

Maryland Environmental Trust
Board of Trustees Open Meeting Minutes
November 4, 2024

Trustees Present:

Gary Burnett, Chair

Greg Bown, Vice Chair

Thomas (Toby) Lloyd, Secretary

Megan D'Arcy

Megan Benjamin

Lori Lynch

Julia King

Craig Highfield

Crystal Chissell

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, Treasurer

Keith Colston

Nathan Volke

Diana Conway

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)

Michelle Grafton (MET Staff)

Kevin Bull (MET Staff)

Laural Paterini (MET Staff)

Dan Skalos (MET Staff)

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

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

Emilie Schwartz, 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 4:03 p.m.

II. Minutes of the September 9, 2024 Regular Meeting

Chair Burnett asked for a motion to approve the minutes of the regular meeting of the Board of Trustees held on September 9, 2024. Mr. Lloyd motioned to approve the minutes; Ms. Benjamin seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

III. Board Chair's Report

No report.

IV. Director's Report

Mr. Turgeon introduced Dan, Skalos, and Easement Program Director and gave a brief overview of his background. Mr. Skalos introduced himself and stated that he was excited to be a part of MET.

Mr. Turgeon referred to the Director's Report that was provided to the Trustees prior to the meeting. He gave an update on the Keep Maryland Beautiful Grants Program. He stated that the application period ends on November 15, 2024. The Board will review and approve the proposed grant awards at the regular board meeting on February 3, 2025. The funds will be distributed on March 20. The total funding for this year's Program is about \$327,000. The Chesapeake Bay Trust, who manages the application and award process, has reported that there have been close to 100 applications submitted. Mr. Turgeon stated that he expects several more as there tends to be an influx of submissions during the last week of the application period. Mr. Turgeon encouraged the Trustees to review Chesapeake Bay Trust's report that outlines the progress of last year's grant awards.

V. Committee Reports

A. Lands

Ms. Benjamin reported that the Lands Committee met on October 23rd to review the items on the consent agenda.

Consent Agenda

Committee recommendation to approve accepting grant of new easement to MET

- a. Proposed grant of easement from Anne and William Peck on 33.16 ac. in Baltimore County

Committee recommendations to approve actions on existing MET easements

- b. 1043HEA12.BACO Request for approval

Ms. Benjamin asked for a motion to move the consent agenda for approval as recommended by the Lands Committee. Mr. Bowen so motioned; Chair Burnett seconded. All voted in favor.

Mr. Skalos mentioned that Mr. and Mrs. Peck have requested to include an additional 1.5 wooded acre parcel in their easement proposal. The lot is adjacent to the property in Consent Agenda item a.

Mr. Skalos stated that thus far in FY25 MET has conserved 321 acres. He gave an update of the Easement Program's ongoing projects.

Ms. Markline mentioned that Mr. Bull and Ms. Foster attended the National Land Conservation Conference Rally in Rhode Island hosted by the Land Trust Alliance <https://alliancerally.org/>. She mentioned that the next MET hosted Roundtable is scheduled for November 7th. Ms. Markline noted that stewardship staff has resumed on-the-ground easement monitoring visits.

Ms. Benjamin made a motion to meet in closed session to consult with counsel to obtain legal advice. Mr. Burnett seconded the motion. All voted in favor to close the meeting. The meeting moved to closed session at 4:25 p.m.

The meeting was closed on November 4, 2024, at 4:25 p.m. under provisions of General Provisions Art. §3-305(b): Topic #7 (To consult with counsel to obtain legal advice).

Delegate Ziegler moved to end the closed session; Mr. Bowen seconded. All voted in favor. The closed session ended at 4:48 p.m.

The regular meeting of the MET Board of Trustees re-opened at 4:48 p.m.

B. Land Trust Outreach

Mr. Bowen reported that the Land Trust Outreach Committee did not meet in October.

Mr. Bowen relayed that MET is currently working with four land trusts to renew their Cooperative Agreements. He mentioned the upcoming Roundtable event, hosted by MET Stewardship Staff. The topics of discussion are: revisions to the Cooperative Agreement template; monitoring report requirements; and an interactive discussion on conservation easement violation detection and management. The goal is to renew and clarify objectives and expectations with our collaborative partners for accomplishing MET's missions.

Mr. Bowen informed the Trustees that MET has received 533 monitoring reports from its co-holding partners, exceeding the annual goal of 500. Mr. Turgeon gave credit to Ms. Grafton for establishing a process that made this possible.

Mr. Bowen noted that Ms. Grafton is actively gathering and editing content for the annual Stewardship Newsletter which will be distributed to easement landowners and land managers in the fall of 2024.

C. Governance

No report.

D. Finance

Ms. King provided a summary of the growth of MET's restricted and unrestricted funds.

Ms. King asked for the Board's approval of the financial statements provided prior to the meeting via email. Mr. Lloyd approved the motion; Mr. Burnett seconded. All voted in favor.

Mr. Turgeon gave a brief description of how the funds are utilized by MET.

Vice Chair Bowen excused himself from the meeting as he is the Director of the American Chestnut Land Trust.

Mr. Turgeon asked the Trustees to recall the request mentioned at the last regular Board Meeting by the American Chestnut Land Trust on behalf of the Southern Maryland Conservation Alliance <https://www.acltweb.org/index.php/southern-maryland-conservation-alliance/> for a grant in the amount \$5,000 from MET's Board-managed funds. The funds will be utilized by the Alliance for the development of tools and outreach materials to engage local governments, landowners, and other stakeholders about the economic and other benefits of land conservation as opposed to continued sprawling development in southern Maryland. The goal is to highlight the economic and cultural values and quality of life

benefits that the natural resources in the region bring to Marylanders. The materials will be made available as a template for use by other conservation organizations throughout the State. Since that meeting, the Alliance has provided a formal request to MET for the funds. If approved, MET would be one of several organizations awarding funds toward this project.

Mr. Turgeon stated that the Finance Committee voted to approve the request in the amount of \$5,000 and to present the request for Board approval.

Mr. Turgeon asked for a motion to approve granting \$5000 to the Southern Maryland Conservation Alliance to be used for the project noted above. Mr. Lloyd approved the motion; Ms. D'Arcy seconded. All voted in favor.

Vice Chair Bowen returned to the meeting.

E. Ad-hoc Committee Re: Maryland Piedmont Reliability Project

Chair Burnett gave a brief overview of the Project. He stated that the Ad-hoc Committee met and drafted an information page (provided in the Board Packet). Mr. Burnett informed the Trustees that there are three Properties with MET easements that will be impacted by the transmission line route proposed by PSEG. The Committee asked for assistance from the Trustees to formulate the Board's position and the next steps to be taken.

Mr. Turgeon stated that PSEG anticipates submitting their Certificate of Public Convenience and Necessity permit to the Maryland Public Service Commission by the end of the year.

MET, along with the other Land Units of the DNR, will provide reports to the Powerplant Research Program (PPRP), a Unit within the Department of Natural Resources, who has been tasked with managing the reports and information provided by all State entities (not just DNR) impacted by the transmission project. The PPRP will, in turn, provide its analysis to the Secretaries of the DNR and MDE. The analysis will be summarized and presented to the State Administration for review by the Governor's Office.

Several Trustees engaged in an interactive discussion regarding the Project. Suggestions were noted for the Ad-Hoc Committee to consider when drafting their position on the project and what should be included in the MET report to the PPRP. Ms. D'Arcy mentioned that the Eastern Shore Land Conservancy (ESLC) was faced with a similar project called Mid-Atlantic Power Pathway (MAPP). Ms. D'Arcy also recommended reaching out to the Land Trust Alliance for assistance. Ms. Markline stated that at the

most recent Forever Maryland Conference, Rex Linville from the Land Trust Alliance, told a success story about preventing a Right-of-Way through conservation easements in Virginia. She mentioned that Mr. Linville would be willing to elaborate more on the topic with MET. Mr. Turgeon stated that, at this time, MALPF has not issued a public statement on the project. He will follow up with Executive Director, Michelle Cable. Ms. Benjamin noted that she wouldn't be opposed to making a broad preliminary position stating that the MET Board believes in our easements, and we support the values of the easements we hold. Mr. Bowen and Delegate Ziegler expressed their concerns that this is potentially only the first project of its kind, and that the proper due diligence was not performed by PSEG to ensure the least amount of negative impact on the natural resources on the proposed route. Ms. Chissell acknowledged that she would be in agreement for the Board to make a strong statement in support of our easements.

It was noted during the discussion that the Board's statement would likely be submitted to PSEG, stated in MET publications and posted to the MET website. Chair Burnett suggested also corresponding directly with impacted easement landowners.

Chair Bunett will set up the next Ad-hoc Committee meeting in the near future. Current Committee members are Delegate Ziegler, Megan Benjamin, Toby Lloyd, Gary Burnett. He noted that the Committee will begin drafting a statement for review and feedback.

VI. Other Business

Nothing to report.

VII. Adjourn Meeting

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

