

Maryland Environmental Trust
Board of Trustees Open Meeting Minutes
May 4, 2020

Trustees Present:

Mary Burke, Chair
Royden Powell, Vice Chair
Julia Jitkoff, Treasurer
Sarah Taylor-Rogers, Secretary
Thomas Lloyd
Gregory Bowen
Senator Addie Eckardt
Delegate Gilchrist
Scott Barao
Gary Burnett
Mark Hoffman
Tom McCarthy

Trustees Absent:

Ken Montague

Others Present:

John Turgeon, Executive Director for Maryland Environmental Trust
Kelly Price, Maryland Environmental Trust
Michelle Grafton, Maryland Environmental Trust
Ann Carlson, Maryland Environmental Trust
Jon Chapman, Maryland Environmental Trust
Talley Kovacs, Office of Attorney General

I. Call to order

MET Board Chair Mary Burke called the meeting to order at 4:07 pm via conference call due to the Covid-19 Pandemic.

II. Board Work Plan & Governance Topics

A. Adopting the Minutes

Ms. Burke moved for approval of the minutes for the March 2, 2020 Board Meeting. Mr. McCarthy motioned to accept the minutes. Ms. Jitkoff seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

B. Chairwoman Report

Ms. Burke updated the Board on the Board retreat that was supposed to be held in April at the Chesapeake Bay Foundation. She informed the Board that another retreat will be held but a date has not been set.

Ms. Burke requested the Board vote today on another matter that has been spoken about in previous meetings regarding a shortened Board meeting schedule. She said the new Board meeting months would take place in February, May, June, September, and November. Ms. Burke stated that if there was an important item that needed to be voted on that the Board can have votes by email.

Ms. Taylor- Rogers motioned to have the new meeting dates be approved. Mr. Bowen seconded the motion. All in favor.

Ms. Jitkoff questioned regarding committee meetings and when the committees would meet. Ms. Burke said that the committee would still meet monthly to discuss any items that needed attention. She advised this process would free up more time for staff with less Board meetings and would require the committees to be more involved and would also require the committees to work more at a committee level. Ms. Burke is requesting to have meetings with each of the committee chairs 1-2 times per year.

Mr. Turgeon reiterated what Ms. Burke said about the Board meetings changing to five meetings per year. Mr. Turgeon explained to the Board why certain months were picked and how these months affected MET.

Ms. Jitkoff said that the Finance Committee would be reporting about two months behind. She is not anticipating any problems, just letting everyone know that it would be a two month lag.

Mr. Bowen suggested that if an issue did arise conference calls or emails can take place for special situations.

Ms. Burke reported on the Forever Maryland Foundation (FMF). She reminded the Board that she is the board liaison to FMF. She informed the Board that she attended the first board meeting for FMF and she went through Board orientation. Ms. Burke advised the Board that they are working hard on KMB grants, the annual land conservation conference, newsletters for MET, and the annual report. She said that they are behind on spending but she thinks this may be ok and that they have hired a firm to do the search for the Executive Director. Ms. Burke said she is on the search committee for the executive director position for FMF. She advised the Board that FMF is also in search of new Board members and if anyone knows of any good candidates to please let her know so she can pass the names on. She also announced that John Griffin and Jim Morris are now representatives serving on the FMF Board.

Ms. Burke informed the Board that FMF is planning on awarding another 70k in June to MET as agreed in the contract and that Mr. Turgeon and Ms. Burke will be working on MET's case for funding support from FMF for future years..

Ms. Burke announced that Mr. Powell is terming off the board and this is his last board meeting. She said she was sending a heartfelt and deepest gratitude from the Board to Mr. Powell. Ms. Burke noted that Mr. Powell has the greatest insights and is very helpful.

A motion was made by Ms. Taylor-Rogers for Ms. Burke's comments to be added in the minutes with his service and dedication to the Board and the MET Staff.

Mr. Burnett seconded the motion. All in favor.

Mr. Powell addressed the Board regarding his departure and was appreciative of the time, hard work and effort the Board has put into MET. He thanked all for the opportunity he was given to serve on the MET Board.

Ms. Burke announced that Mr. Burnett has agreed to step into the new role of Vice-Chair.

III. Director Report

Mr. Turgeon reported that the Easement Program is actively managing 34 new conservation easement projects that would protect over 3,900 acres. He stated that MET has already surpassed its annual work plan goal to conserve an additional 1,000 acres for the fiscal year. Mr. Turgeon said Acting Program Manager Ann Carlson anticipates completing at least two additional projects by the end of June 2020, which will bring MET's protected acreage total to 1,201 acres for the fiscal year.

Mr. Turgeon informed the Board that for FY20, the Stewardship Program has overseen the completion of 309 easement monitoring assignments, which accounts for just over half of MET's annual work plan goal of 550 assignments completed. He said that 153 assignments were completed by MET staff, 128 completed by volunteers, and 28 completed by co-holding land trusts. Mr. Turgeon reminded the Board that MET has been under a mandatory telework order since early March. He said as part of this order, MET staff and volunteers are prohibited from conducting any work in the field, which includes easement monitoring visits and hopefully in the interim MET will be monitoring easements utilizing the most recent aerial imagery available from the Maryland Dept. of Information Technology.

Mr. Turgeon further explained to the Board about not being able to do field work due to the stay at home order in effect. He said that MET staff recruitment has been put on hold as well due to hiring freeze. He also told the Board that he was advised by DNR that DBM is looking for Budget cuts from all agencies. He said that DBM is requesting the agencies try to have non-staff related cost reductions, but since the budget does not reflect much overhead for MET that the Long-Term Contractual positions will be affected by the cuts and this will in return affect the monitoring results for FY21.

Mr. Turgeon announced at the end of April, Land Trust Assistance Program Manager Michelle Grafton submitted a nomination for MET to receive the 2020 Land Trust Excellence Award from the Land Trust Alliance. He said the nomination highlighted MET's 2019 launch of the non-profit Forever Maryland Foundation as an outstanding initiative to broaden support for land conservation. Mr. Turgeon said it also highlighted the recently expanded partnership and reach of its longstanding Keep Maryland Beautiful Grants program as an outstanding collaboration initiative and the Land Trust Excellence Award is made annually at LTA's Land Trust Rally in the fall.

Ms. Burke announced that Rally will be online this year due to the pandemic. She stated that everything will be virtual.

Mr. Turgeon updated the Board regarding the Keep Maryland Beautiful Grants program. He said that MET's Fiscal Officer Kelly Price is working with the Forever Maryland Foundation and DNR to process KMB grant awards to 80 recipients totaling \$307,500.

Mr. Turgeon said that he has been working with Toby Lloyd, Chair of the MET Board's Governance Committee, to obtain names of Board nominees. He explained that Mr. Lloyd will update the Board later on the process and the names that have been provided.

IV. Committee Reports

A. Governance and Nominating Committee

Mr. Lloyd announced that four candidates were selected from the Governor's office for being appointed to the MET Board of Trustees. Those names were Megan Benjamin, Megan D'Arcy, Will Cook, and Susan Zilberfarb. Mr. Lloyd stated that Mr. Cook was already on the FMF Board so he could not be on the MET Board as well; therefore, he is requesting that Megan Benjamin, Megan D'Arcy and Susan Zilberfarb be appointed to the MET Board.

Mr. Lloyd made a motion for all nominees except Will Cook to be appointed to the MET Board of Trustees.

Ms. Sarah Taylor- Rogers seconded the motion. All were in favor.

Mr. Lloyd said that two seats are still available on the Board and he is hoping to have those seats filled by the June meeting.

Mr. Lloyd advised the Board that he, Ms. Burke, and Mr. Turgeon will be meeting with Ms. Kovacs and Mr. Medoff from the Office of the Attorney General for DNR, regarding the Governance Committee Task List.

Mr. Lloyd announced that Ms. Burke's Board term is expiring on May 31, 2020, and the Board also needs to take a vote on the Chair and Vice Chair positions for the new fiscal year.

Ms. Burke and Mr. Burnett disconnected from the conference call for the Board to make a vote.

Ms. Jitkoff motioned to approve Ms. Burke for a second four year term to the MET Board of Trustees.

Ms. Taylor-Rogers seconded the motion. All in favor.

Mr. Lloyd motioned to appoint Ms. Burke and Mr. Burnett as Chair and Vice-Chair respectively. Mr. Powell seconded the motion. All in favor.

Mr. Turgeon contacted Ms. Burke and Mr. Burnett to have them rejoin the conference call.

B. Finance Committee

Ms. Jitkoff reported that as of the end of March 2020 over 57k in loss has been reported from Brown Advisory for MET's account due to the market.

Ms. Jitkoff stated that MET's private side net worth is still over \$3 million.

She said that the budget is moving forward well.

C. Easement and Stewardship Committee

Mr. Powell advised the Board of his departure from the MET Board of Trustees and wanted to give some remarks about Ms. Carlson and Mr., Chapman. He stated that Ms. Carlson and Mr. Chapman are being recognized for their creativity and perseverance, and Mr. Powell thanked them for their commitment to MET and the Board of Trustees.

Ms. Carlson reported that MET currently has 34 active easement projects with four amendment projects. She said two of the conservation projects are closing this week. Ms. Carlson stated the easement team has a very productive and robust project timeline, and some of the easement projects are going to be purchased projects as well as donated. Ms. Carlson advised the Board that so this fiscal year they have protected over 1040 acres, which surpasses the MFR goal that was set for them in FY20.

Mr. Powell mentioned that a consent calendar was sent out in the Board packet that needs to be approved.

Mr. Powell motioned to approve the consent calendar. Ms. Taylor-Rogers seconded the motion. All in favor.

1. Consent Calendar

- a) 20 acres in Washington County

- b) 34.89 acres in Garrett County
- c) 162.525 acres in Queen Anne's County
- d) 291 +/- acres in Dorchester County with the US Navy
- e) 26.785 acres in Harford County with Harford Land Trust
- f) 56.67 acres in St. Mary's County with the US Navy and Patuxent Tidewater Land Trust

Mr. Chapman addressed the Board regarding the request to approve a Proposed Amendment on 155.6 acres in Talbot County. The consensus of the Stewardship and Easement Committee was that the reduction in the number of total dwelling units (3 down to 2) on the conservation easement land and proposed location of the new dwelling unit enhanced protection of the property. The requirement of common ownership and prohibition of any further division (eliminating the non-density division right) of the property constituted "an extraordinary circumstance".

Mr. Chapman advised the Board that the Talbot County Department of Planning would like the amendment to have a subdivision. He said the terms of the easement state that they are not allowed to build more than one residence on the parcel; therefore they have to divide the parcel in order to add the secondary residence. The condition they are recommending for approval involves an appraisal that the owner would pay for.

Mr. Powell motioned for approval. Ms. Taylor-Rogers seconded the motion.

Ms. Burke asked if there would be a net loss or a net gain in conservation. Mr. Chapman said he is projecting a net gain.

Discussion took place amongst the Board regarding the easement.

All in favor of the motion.

Mr. Chapman spoke about aerial imagery that they are exploring and the benefits. He informed the Board that this could cost around 50k.

Mr. Chapman stated if they already have imagery that is available the company will only charge 8 cents per acre, but if they need to acquire the imagery it is 30 cents per acre. He said the 50k in cost is a mear projection.

Open discussion took place regarding monitoring for the rest of the fiscal year.

Ms. Burke stated that if MET uses old maps for monitoring then the maps that they use would count towards the year that the map was made. She said they cannot use old maps for a different year towards monitoring.

D. Agricultural Committee

Mr. Barao said he did have an opportunity to make a presentation in March at the Maryland cattlemen's Association annual meeting. Dr. Barao had 20 minutes on the program and gave an overview of what MET does. He advised the event did help increase people's awareness regarding MET and what opportunities the agency has to offer.

E. Land Trust Advisory Committee

Mr. Bowen advised the Board that most of the land trusts are very concerned about the loss of revenues they are experiencing. He said that assistance has been made available through the Care Act and the PPP, and that some land trusts have been able to acquire state assistance but most of the land trust's rely heavily on their donors.

Mr. Bowen stated that most of the land trusts have had a lot of turnover and he is suggesting that MET could help with providing information on managing their operations and staying afloat and successful during this pandemic. He said that he is in the process of making a 2021 work plan that he will share with the committee.

F. Grants Committee

Nothing to report.

V. Adjourned Meeting

Meeting adjourned at 5:20 pm.