June Regular Meeting.

Mr. Turgeon recognized Ms. Markline for her accomplishment in recently completing the DNR's Supervisor Training and Engagement Program (STEP). The program is designed to give Supervisors the tools they need to prepare them for higher levels of responsibility. Participants are required to attend weekly sessions for twelve weeks and to complete a capstone project in an effort to assist DNR leadership address agencywide issues.

Mr. Turgeon apprised the Trustees of the status on easement number 024CHA78.HOWA. He stated that the parties are working on several agreements to effectuate that settlement. MET staff and the OAG have put together an Amendment and Restated Deed of Conservation Easement for the property. The draft document was submitted to the involved parties in April.

**Mr. Turgeon asked for a vote to approve delegation of all aspects of negotiating and executing the Amended and Restated Deed of Conservation Easement. The motion was moved by Ms. Conway; seconded by Mr. Burnett. All voted in favor.**

## **V. Committee Reports**

### **A. Lands**

Ms. Benjamin reported that the Committee met on April 23, 2025. She reiterated the invitation to Trustees to attend and/or become a Lands Committee member.

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

- a. Worthington Family Properties LLC to MET, 30.5 acres in Baltimore County
- b. Rum Spring Farms LLC to MET, 160 acres in Frederick County
- c. Lynne Cherry to MET and Catoctin Land Trust, 56.2 acres in Frederick County
- d. James Cilecek to MET, 100.6 acres in Garrett County
- e. Southeast Creek Farm LLC to MET and Eastern Shore Land Conservancy, 100.4 acres in Queen Anne's County
- f. The Wading Place, Inc to MET and Eastern Shore Land Conservancy, 30.4 acres in Queen Anne's County
- g. Swann Farm LLC to MET and Eastern Shore Land Conservancy, 70.6 acres in Talbot County

#### **Consent agenda - Approval of actions affecting existing MET conservation easements:**

- h. Request for amendment of easement (MET Folio #0226THO92.HARF)
- i. MET's Temporary Commercial Events and Activities Agreement template

**Ms. Benjamin asked for a motion to move the consent agenda as stated above. Ms. Conway moved; Mr. Colston seconded. All voted in favor with no further discussion.**

Ms. Benjamin noted that the Lands Committee reviewed and approved MET's Enforcement of Conservation Easements Policy at the April meeting. Ms. Markline gave an overview of the Policy.

**Ms. Benjamin made a motion to approve MET's Enforcement of Conservation Easements Policy; Delegate Ziegler seconded. All voted in favor.**

Mr. Skalos gave an overview of the conservation projects in the pipeline. There are twelve easements projected to close in CY2026 which total just shy of 1,450 newly conserved acres. Mr. Skalos reported that there are also a handful of easements in progress in addition to those twelve.

Mr. Turgeon introduced the matter of a potential easement violation related to MET ID# 0525IRV00.BACO, owned by the Irvine Natural Science Center, Inc.that required a closed session for this meeting. All public parties left the meeting.

**Chair Burnett made a motion to meet in a closed session to consult with counsel to obtain legal advice related to a potential easement violation of MET ID# 0525IRV00.BACO. Delegate Ziegler seconded the motion. All voted in favor to close the meeting. There were no opposing votes. The meeting moved to closed session at 4:40 p.m.**

The meeting was closed on May 5, 2025, at 4:40 p.m. under the provisions of General Provisions Art. §3-305(b): Topic #7 (To consult with counsel to obtain legal advice). Only MET Trustees and staff were in attendance. Persons present for discussion included Keith Colston, Michelle Grafton, Megan Benjamin, Roger Medoff, Diana Conway, Alice Chalmers, Hillary Bell, Lori Lynch, Kevin Bull, Crystal Chissell, Toby Lloyd, Julia King, Wendy Foster, Cindy Hoffmann, Matthew Luddington, Dan Skalos, John Turgeon, Gary Burnett, Kelly Price, Natalie Ziegler, Cynthia McCann, Josette Markline, Nathan Volke.

**Chair Burnett made a motion to end the closed session; Mr. Colston seconded. All voted in favor. The closed session ended at 5:01 p.m.**

In closed session the Trustees consulted with legal counsel regarding a potential legal matter. No actions or decisions were made during this session.

The regular meeting of the MET Board of Trustees re-opened at 5:01 p.m.

## **B. Land Trust Outreach**

Ms. Grafton reported that there are no requests for new Cooperative Agreements at this time but there may be as many as twenty renewals by the end of the year.

Ms. Grafton noted that twenty-six co-holding partners have submitted their annual monitoring reports for calendar year 2024. MET staff has processed around 535 of those reports and continues this effort.

The next Land Trust Roundtable, titled “From Data to Conservation” is scheduled for May 15, 2025. This event will highlight how various Land Mapping Tools can support Maryland conservation efforts. The event will include presentations from the developers of these tools as well as hands-on exercises for the attendees. More details can be found on MET’s webpage.

The next Land Trust Outreach Committee meeting is still to be determined.

## **C. Governance**

Mr. Lloyd welcomed Ms. Chalmers as a new Trustee. He informed the board that, with the passing of Mr. Bowen, a new Vice Chair will be voted on this evening. Ms. Lynch

recused herself from the meeting for this vote as she was the candidate proposed by the Governance Committee for the position.

**Mr. Lloyd asked for a motion to approve Ms. Lori Lynch to serve as Vice Chair for a two year term. Ms. Benjamin moved the motion; Mr. Burnett seconded. All voted in favor.**

Ms. Lynch returned to the meeting.

Mr. Lloyd reported that the Governance Committee proposed Mr. Hoffman continue serving as Treasurer. The term would be one year as Mr. Hoffman will be terming off of the Board after next year.

**Mr. Lloyd asked for a motion to approve Mr. Hoffman to continue as Treasurer for a one year term. Delegate Ziegler moved the motion; Mr. Volke seconded. All voted in favor.**

Mr. Lloyd reminded the Trustees to complete the required ethics training and form. The training is a one-time requirement, but the form must be completed annually.

#### **D. Finance**

Chair Burnett referred to the budget sheets provided prior to the meeting. He mentioned that the balance sheet has slightly changed as MET has moved to an online version of Quickbooks. He pointed out that MET is well under budget by about \$55,000.

Mr. Burnett stated that the FY26 budget will be presented for approval at the next Regular Board meeting on June 2, 2025. He noted that the budget will include an increase towards KMB Grants from MET's Board managed funds. The fund's current balance is just under \$4,000,000.

**Mr. Burnett asked for a motion to approve the budget sheets as submitted. Mr. Colston approved; Delegate Ziegler seconded. All voted in favor.**

#### **E. Ad-hoc Committee Re: Maryland Piedmont Reliability Project (MPRP)**

Mr. Turgeon reported that power company PSEG has filed an application to the MD Public Service Commission for the project. Mr. Turgeon reminded the Trustees that MET has provided PPRP (DNR's Power Plant Research Program) with its evaluation of impact on the three MET easements that will be affected by the proposed powerline route. He noted that PSEG's intent is to be online by 2027 which means construction in 2026.

A discussion ensued about MET's position on this project, and the impact it could have on MET.

**Chair Burnett asked for a motion to meet in a closed session to consult with counsel to obtain legal advice related to the Maryland Piedmont Reliability Project. Ms. Conway moved the motion; Ms. Chalmers seconded. All voted in favor to close the meeting. There were no opposing votes. The meeting moved to closed session at 5:29 p.m.**

The meeting was closed on May 5, 2025, at 5:29 p.m. under the provisions of General Provisions Art. §3-305(b): Topic #7 (To consult with counsel to obtain legal advice). Only MET Trustees and staff were in attendance. Persons present for discussion were Keith Colston, Michelle Grafton, Megan Benjamin, Roger Medoff, Diana Conway, Alice Chalmers, Hillary Bell, Lori Lynch, Kevin Bull, Crystal Chissell, Toby Lloyd, Julia King, Wendy Foster, Cindy Hoffmann, Matthew Luddington, Dan Skalos, John Turgeon, Gary Burnett, Kelly Price, Natalie Ziegler, Cynthia McCann, Josette Markline.

Topics in question were:

- What obligation does MET have to the three landowners affected by the MPRP
- What official position can MET take (intervener vs speaker).

Mr. Medoff reminded the Board that, early on, there were questions surrounding what MET could/should say publicly to advocate for itself as a holder of easements and on behalf of the landowners. Mr. Medoff's recollection was that MET's Board, separate and apart from the staff, had the authority and capacity to comment on the matter. MET was advised that the state as a whole would take a unified position and speak as one voice. Mr. Medoff stated that the Board may be able to independently take on the role of intervener, but he would need to consult with his colleagues at the Office of Attorney General for confirmation.

Chair Burnett reminded Trustees that the board did submit an independent comment in support of the landowners on the project. He stated that he welcomes the advice of the OAG to determine best practices as this project continues.

Mr. Lloyd pointed out that there is language in the easement specific to eminent domain.

Ms. Chalmers stated that this matter is time-sensitive in terms of the project's timeline.

**Chair Burnett asked for a motion to end the closed session; Delegate Ziegler moved the motion; Mr. Lloyd seconded. All voted in favor. The closed session ended at 5:40 p.m.**

In closed session the Trustees consulted with legal counsel regarding the Maryland Piedmont Reliability Project. No actions or decisions were made during the session.

The regular meeting of the MET Board of Trustees re-opened at 5:40 p.m.

**VI. Other Business**

Ms. Conway referred to Senate Bill 931/House Bill 1036 that passed in this year's legislative session, which overrides local and municipal zoning and conservation restrictions with regard to siting of solar facilities. She questioned if this is something that concerns MET and its easements. Chair Burnett and Mr. Turgeon had no comment on this but stated that they will look into the matter.

**VII. Adjournment**

**Chair Burnett called for a motion to adjourn the meeting. Delegate Ziegler moved; Mr. Colson seconded. All voted in favor.**

The meeting was adjourned at 5:45 p.m.

The next regular Board meeting is scheduled for June 2, 2025.



### Summary of first closed session held on May 5, 2025

1. Statement of the time, place and purpose of the closed session:
  - a. Time of closed session: 4:40 p.m.
  - b. Place (location) of closed session: Google **Meet**
  - c. Purpose of closed session: Consultation with legal counsel
  - d. Record of the vote of each member as to closing the session:
    - i. Names of members voting aye: Gary Burnett (Chair), Toby Lloyd (Secretary), Lori Lynch, Keith Colston, Nathan Volke, Julia King, Diana Conway, Megan Benjamin, Crystal Chissell, Alice Chalmers, Hillary Bell, Delegate Natalie Ziegler
    - ii. Members opposed: None
    - iii. Members abstaining: None

2. Statutory authority to close session:

This meeting was closed under the following provisions General Provisions Art. §3-305(b): Topic #7.

- 3.

Topic Description	Persons present for discussion	Action Taken/Each Recorded Vote
#7 Consult legal counsel regarding landowner violations of conservation easement	Trustees (Gary, Toby, Lori, Keith, Nathan, Julia, Diana, Megan, Crystal, Alice, Hillary, Natalie)  MET Staff (John, Josette, Wendy, Cindy, Kelly, Matt, Michelle, Dan, Kevin)  Office of the Attorney General (Roger, Cindy)	No action or decision was made during this closed session.

4. The closed meeting ended at 5:01 p.m.

**Summary of second closed session held on May 5, 2025**

5. Statement of the time, place and purpose of the closed session:
  - a. Time of closed session: 5:29 p.m.
  - b. Place (location) of closed session: Google **Meet**
  - c. Purpose of closed session: Consultation with legal counsel
  - d. Record of the vote of each member as to closing the session:
    - i. Names of members voting aye: Gary Burnett (Chair), Toby Lloyd (Secretary), Lori Lynch, Keith Colston, Nathan Volke, Julia King, Diana Conway, Megan Benjamin, Crystal Chissell, Alice Chalmers, Hillary Bell, Delegate Natalie Ziegler
    - ii. Members opposed: None
    - iii. Members abstaining: None

6. Statutory authority to close session:

This meeting was closed under the following provisions General Provisions Art. §3-305(b): Topic #7.

7.

Topic Description	Persons present for discussion	Action Taken/Each Recorded Vote
#7 Consult legal counsel regarding the Maryland Piedmont Reliability Project	<p>Trustees (Gary, Toby, Lori, Keith, Nathan, Julia, Diana, Megan, Crystal, Alice, Hillary, Natalie)</p> <p>MET Staff (John, Josette, Wendy, Cindy, Kelly, Matt, Michelle, Dan, Kevin)</p> <p>Office of the Attorney General (Roger, Cindy)</p>	No action or decision was made during this closed session.

8. The closed meeting ended at 5:40 p.m.