



**MINUTES**  
**Meeting of the Board of Trustees**  
January 19, 2021

**Attendees:**

Conservancy board members: Claudette Papathanasopoulos, Mark Trostle, Avi Sareen, Greg Licamele, Chase Rowan, Rick DiBella. HOA board members: Harry Pugh, William Atwill, Frank Blackstone. Staff: Iris Gestram, Taryn McFarland, Jamie McArdle, 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 [attachment]**

Mark Trostle requested to edit "Mark will draft" the reciprocal trail use agreement for Hartland to instead read "Mark offered to draft."

Motion to approve minutes from November 10, 2020 with this minor edit passed without dissent.

**IV. New Business**

○ **2021 Board Election and Transition [attachment]**

*As a reminder, per the Conservancy by-laws, this election is intended to be the first and only election in which 2 Willowsford residents will be elected by fellow-residents to serve on the Conservancy board of trustees. Thereafter, the board is entitled to appoint successors.*

Claudette presented the election recommendations per the attachment.

- Iris offered for staff to handle vendor selection.
- The board agreed the election should coincide with a community meeting. Claudette and Iris will confer on a potential date that is 2-3 weeks before the May 18<sup>th</sup> board meeting. The May 18<sup>th</sup> board meeting could then serve as the first organizational meeting of the new board.

- The board agreed a task force should be formed to help coordinate the election and tasks per the timeline in the attachment. Claudette Papathanasopoulos, Chase Rowan, Harry Pugh and Mark Trostle offered to serve as task force members.

In addition to the 2 elected trustees, the new board will also include 3-5 developer-appointed trustees. The developer's plan is subject to change but for now includes appointing the 3 existing resident board members for 2-year terms (Claudette Papathanasopoulos, Chase Rowan and Greg Licamele), Avi Sareen for a 1-year term, and Mark Trostle for a 1-year term in an advisory role.

Bill Atwill was asked about his level of interest in transitioning to the Conservancy board. He is not interested at this time.

Current board trustees were asked to send feedback indicating their willingness to continue serving on the new board. Trustees were also asked to send feedback to Iris about Mark serving in a potential advisory role on the new board.

- **Septic Upgrades**

The Conservancy manages three residences for employees. The drain field for the residence on Peach Orchard Lane is in immediate need of replacement. This is a legacy issue as the drain field is old and near the end of life. The developer has agreed to pay 50% of the cost and the Conservancy is currently getting cost estimates. Over time, the rental fees for the residences generally cover these types of maintenance expenses. This expense will not have a big impact on the 2021 Conservancy budget, especially since the budget has a surplus this year and the new reserve fund is in place.

- **Greens Section 18 [attachment]**

The new plan for Greens Section 18 was reviewed. The plan includes 15 lots with over 50% of the added land area left as open space. A few land parcels will be going to the HOA because they are higher maintenance (e.g., storm water, entrance, etc.), but much of it will be deeded to the Conservancy. A temporary construction entrance to the property that crosses Conservancy open space, and was requested by Willowsford residents, is planned to be converted to a trail after construction. The Conservancy will work to connect this section to The Greens trail system. The developer is close to submitting the plan for county approval.

- **2021 Program Schedule [attachment]**

The Conservancy presented a robust schedule for 2021. The Conservancy is making an effort to have all staff participate during programming so that residents have more opportunity to hear from and interact with staff. The programs will be adjusted as needed due to COVID.

## V. **Old Business**

- **Hartland Reciprocal Trail Use [attachment]**

Willowsford continues to consider a reciprocal trail use agreement with Hartland. The agreement would potentially connect and allow shared use of the trails within Hartland, the Grant and maybe the Grange. Though the Grange Farm Loop trail is adjacent to the Conservancy equipment building and driveway connected to Fleetwood, there is currently no safe place to cross the road, and this may prevent the Grange trails from connecting to Hartland and/or the Grant.

Both the Conservancy and HOA will participate in drafting and/or reviewing potential agreements.

- **Conservancy Office Move**

Conservancy staff is currently in process of moving to the Boat House office. IT and phones have been set up. Files have yet to be moved. The move-in deadline is January 31 and there are no foreseen issues meeting this deadline. As a reminder, the goal is to make this a functional office, but also maintain the existing look and feel of the Boat House. The plan is to continue operating through electronic means during COVID, but to eventually keep regular office hours in which residents can visit the Boat House and speak to staff in-person.

## **VI. Committee Updates**

### **○ Finance Committee Report [attachment]**

The Conservancy's reserve study is on schedule to begin in February. The Conservancy's facilities are simpler than the HOA facilities and therefore the reserve study could be comparably shorter and easier. The Boat House will not be included in the Conservancy reserve study because it is part of the HOA's study.

In reviewing the final budget numbers for 2020, advertising came in considerably under budget. The advertising budget is primarily spent on farm marketing materials. Since CSA shares sold out much faster in 2020 than anticipated, money was not needed for later marketing campaigns.

## **VII. Staff Reports**

### **○ Land stewardship (see attached report)**

There was a request for the Conservancy to better advertise volunteer opportunities. Picking up trash is one of the best ways residents can help out. Trash has become a bigger problem during COVID with more residents using the trails and working from home. Trash often gets blown onto the rails and into open space from poorly secured resident trash and recycling cans. Staff did install a trash can at the Greens trailhead, which has been helpful. Staff would like to see additional trash cans installed at trail heads.

Deer management program results were reviewed. Taryn will have more responsibility over this program moving forward. It was noted that the archery program took 1/3 of the deer, which indicates the importance of continuing to continue both the archery and firearms programs. This year deer were taken more consistently across the hunting areas, suggesting good program design.

There continues to be an issue with people on the trails even when they are closed for hunting. This issue is not specific to Willowsford; other communities are also seeing similar issues. It is requested that residents call the Sheriff's department when they see people trespassing on closed trails. It is important to take pictures and video to help law enforcement follow up on trespassers.

### **○ Farm (see attached report)**

There have been good sales in the 2021 CSA season already. Auto-renewal will kick in next week and could have a higher rate than previous years because the share sizes and pickup options are the same.

Overall, in 2020 the farm deficit was cut in half and the farm found key ways to save on farm production. Still, the farm faces challenges to ever reaching a breakeven budget, including: operating without government subsidies that are given to other farms; paying higher costs for insurance and other expenses because of operating as an "institutional" farm; choosing to pay a living wage to its farmers, and providing community services that don't directly generate income.

For these reasons, the farm will continue to inch closer to breakeven, but may never reach it. However, if one divides the farm costs by number of households, it gives a good return to the community in terms of services, education and programming, and increased real estate value of Willowsford homes.

#### **VIII. Other**

- Next Meeting: Tuesday, March 16, 5:00 pm, Zoom Call
- Mary resigned from board as of December 31, 2020.
- Chase Rowan agreed to serve as interim treasurer at least until the new board is installed.

#### **IX. Adjourn at 6:40 pm.**

### EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

#### Administration

Conservancy staff are moving offices to the Boat House; the move is scheduled to be completed by January 31. Phone, IT, and other infrastructure has been installed. Some furniture, including tables, seating, shelves and file cabinets, are being added as needed to supplement existing furnishings while maintaining the general appearance of the building interior. During COVID, meetings will continue online and by limited appointment. Once restrictions are lifted, the Conservancy plans to post regular business hours.

Tenant house maintenance: septic systems at both the Lightridge Farm Road and Peach Orchard Lane tenant houses need upgrading. At the Lightridge house, the undersized "pump and haul" system requires an additional tank to expand capacity to a level appropriate for the house. At Peach Orchard, the septic field has reached the end of its life. It is in disrepair and, as per the LC Health Department, must be replaced. While, generally, expenses can be covered through rent payments, the costs for the two systems needing major work simultaneously in 2021 will exceed budgeted funds this FY. Because, to some extent, it is a "pre-existing condition", the developer has pledged to cover 50% of the Peach Orchard house cost for interim measures and replacement.

#### Conservancy Programs

The Conservancy is launching a robust 2021 calendar of education programs and events, online and in-person, as COVID-19 developments permit. A preliminary schedule has been included with the board materials.

#### **Land Stewardship** (Taryn McFarland, Land Stewardship Manager)

Strategic planning and prioritizing are key at this time of year to ensure our goals for the upcoming season are met. With several restoration and trail improvement projects on the horizon, we are "front-loading" our year with work to make things go smoothly later in the season.

#### Trail Maintenance and Work Orders

During winter, the team is focusing on repairing and improving trail infrastructure. Trail Maintenance Surveys continue across the four villages to evaluate all infrastructure including over 45 bridges in addition to culverts, boardwalks, overlooks, and more. Work

also includes the removal of dead and hazardous trees near trails and structures before the start of the growing/mowing season.

Conservancy Trail Maps are being updated. Additionally, "assisted-friendly" maps are in progress, depicting trails that are easier to traverse with strollers, wheelchairs, etc. Work orders are being received at a usual rate.

Firewood orders continue to come in steadily and a cost analysis was completed to assure all costs associated with the sale of firewood and racks are covered, including staff time. Sales prices were updated to reflect this.

2020 firewood and rack sales yielded \$14,789 compared to 8,438 in 2019, a 57% increase. Amenities rental income increased to \$5,980 from 3,630 in 2019, a 61% increase mostly due to rental of the new Hidden Meadow Event Field for larger groups.

### Land Management

A 2021 priority is the completion of a Land Management Plan. Sub-plans for upcoming projects, invasive plant control, and meadow & grassland management are nearing completion. These management plans outline goals, practices, and priorities to support land and wildlife conservation, budgeting, long-term planning, and resident outreach. As part of the grassland management planning, 2021 bush hogging maps have been updated, fine-tuning the timing of bush hogging to support ground nesting birds and other wildlife.

The Conservancy has an opening for a 13-week summer Land Stewardship internship, to be posted this week.

### Wildlife Management

The 2020-2021 season of the Conservancy deer management program successfully ended on January 8. Completing its 5<sup>th</sup> year, program has an excellent safety and harvest record. A total of 133 deer were harvested this season (compared to 136 last year, and 61 deer in 2018-19), including 123 antlerless deer (92%) and 10 antlered deer. Approx. one third (47 deer) was taken using archery.

Deer harvest by village\*:

70 deer (53%) - The Grant

47 deer (35%) - The Greens

8 deer (6%) - The Grove (limited to 1 hunting zone)

8 deer (6%) as part of Willowsford Farm nuisance deer control.

\*Deer take reflects deer pressure, hunting effort, and opportunity to safely hunt. For example, no hunting takes place in The Grange even though deer pressure is high and over-browsing of young trees limits has been noted. The Conservancy will continue to evaluate and manage the program for maximum safety and best possible deer management to reduce deer browsing impact and improve forest regeneration in Willowsford open space.

### Home Habitat Resources and Resident Outreach

The Conservancy is working with the HOA and both boards on strengthening the conservation and land stewardship message in the community Design Standards. We plan to provide more comprehensive “home habitat” resources on the Conservancy website by March 2021. We hope to inspire Willowsford residents to use more native plants in their home landscapes and create wildlife friendly habitat. Website content, education programs, e-news and video content, and local partnerships will help provide tools, resources, and ongoing community dialog around sustainable stewardship of both community open space and resident home landscapes.

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

Winter on the farm looks much different than the summer months. While we are harvesting for the weekly winter CSA distributions, most of our time is spent on maintenance, repair, and planning for the upcoming season.

### Maintenance & Repair

Our winter project list is focused both on getting equipment serviced and continuing to make facilities more user friendly and efficient. We reconfigured the barn to better accommodate storage and maintenance needs by converting an old dry storage bay into a shop for more space and easier equipment access. The old shop now houses egg washing as well as better insulated storage for products requiring mid-range temperatures, such as zucchini, peppers, and tomatoes.

The new delivery truck was branded with a “wrap.” The bold, attractive graphics and text make a powerful statement and will be an effective CSA marketing tool while the truck is running deliveries through the neighborhood.



The farm continues to sell or trade in equipment that is no longer useful, including a spader (improper size for our operations), an electric cultivating tractor (highly inefficient for farm use), and other smaller items not well suited for our farm's soils and operations. Revenue and trade-in credits are being re-invested in other farm equipment to boost productivity in the long run.

### Planning

Staffing continues to be an ongoing challenge. Assistant Farm Manager John Buckley left the farm effective January 15, returning to school to study forestry. He has been an asset to the farm and will be missed, though we are happy for him as he takes this next step in his career. The farm will restructure the team slightly. Alexandra Burnham was promoted in late 2020 to Harvest & Sales Manager, and the new hire will hold the complementary position of Production Manager – both reporting to the Farm Manager. The Production Manager will oversee field operations leading up to harvest, at which point Alexandra will lead harvest, pack, and sale of products. Interviews are underway.

We are also hiring 2021 seasonal staff, with two of the three full-time seasonal positions filled. Part-time seasonal harvest and delivery positions will be posted in the spring. The applications we received for seasonal roles are encouraging. I am excited we will have a good team with strong experience.

Production planning is well underway, based on sales projections. We are making first contact with wholesale partners to determine their needs and adjust our production accordingly. We anticipate wholesale outlets to be more stable than in 2020 and are vetting those partners harder to shore up that part of the business.

### Marketing, Sales, and Revenue

CSA auto-renewals are scheduled for January 28, and a communications campaign is underway to notify shareholders. Members can adjust autorenewal settings prior to the 28<sup>th</sup>. Without changes to the distribution configurations, we are hopeful autorenewal is easy and effective for shareholders. Once autorenewals have processed, additional marketing campaigns are scheduled to reach 2021 sales goals.

CSA sales were strong for 2020. We responded to an increase in demand, largely due to COVID-19, with an increase in offerings. This helped offset sales lost due to the closure of the farm stand. We met or exceeded CSA sales goals, and saw an average of \$3,365 in extra sales per week. Restructuring of share sizes and offerings yielded an extra \$1.50 in average basket size to \$25.40 in 2020 from \$23.90 in 2019.

In total, the farm halved its net loss compared to the 2019 fiscal year (from -\$301,000 to -\$151,000), and finished FY2020 about \$25,000 better than budgeted.

As we look to 2021, we are encouraged to see YTD sales far ahead of 2020 YTD, due to substantial December sales from "early bird" promotions. We anticipate another spike in sales with January 28 autorenewals and are interested in seeing how 2021 retention rates compare to 2020. The 2020 total retention rate was 69%. We anticipate a decrease due to the high number of first-time customers who purchased a share during COVID and who may not be ideal CSA customers.

A customer satisfaction survey of current CSA members was conducted at year-end. Of 139 respondents, 99 stated that they anticipate participating in 2021 (71%), 27 are undecided, and 9 have decided against a Willowsford CSA. This is likely a skewed sample.

### CSA Summary

2021 Main Season Share Sales	2021 YTD Actual	Goal	2021 YTD % Sold	2020 YTD Actual	2020 Actual Shares	2019 Actual Shares	2018 Actual Shares
<b>Veggie Shares</b>	143	400	35.75%	54	403	300	253
Family	34			11	128		
Personal	71			33	197		
Starter	38			10	77		
<b>Meat Shares</b>	34	50	68.00%	5	70	38	N/A
<b>Eggs</b>	103	200	51.50%	33	200	181	219
<b>Flowers</b>	27	80	33.75%	13	74	47	58
<b>Total Sales (Gross)</b>	<b>\$145,136</b>	<b>\$381,071</b>	<b>38%</b>	\$50,048			

2020 Winter Shares	2020 Actual	2020 Goal	2019 Actual
<b>Veggies</b>	151	100	100
<b>Custom Meats</b>	35	30	24
<b>Milk</b>			35
<b>Eggs</b>	99	100	67
<b>Total Sales (Gross)</b>	<b>\$48,800</b>	<b>Budget</b>	<b>\$39,350</b>

2020 Demographics					Retention 2019 to 2020
<b>Household Memberships</b>		<b>415</b>			
New Members		187	Returning Members	228	
New Members from WSF		110	Returning Members WSF	161	78%
New Members Other		77	Returning Members Other	67	55%
Total WSF Members	271	65%			Total retention: <b>69%</b>
Total Other Members	144	35%			

2019 Demographics		
<b>Household Memberships</b>		<b>329</b>
Total WSF Members	207	63%
Total Other Members	122	37%