

WILLOWSFORD CONSERVANCY
Meeting of the Board of Trustees

November 5, 2019, 4:30 pm

Sycamore House

Board Meeting Minutes

Attending: Mark Trostle, Rick DiBella, Stacey Kessinger, and Stan Settle - Trustees; Iris Gestram, Executive Director, Ashley Swensen, Retail Manager, Collin Thompson, Farm Manager, and Patrick Boleman, Land Stewardship Manager, absent Claudette Papathanasopoulous, Mary Hegedus and Chris Bodley

- I. Call to order at 4:34pm.
- II. Approval of agenda, motion passed 4 to 0.
- III. Welcome and Introductions – It was noted that a board orientation was held for the incoming members prior to this meeting.
- IV. Approval of Minutes [attachment], motion passed 4 to 0.
- V. New Business
 - 2020 Budget, Rick DiBella moved to approve the 2020 budget as presented. The motion passed 4 to 0.
 - i. As the developer subsidy has decreased resident assessments have increased; this is reflected in the 2020 budget. Both the Conservancy and the Founder feel confident that the budget reflects proven numbers that will be sustainable over time.
 - ii. The budget is based on an annual resident assessment of \$480 per household. Over time, annual resident assessments may reach \$600 per year after which mostly inflation adjustments are expected.
 - iii. Correction to the document titled Willowsford Conservancy FY2020 Budget DRAFT 10-28-2019, Net Operating Income 2019 Expected Total should be $\$105,159 + (\$318,672) = \mathbf{(213,513)}$. **\$175,004** was erroneously shown instead.
 - Communications Strategy 2020 Assessments
 - i. A strategy to communicate the budget and increase in assessments was presented to the board which includes an email to the residents jointly with the HOA assessment e-mail, posting of the budget and assessment notice on the Conservancy website, along with a community update meeting in early 2020. The timing of the announcement will coincide with the release of the HOA 2020 budget.
 - Staffing Update
 - i. Patrick Boleman, Land Stewardship Manager, will be relocating to North Carolina and has resigned from his position with the

Conservancy effective December 18, 2019. The position has been posted to be filled when a qualified candidate has been found.

- Board Transition
 - i. The existing board thanked those transitioning off for their service: Chris Bodley, Stacey Kessinger and Stan Settle. Rick DiBella, Mark Trostle, and Mary Hegedus will continue to serve as Founder members through the transition. Resident Claudette Papathanasopoulous will continue to serve on the board. The Founder appointed the incoming board members, Greg Licamele, Chase Rowan and Avi Sareen.
- Agenda Items for January Agenda
 - i. Community outreach and resident communication
 - ii. Capital Reserves
 - iii. Enforcement of Violations
 - iv. Endowment

VI. Old Business

- 2020 Benefits, HR and Payroll
 - i. Benefits administration, payroll and HR are being transitioned away from Paychex to Kelly and Loudoun Insurance Group, effective January 1, 2020. Based on preliminary review of cost estimates the Conservancy can provide the same level of benefits at similar cost for the Conservancy employees in 2020.
- 2020 Board Meeting Schedule – bi-monthly, 3rd Tue, 5:00 pm
 - o January 21 – **re-schedule:** Monday, Jan. 13 @ SH
 - o March 10 – **re-schedule:** March 24 (Lodge)
 - o June 16 – **re-schedule:** June 9 (SH)
 - o September 15 (Lodge)
 - o November 10 (SH) (budget approval)

VII. Reports

Land Stewardship (Patrick Boleman, Land Stewardship Manager)

- Planning for western Grove trail additions is completed; trails will be installed by the end of the year with final details (i.e. light stonework, trail markers) completed by spring 2020. Trails will be opened once land development has finished.
- Staff are continually repairing boardwalks along Wetlands Way. Initial boardwalk design and construction materials used during the land development phase have led to rapid deterioration. The Conservancy is spot-fixing issues and plants to replace deteriorating boardwalk sections this winter. Staff are developing cost-effective boardwalk designs which are expected to deteriorate less quickly.
- Before start of the firearms deer management season, additional chain posts were added to block entrance into hunting zones during trail closures, for improved safety.

Tree Work and Work Orders

- Tree work continues to dominate a substantial portion of work time; staff completed over 350 hours of hazard tree inspections and removal in 2019 to date.
- More than 180 work orders have been completed to date in 2019. These include a few work orders where no action was taken. Not included is tree work completed without

work order submitted through the HOA work order system for work on Conservancy Open Space. Additional staff training and tools are being put in place to manage the workload.

Open Space Violations

- The Conservancy continues to coordinate with the HOA to streamline the open space violation process. Open space disturbances by residents continue to be a significant issue requiring substantial staff time and resources to manage and repair. More robust and effective enforcement is needed.

Wildlife Management

- The Deer Management Program started off successfully with 41 deer taken during the initial Oct 5-Nov 4 archery hunt, including 39 antlerless deer. The first firearms hunt is scheduled for Nov 5-9. This year's season extends through January 4.

Farm Production (Collin Thompson, Farm Manager)

Following this last week of summer CSA, the Farm team will dedicate time to winterizing the farm by completing fall harvests, finishing winter plantings, and performing annual winter maintenance, as well as making time for well-earned rest for the hard-working farm team.

Overall, it was a successful season with robust produce offerings. The year is finishing strong with a diverse offering and substantial CSA boxes, hopefully leaving members excited to sign up for 2020 CSA shares

Financially, the Farm performed significantly better than in past years with a few continued challenges mostly due to the new Farm management team still in the learning phase of operations. My team and I have identified additional ways to improve efficiencies and reduce labor per unit across all enterprises. I am looking at 2020 as a test for a few new approaches and am confident that proposed changes will continue to improve the Farm's performance.

Substantial progress continues to be made in cost control. Given the substantial improvements already achieved this year, the 2020 budget is deliberately conservative. As we approach operations with a greater sense of innovation, creativity and entrepreneurial spirit, Willowsford Farm still seems to be in its nascent stages despite having been in operation for several years. Key investments and improvements were made in 2019 and will continue to be made, budget permitting. These include infrastructure improvements, market development, and equipment management.

Wholesale orders have slowed, primarily due to substantial staff turnover at our primary buyer, Common Market Co-op. I hope the Co-op's internal operations will stabilize even with their expansion in 2020. At the same time, we continue to explore additional markets to build resilience in our wholesale approach.

Livestock operations are being re-assessed. Egg sales have slowed in 2019, creating a production surplus despite flock reduction from 2018. Depending on winter sales, there may be a greater flock reduction than anticipated for winter 2019-2020 and for 2020. However, we want to avoid an egg shortfall for 2020 farmers market sales which are untested waters for Willowsford Farm. The new pigs are growing well, and we anticipate harvesting half of the animals by the end of 2019 to test the meat quality. The focus of Willowsford Farm will continue to be on vegetables which provide a higher financial return. Until the farm is in a more financially stable position, it seems wise to reduce in areas that do not provide enough return, i.e., livestock.

Currently, we are focused on winter CSA, winter maintenance, and planning for the 2020 season. I have drafted the 2020 crop plan and prepared new ground for a planned expansion of growing areas. We continue to focus our efforts on (a) recruitment of new CSA members and drop sites; (b) direct-to-consumer sales (CSA and farmers market); and (c) continued wholesale growth.

In summary, 2020 will be a year to test theories we have developed during the 2019 season to continue improving the farm in terms of production and the “bottom line.”

Farm Retail & CSA (Ashley Swensen, Retail Manager)

Winter CSA Memberships	Total	Budget
Veggie Shares	100	100
Meat Shares:	23	20
Farmers Choice	14	
Chicken (Sold Out)	10	12
Milk	30	20
Eggs	60	100
Total Sales (Gross)	\$31,897	

Online Sales in Addition to CSA - Totals for 2019	
“Farm Stand Online” Subscribers	137
Boxes Sold (Since 6/21 launch)	43
Box Revenue	\$1,345
“Extra Items” Purchased	\$6,310

Farm retail experienced significant disruptions to operations this fall with the sudden closures of two of our major suppliers, Tuscarora Organic Co-op (supplementary produce), and Trickle Springs (ice cream – top selling item). Our farm team has made a great effort to increase Willowsford product available to the Farm Stand in place of TOG.

We’ll continue outreach over the winter to find new local farm partners, particularly for fruit as well as ice cream for 2020. Winter CSA sales are proceeding well, and we expect to meet or exceed all subscription goals.

Plans for the 2020 CSA and market season include the addition of home deliveries and new off-site pickup locations in place of the Boat House. Marketing for 2020 will begin in December, with strong pushes planned in February and April to correspond with our historical spikes in CSA sign-ups. Details are outlined in the Marketing Plan submitted with the 2020 Budget. Our direct-to-consumer sales opportunities for 2020 will begin in March with the seasonal opening of the Brambleton Farmer's Market.

Programs & Events (Iris Gestram, Executive Director)

The Conservancy offered approx. 48 programs, classes and events between March-November serving an estimated 1,200+ residents and non-residents.

Conservancy Venues

Grant campsite rentals reached 64 reservations this year during the May-October season. The Hidden Meadow Event Field was rented twice in addition to serving as the site for the annual Community Bonfire & Camp-over event. Cedar Pond Pavilion was rented twice in addition to serving as site for education programs. The Archery Range is successfully serving the resident Willowsford Archery Club which hosted multiple archery education events; membership exceeded 60 residents in fall. Promotion of venue rentals and firewood sales will be a focus in 2020 to increase resident engagement, sales and rental income.

VIII. Other

IX. The meeting was adjourned at 6:22pm