

Maryland Environmental Trust
Board of Trustees Open Meeting Minutes
May 3, 2021

Trustees Present:

Mary Burke, Chair
Gary Burnett, Vice Chair
Sarah Taylor-Rogers, Secretary
Julia Jitkoff, Treasurer
Delegate Jim Gilchrist
Lori Lynch
Thomas Lloyd
Megan D'Arcy
Susanne Zilberfarb
Gregory Bowen
Mark Hoffman
Megan Benjamin
Senator Addie Eckardt
Tom Prevas
Tom McCarthy

Trustees Absent:

Diana Conway
Ken Montague

Others Present:

John Turgeon, Director, Maryland Environmental Trust
Wendy Foster, DNR Liaison, Maryland Environmental Trust
Josette Markline, staff, Maryland Environmental Trust
Kelly Price, staff, Maryland Environmental Trust
Ann Carlson, staff, Maryland Environmental Trust
Jon Chapman, staff, Maryland Environmental Trust
Michelle Grafton, staff, Maryland Environmental Trust
Talley Kovacs, Asst. Attorney General, Office of the Attorney General (OAG)

I. Call to order

Chair Mary Burke called the meeting to order at 4:04 pm via conference call due to the COVID-19 Pandemic.

II. Board Work Plan & Governance Topics

A. Adopting the Minutes

Ms. Burke asked for a motion to approve the minutes of the February 1, 2021, MET Board meeting. Ms. Taylor-Rogers motioned to approve the minutes; Senator Eckardt seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

B. Chair Report

Ms. Burke discussed the following topics with the Board:

- There has been no decision yet as to when State office buildings will re-open and when MET staff can return to working in the office full-time. Ms. Burke advised the Board that the June Board meeting will be held virtually. Ms. Burke is hoping the September Board meeting will be held in-person at the Crownsville State office building.
- Ms. Sarah Taylor-Rogers will be stepping off the Board at the end of the month and today is her last board meeting. She will have served two full terms as a Trustee. Ms. Burke informed Ms. Taylor-Rogers that a Governor's Citation for her service will be issued to her via mail. Ms. Taylor-Rogers gave a statement to the Board regarding her time as a Board member and her gratification for being able to contribute.
- The Circuit Court of Howard County granted MET's motion for summary judgement regarding the Chase Farm Easement litigation matter. Ms. Burke commended Ms. Kovacs and her legal team for their hard work and effort put forth on this case, as well as Mr. Turgeon and Mr. Chapman.
- The legislation submitted in the just ended General Assembly session proposing the appointment of MET Trustees by the Governor and legislative branches did not pass. The MET governance and legislative committees will work on a bill proposal that addresses the issues with the current process for selecting board members.
- Ms. Burke asked that any Board member who was interested in joining a board committee or switching committees should let her know now as she is planning on submitting the new committee assignments very soon.
- Ms. Burke advised the Board that the preparation of the new five-year MET strategic plan will begin in the fall with a board retreat. MET will be hiring a consultant to manage this process.
- Michelle Boyle has been named vice president of advancement for the Forever Maryland Foundation.
- The Keep Maryland Beautiful (KMB) grants were awarded on March 20th.

- Steve Quarles will be stepping down as Forever Maryland’s Board Chair and Nick Dilks has been nominated to serve as the new chair. A vote on his nomination will take place at the June Meeting.
- The annual Land Conservation Conference will be held July 13th and 14th at the Cal Ripken Stadium in Aberdeen. Ms. Burke requested all board members to attend.
- MET and Forever Maryland are planning for a joint gathering of board and staff over the summer, perhaps at the Land Conservation Conference.

III. Director Report

Mr. Turgeon thanked the MET staff for their hard work and dedication through the rough times and all the challenges that have taken place during the pandemic. He advised the Board that each and every person is doing an excellent job and has put forth tremendous effort to keep MET afloat and moving forward in the right direction, reminding everyone of the staffing issues MET has encountered along the way.

Mr. Turgeon reported on the following topics:

- In April, Ann Carlson was hired as MET’s Conservation Easement Program Manager. She had been serving as “Acting” program manager since May of 2019. Ms. Carlson thanked the Board and the MET staff for their help and support.
- New hire Josette Markline was introduced to the MET Board and staff. Ms. Markline has accepted the new Stewardship planner position with MET and that she will be working under Jon Chapman in the Stewardship program. Ms. Markline gave a brief introduction of herself and her previous experience with Maryland Environmental Service (MES).
- MET will be interviewing for the vacant Administrative Officer III position on May 17th and May 18th. MET is hoping to have this position filled by the start of the new fiscal year.
- In the General Assembly session that just ended, a bill (HB 860/SB 692) was just passed that extends the deadline from 2025 to 2030 for achieving the previously established State goal of protecting 1,030,000 acres of productive agricultural land. In addition to farmland protected by easements through the Maryland Agricultural Land Preservation Foundation (MALPF), the DNR’s Rural Legacy Program, and local government agricultural preservation programs, this new bill now counts all the land protected by MET’s conservation easements toward meeting the State’s goal.
- In March, 91 Keep Maryland Beautiful grants totaling \$312,500 were awarded toward environmental education, community cleanup, and beautification projects. KMB consists of four different grants: Aileen Hughes, Citizenship Stewardship, Clean Up and Green Up, and Janice Hollman.
- Mr. Turgeon reviewed the draft Annual Work Plan for FY 2022 with the Board that was sent in the Board packet.

- Mr. Turgeon informed the Board that the Finance Committee discussed the FY22 budget, and a final draft will be presented to the Board at the June meeting.

IV. Committee Reports

A. Governance Committee

Committee chair Mr. Lloyd reported on the following items:

- Mr. Lloyd, Ms. Burke, and Mr. Turgeon have been working with Ms. Kovacs on revisions to MET's bylaws. A draft of the changes will be presented to the Board for review as soon as they are finalized.
- Recommendations for new MET Trustees have been presented to the Legislative and Executive Branches, but the committee has not received any nominations yet.

B. Finance Committee

Committee chair Ms. Jitkoff reported on the following items regarding MET's board managed funds:

- The compilation report for the board managed funds was received from Brown Advisory and will be mailed out to all MET Trustees. Ms. Burke made a motion to accept the report. Mr. Lloyd seconded the motion. All voted in favor.
- Forever Maryland Foundation has received all payments from MET in accordance with the 2019 agreement between MET and Forever Maryland. The total amount received was \$1,150,000.00.
- Ms. Jitkoff gave a brief overview of the stock market's performance over the past year and its effect on MET's board managed funds.
- Ms. Jitkoff requested from the Board an approval of the budget vs. actual report from July-March FY 2021 and the balance sheet for the end of March 2021. Ms. Burke motioned for the approval and Senator Eckardt seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

C. Lands Committee

Mr. Burnett thanked Ms. Carlson for her hard work and well-deserved promotion.

Mr. Burnett asked Ms. Carlson to report on the three items on the consent agenda that were included in the Board Packet and listed below:

1. Consent Agenda:
 - a. Proposed grant of easement on 32.62 +/- acres in Harford County with the Harford Land Trust
 - b. Proposed grant of easement on 288.39 +/- acres in Dorchester County with the Eastern Shore Land Conservancy

Ms. Burke motioned to approve the consent agenda. Senator Eckardt seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

Ms. Carlson reported on the following items:

- In March MET hosted a Roundtable for our land trust partners to introduce MET's revised model easement document. Ms. Carlson presented on the model easement. Ms. Kovacs and Roger Medoff from OAG addressed questions. 44 people attended. The model easement was well received.
- Ms. Carlson has drafted five easements with the new model easement. The roll out of the document is going well. She will continue to review the model for any needed updates.
- A new Conservation Easement Program Manual is currently being developed.
- One conservation easement recorded since we last met: Loose Cow LLC (26+/- ac in Harford County). One conservation easement has sent to land records to be recorded: Izaak Walton League (48 +/- ac in Harford County)

Mr. Chapman gave an overview on the following easement stewardship topics:

- An update was given on the Lens remote easement monitoring project, followed by an overview of what the project entailed.
- MET has been approved by Volunteer MD to receive funding for another Americorps member for FY22 to serve as volunteer coordinator in the stewardship program. This individual will begin with MET in August 2021. Wendy Foster will be training the new volunteer coordinator.

Mr. McCarthy thanked Mr. Chapman for recently providing him the Lens software training and he informed the Board that DNR's Land Acquisition and Planning unit is interested in using Lens. Ms. Burke commented that the aerial imagery is fascinating and very user friendly.

D. Agricultural Committee

Nothing to report.

E. Land Trust Advisory Committee

Mr. Bowen turned the meeting over to Ms. Grafton for LTAC updates and she reported on the following:

- MET's land trust assistance and stewardship programs continue to collaborate with local land trusts and have received many monitoring reports for co-held easements.
- There are no new cooperative agreements with land trusts to present this month. There have been no issues with land trust partners.
- MET has been communicating monthly with all partners with e-communications.
- The news and publications section of MET's webpage has been revised.
- Ms. Grafton has participated in the Southern Maryland Conservation Alliance meetings with Mr. Turgeon. The Alliance should formally kick off this summer.
- The committee last met on 3/30 and discussed the restructuring of MET committees, as well as topics and projects of interest for the committee to explore over the next year.

F. Grants Committee

Nothing to report.

G. Outreach Committee

Ms. Zilberfarb stated that the Committee is in the early stages of a draft outreach plan and that they are looking for more strategic elements to be added.

V. Other Business

Ms. Burke asked for a motion to close the open meeting at 5:11 pm and to open a closed meeting session. Senator Eckardt motioned to close the open meeting and open the closed meeting. Mr. Burnett seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

VI. Closed Meeting

The meeting was closed pursuant to Md. Code Ann., Gen. Prov. Section 3-305(b)(7), (8) in order to discuss and receive advice regarding litigation with counsel and MET staff in the case of McCauley et al v. Roxbury View, LLC et al.

Closed meeting adjourned at 5:35pm.

Senator Eckardt motioned to close the closed meeting and reopen the open meeting. Mr. Burnett seconded the motion. All voted in favor.

VII. Adjourn Meeting

Meeting adjourned at 5:35pm.