

**WILLOWSFORD CONSERVANCY**  
**Meeting of the Board of Trustees**  
**Minutes**

June 9, 2020, 5:00 pm

**Attendees:** Board Trustees: Mark Trostle, Rick DiBella, Claudette Papathanasopoulos, Greg Licamele, Avi Sareen, Mary Hegedus, and Chase Rowan. HOA Board: Harry Pugh and William Atwill. Conservancy Staff: Iris Gestram, Taryn McFarland, Jamie McArdle, Ashley Swensen and Collin Thompson.

**I. Call to Order**

Meeting was called to order at 5:02pm

**II. Approval of Agenda**

Motion to approve agenda passed without dissent.

**III. Approval of Minutes from March 24, 2020 [attachment]**

Motion to approve minutes passed without dissent.

**IV. New Business**

**Dominion Energy Pipeline Upgrade, The Grant [attachment]**

Dominion requested to utilize land and create a temporary construction easement in Willowsford's Grant village in order to safely upgrade its natural gas pipeline. Conservancy land would be most impacted by this work, including the closure of one trail for the duration of the project. Dominion has proposed an agreement that includes: restoring grades and contours; restoring all vegetation including with container-sized trees; 2-years of maintenance including watering, trimming and weeding of vegetation; and replacement of vegetation below 75% survival rate. In addition, the agreement includes a fee paid to the Conservancy. The work would begin in July and last approximately 5 months. Mark Holliday (Developer) and Taryn McFarland (Conservancy) would serve as Dominion's liaison for the project and restoration work.

Mark Trostle motioned to approve the plan under the conditions outlined in the agreement (attached).

Motion passed without dissent.

**Land Parcel for HOA Tot Lot, The Greens [attachment]**

Residents initiated a process last fall for a tot lot in the southern section of the Greens village. A suitable piece of land has been identified near the intersection of Ellenvale Farm Drive and Tulip Poplar Place. This location is also easily accessed via Raptor Perch Trail. The land is currently owned by the Conservancy and would need to be transferred to the HOA for the tot lot to move forward. This requires a boundary line adjustment that would slightly expand the HOA land and diminish Conservancy land by roughly half an acre.

The board did not express any objections.

Greg suggested adding interpretive signage near the tot lot, since it is adjacent to Raptor Perch Trail.

### **2020-2021 Deer Management Program Season [attachments]**

- *Smithsonian 2019 Deer Impact Study Final Report*  
The Smithsonian Conservation Biology Institute submitted Willowsford Conservancy's 3<sup>rd</sup> Deer Impact Study. Overall, the study suggests that deer are still having a large impact in the community, though some oak and ash trees are seeing good seedling regrowth in some areas. The study results are in line with what is observed in the broader Northern Virginia region, which still has an extremely high, but declining, deer population. The report concludes that the Conservancy's deer management program can be a successful way to control the deer within Willowsford and give new seedlings a chance to grow.

Overall, the 3 years of studies have confirmed what the Conservancy has been observing: there is an overpopulation of deer in all four villages that impacts forest regeneration. The Conservancy does not recommend continuing with more studies because of the high cost and because there is not enough new knowledge coming out of this work. The studies already provide adequate baseline data and information about deer movement within the villages.

It will likely be a long-term process to lower the deer population in Willowsford, barring an outbreak of Chronic Wasting or other disease. Moving forward, the Conservancy will continue to rely on Virginia state figures and guidelines to ensure appropriate deer management.

- *2020-2021 Program Document and Proposed Dates*  
The Conservancy proposed 2020-2021 Deer Management Program dates that accommodate deer biology and trail access for residents during holidays. The dates were also selected in order to ensure no trails are closed for extended periods of time. Because the trails have numerous access points, it is important that ALL trails within the Greens and Grant are closed during firearms hunting, even if the hunting is restricted to only a portion of the open space. The Conservancy has increased signage and will continue its annual outreach and communication campaign before and during the deer management season to ensure residents are aware of the program and any closures. The Conservancy is also in close contact with the Sheriff's Office, which is fully informed about the program. Since participants are required to label all hunter equipment with ID numbers, it is easy to identify any equipment that does not belong to our hunters and report poachers. Participants will again be required to contribute 10 hours of volunteer work to the Conservancy this season.

### **Conservancy Amenities Use During COVID**

The Conservancy proposed to open Cedar Pond Pavilion and the Grant Campsites the weekend of June 13th. Hidden Meadow event field will not be opened because it is set up for large groups that cannot convene safely at this time. At Cedar Pond Pavilion, the Conservancy proposed to open for up to one rental per week. At the Grant Campsite, the Conservancy proposed to open the entire site for up to only one group at a time. The restroom would be cleaned/sanitized between rentals. If the Conservancy adds another restroom to the campsite, it will propose opening for up to two groups at a time. The board did not express any objections to this plan.

## V. Old Business

### **Conservancy Endowment Operating Procedures [attachment]**

The Endowment Operating Procedures were updated to clarify that income can be used for “Conservation/stewardship projects”, it is not intended to cover regular operating costs. The document was also updated to indicate the process for distribution of funds, as well as the process for “loaning” funds to the Conservancy for emergency purposes.

With one grammatical edit, the Board approved the Operating Procedures without dissent.

### **Board Meeting Resident Engagement**

The Board generally agreed to move forward with resident engagement guidelines as described below. These guidelines may be refined.

- Residents are encouraged to reach out to the resident board members with comments, questions and agenda items, or to submit the information to [info@willowsfordconservancy.org](mailto:info@willowsfordconservancy.org). Proposed agenda items must be submitted at least two weeks in advance of the meeting date for board consideration.
- Residents may request to speak at the beginning of a board meeting. Speaking time is limited to 3 minutes per person and residents are asked to submit a copy of the written notes to the board. Speaking requests must be submitted at least 48 hours before the scheduled meeting time.
- Written questions submitted during Zoom calls will be answered after the meeting by board or staff as appropriate.
- HOA board representatives may participate with comments and questions.

### **Conservancy Board Participation at HOA Board Meetings**

Resident board trustees agreed to rotate participation at HOA board meetings.

## VI. Committee Updates

### **Finance Committee Report**

The Conservancy has had difficulty finding individuals that can support the diverse roles required for the Business Operations Manager position. The roles include bookkeeping, communications and HR. Therefore, the Conservancy has decided to outsource bookkeeping and promote Jamie McArdle to continue with communications and some HR responsibilities. KPI will be contracted for bookkeeping. This move will save the Conservancy roughly \$20,000, while meeting the organization’s needs.

In reviewing the financial statement, revenue outlook for the year is as follows:

- CSA revenue will do extremely well
- Retail sales will hit figures (despite the farm stand being close) by selling online
- Program revenue will be short due to Summer Camp cancellation
- Resale fees might be down
- Farm lease income will be down because the lease had been expected to start in January but did not start until April.

Expense outlook:

- Conservancy will not be filling the maintenance position for now
- There are more work orders for large trees that require contractors. This will continue to increase in coming years.

## **VII. Staff Reports**

### **Land Stewardship**

See ED report. In addition, the team is seeing an increase in waste/debris on Conservancy property. It was suggested that the Conservancy work with the HOA to publish notices to residents about preventing litter. Covid might be part of reason we are seeing more trash, as residents may be reluctant to pick up trash that does not belong to them.

### **Farm**

See ED report.

### **Retail**

See ED report. In addition, sales are beating expectations. The CSA program saw a 69% overall retention rate from 2019, compared with a national average in the low 40s; and sold out for the season. For Willowsford residents, the retention rate was 78%. Staff will work to retain members into next season.

### **Business Operations**

See ED report. In addition, Iris thanked staff for their dedication and hard work and for bringing much creativity to their jobs throughout the pandemic. There have not been any missed workdays.

The Conservancy's number one priority has been to ensure families are able to use outdoor trails during this time. While most programs were canceled, one moved to a zoom call, which went very well. The first in-person programming since the pandemic started will take place on June 30<sup>th</sup> at Cedar Pond Pavilion with 10 participants total. Two in-person programs will likely move forward in July. The Conservancy is hoping it will be able to move forward with the highly popular community bonfire and campout this fall.

## **VIII. Other**

### **IX. Adjourn**

Meeting was adjourned 6:59pm.

ATTACHMENT  
WILLOWSFORD CONSERVANCY  
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June 9, 2020

ED REPORT

**Land Stewardship** (Steve Lockett, Assistant Field Operations Manager)

During the COVID-19 shutdown, the Conservancy continued to fully operate with safety protocols in place, assuring that trails, amenities and open space were well maintained to support the wellbeing of Willowsford residents during this challenging time with opportunities for outdoor recreation, education and family activities.

Trails

- Conservancy trails are mowed bi-weekly with The Grange and Grant one week and The Grove and Greens the following week. Volunteers are assisting with trail maintenance and bridge repairs. Participants in the Deer Management Program are volunteering to help with removal of old barb wire from open space and the rebuilding of The Grange trail overlook structure.
- Staff completed comprehensive trail surveying reports throughout all 4 villages and placed updated trail wayfinding maps in each trailhead kiosk.

Work Orders

- A high volume of work orders this spring included 35 work orders between Feb-May compared to 22 work orders the previous year; and included larger-scale tree removals. Overall, the need for removal of hazard trees continues to increase due to natural decline of trees, long-term impacts from construction work, pest and diseases, severe weather, and other factors. The Conservancy aims to have non-urgent work orders completed within 4 weeks of receipt with "same business day" responses to emergency and hazard conditions. In addition to tree work, there are increasing reports of builder- and resident-generated debris in open space, and more time is being spent by the land stewardship team picking up trash in open space.

Firewood

- In Jan-May 2020, 18 firewood orders were received for a total of 5.83 cords of wood and 8 firewood racks, generating \$4,027 in income. In Jan-May 2019, 3 orders were received for a total of 1 cord of wood and 2 racks; total income: \$838. Sale of Willowsford harvested firewood makes use of dead trees and hazard trees on open space. Most importantly, it protects Willowsford woodland from pests and diseases that can be transmitted from off-site firewood transported into the community. Conservancy amenities require the use of on-site firewood.

Amenities

- Cedar Pond Pavilion has been de-winterized and is ready for rental and program use. Repair work at The Grant campsite has been completed and the campsite is

ready to be opened on June 12, with COVID-19 protection guidelines in place. The Hidden Meadow campsite and event field is ready to be rented once COVID-19 regulations permit larger gatherings.

### Miscellaneous

- Four hunter volunteer days have been scheduled. During the May 13 and 27 volunteer days, hunters removed ¼ mile of old fencing that included barbed wire and 5-strand metal fencing. We are looking forward to the June 13 and 27 volunteer days when hunters will assist with board walk repairs.
- After completing the reforestation project with residents on Haybine Lane in The Grove, the Conservancy continues to receive inquiries from residents interested in similar projects.
- Training: The land stewardship team consistently trains to build expertise and perform more work in house. Assistant Manager Steve Lockett and Ranger Rob Garvin are completing arborist training to continue managing tree work in-house to lower operating costs and provide residents with prompt and knowledgeable service. Additional pesticide applicator training and licensing is underway to support the Conservancy's invasive plant removal work.

### **Farm Production** (Collin Thompson, Farm Manager)

During the first main season CSA week of May 25, the Farm packed and distributed around 240 vegetable boxes at the Farm Stand, Pin Oak Park and through home delivery – with a resounding success.

This spring has been very cold. Multiple frosts/freezes in May drastically slowed the growth rate of most crops and a few tender summer crops sustained cold damage. Despite the challenges, we were able to offer diverse early CSA boxes, including partner products (mainly fruit and specialty items). We may see slight delays in maturity of certain summer crops but hope they will rebound with substantial growth in the heat.

The first wholesale delivery to our partners at Greenheart Juice Company included 100# of spinach; other products will soon follow. We are excited to work with Greenheart as they use a lot of product and have been easy to work with through the planning phase. Common Market Co-op continues to be another important wholesale purchaser.

The arrival of our new refrigerated delivery truck provided not only with additional delivery capacity but also refrigeration to maintain product quality on the road. The Farm outgrew the existing truck as we expand CSA home delivery. Having additional capacity allows deliveries to run more smoothly and yield more value with each stop. Estimated additional delivery fees of about \$15,000 will help defray staffing and equipment costs for CSA home deliveries.

The Farm also traded two implements for three more appropriate pieces of equipment. We gained substantial efficiencies in soil management using a new manure spreader and drop spreader and will be able to irrigate more effectively using a new irrigation reel.

In summary, things are progressing well at the farm. We are thankful for the warmer weather that is helping crops mature and fill our shares.

During the **May 31 Willowsford Food Drive**, the Farm collected over 600 lbs of non-perishable pantry staples at Sycamore House and The Lodge for donation to Loudoun Hunger Relief. Willowsford Farm sends excess produce to this local non-profit often during the peak growing season. We thank all residents for helping Loudoun neighbors in need!

**Farm Sales & Marketing – May 2020** (Ashley Swensen, Sales & Marketing Manager)  
2020 Season CSA Sales & Statistics

	Total	Membership Goal		2019 Shares
Main Veggie Shares:	402	350	115%	300
Family	128			
Personal	197			
Starter	77			
Meat Shares:	70	30	233%	38
Farmers Choice	50			
Chicken	20			
Milk	72	40	180%	48
Eggs	200	200	100%	181
Flowers	74	50	148%	47
Total Sales (Gross)	<b>\$375,163</b>	Budget	<b>\$310,741</b>	
			<b>121%</b>	

2020 Demographics			
Total Household Memberships		415	
New Members		187	Returning Members 228
New Members from WSF		110	Returning Members WSF 161
New Members Other		77	Returning Members Other 67
Total WSF Members	271	65%	
Total Other Members	144	35%	

2020 continues to provide both great sales as well as challenges for CSA and Retail. We are pleased to have exceeded our membership goal of 400 CSA veggie subscribers—a

growth of 100 members, and a 33% increase from last year. Add-on shares have also risen well above original targets.

In addition to the season-long commitments, there is strong interest in our a la carte sales through 'Farm Stand Online'. We increased the e-mail database for notifications from about 300 participants to 970. Our second "pop-up" offering in April using this format sold 209 veggie boxes plus meats, dairy and dry goods generating nearly \$9,000. During our first week of CSA (May 25), these trends continued with \$3,501 of extra products sold. Total extra product sales to date are \$24,373.

We anticipate online sales to replace sales lost from the Farm Stand, which remains closed at least through July 15 due to concerns related to Covid-19, to protect the safety of our customers and reduce risk of transmission to Farm staff. Because we operate with a small team, losing even one employee to illness would be challenging. We will assess the remainder of the Farm Stand season in June.

Regarding 2020 proposed summer camp participation, similar concerns led us to conclude that the Farm cannot participate this year. We continue to restrict access to Farm premises to our own personnel and authorized delivery drivers to maintain a safe workplace and the cleanest possible environment for Farm products.

In place of on-premise marketing and engagement, we focus on new digital platforms for community building and customer retention. We launched a Farm YouTube channel with video updates, as well as new CSA materials for member download. These include a comprehensive guide to frequently used features in Harvie, and a PDF guide to making the most of a CSA membership. We continue to search for partners to provide video culinary tutorials for member download.

We continue to focus on customer service, member engagement and education with the goal of maintaining our excellent retention rates from last season among our new members.

2019-2020	
Retention for WSF Members	78%
Retention Other Members	55%
Total Retention	69%

## Business Operations

### Administration:

- The Conservancy welcomes new Land Stewardship Manager Taryn McFarland who began work on May 25, replacing Patrick Boleman who left the position for personal reasons. Thanks to Assistant Field Operations Manager Steve Luckett who had been managing land stewardship operations since December!
- Effective April 27, the Conservancy entered into an agreement with Leesburg-based KP Insights to manage the Conservancy's Bookkeeping and Accounting functions. Jamie McArdle was promoted to Business Operations Coordinator,



managing the Conservancy's communications and resident relations efforts, HR and office administration. The Business Operations Manager position has been eliminated.

- To strengthen resident outreach during COVID-19 restrictions, the Conservancy added a children's/family activity section to the weekly E-newsletter, created a Facebook page, launched the Farm YouTube channel, and will continue to explore and offer virtual classes and programs. The April 23 Zoom class Right Plant Right Place was very successful with 43 registrants and lively registrant participation. Campsite rental opportunities are available starting June 12, with COVID-19 safety measures in place, and a small-scale "Forest Bathing" program is planned for June 30 using Cedar Pond Pavilion and The Greens trails (limited to 5 parent-child pairs).

#### 2020 Program Overview (as of May 30):

##### Completed

- TinkerGarten Nature Play Classes, Sundays, Jan 19-Feb 23, 10:30-11:45 am, The Grange (18 participants)
- Community Update Sessions, Wednesday, Feb 19, 6:30-8:00 pm, Sycamore House and Tuesday, Feb. 25, 6:38-8:00 pm, The Lodge (49 registrants)
- Farm Shares 101 CSA Info Sessions (Farm Team); Wednesday, March 11 at Sycamore House and Sunday, March 14 at The Lodge (35 registrants)
- Right Plant Right Place – Native Plants for the Home Garden (Julie Borneman, Watermarks Native Plant Nursery), Thursday, April 23, 6:30-8:00 pm, Sycamore House (43 registrants) – Zoom Call
- Feathered Fosters (Ashley Swensen), April 18-25, Grange Farm Stand (100 max – sold out)
- Pinewoods Loop Trail Opening – Canceled due to COVID-19. The new trail was opened in March.
- CSA Season begins May 25 – Nov 15

##### Planned

- Exploring Nature with Your Child, interactive nature walk, Tue, June 30, 6:30-8:00 pm, (Kim Strader, Certified Forest Therapy Guide), Cedar Pond Pavilion, (12 max)
- Amenity Rental Season Opens: Cedar Pond Pavilion, Grant Family Campsite, June 12-Oct 31, The Greens, The Grant
- Gardens in Public Spaces – Site tour with Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy, The Grange Wet Meadow and Native Plant Demonstration Garden, Saturday, July 25
- Pollinator Walk with Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy, Sunday, July 26
- 6<sup>th</sup> Annual Community Bonfire & Camp-over, Saturday-Sunday, Sept. 12-13, Hidden Meadow Event Field, The Greens (300 max) (Sept. 26-27 Rain Date)
- HOA Autumn Fest, Saturday, Oct. 17, The Greens