



Meeting of the Board of Trustees
July 27, 2021, 5:30 p.m.
Boat House, Willowsford Lane

Attendees

Conservancy board members: Greg Licamele, Karyn Moreland, Claudette Papathanasopoulos, Chase Rowan, Avi Sareen, Mark Trostle, Jake Virag. Staff: Iris Gestram, Taryn McFarland, Andrew Dunham.

- I. Meeting was called to order at 5:30 p.m.
- II. Approval of Agenda
Motion to approve agenda passed without dissent.
- III. Approval of Minutes [attachment]
Motion to approve minutes from May 18, 2021 board meeting passed without dissent.
- IV. New Business

Executive Director Transition

Iris will be departing as the executive director for personal reasons and leaving the Northern Virginia area. She will be on site until Oct. 8 and then available to help prepare the budget and transition to a new executive director (if hired) until Nov. 12. Iris has served as the Conservancy's only executive director for the last six years.

- V. Old Business

Strategic Planning

Greg and Claudette reviewed a draft timeline and draft survey questions for the strategic planning process discussed in May. A few changes were suggested by Board members and staff, including an open-ended question on what the Conservancy could provide to residents, as well as how can people become more connected. The Board provided direction to move

forward and publish the survey and schedule focus group meetings, which Iris agreed to help facilitate until Nov. 9.

NOVEC Buffer Planting Project, Paddock Gate, The Grange [attachment]

The Board continued discussion on the proposed NOVEC substation in The Grange, a portion of which is adjacent to Conservancy open space. NOVEC is working on a letter of commitment to the Conservancy for \$150,000 worth of tree plantings and related project work to provide a buffer for residents in this area. The Board provided direction to proceed with NOVEC at this time.

Peach Orchard Tenant House Septic System

First discussed at the Jan. 19 Board meeting, the septic system at Peach Orchard Tenant House failed in December 2020. Since then, a number of estimates, Loudoun County Health Department permits and planning work have been completed. The septic system has been deemed a legacy issue, so the Willowsford Developer will cover 50 percent of the final cost. The Board provided direction to move forward with a new septic system at a cost not to exceed 47,600. Peach Orchard House itself needs repairs and renovations, however the forthcoming reserve study will help identify those costs. Peach Orchard House is integral because it provides housing for Willowsford Farm staff.

VI. Committee Updates

Finance Committee Report [attachment]

Due to consultant staffing delays, the reserve study will now be completed in October. As of this report, the budget remains in solid shape for this fiscal year, including under budget in many categories. Home values have increased, leading to higher-than-anticipated transfer fees when a home is sold in Willowsford (0.25% of the price goes to the Conservancy).

VII. Staff Reports

Land stewardship (see attached report)

Farm (see attached report)

Administration (see attached report)

- VIII. The Board unanimously adjourned the meeting at 7:25 p.m. and moved into executive session at 7:31 p.m. to discuss personnel matters. Executive session adjourned at 8:10 p.m.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Land Stewardship (Taryn McFarland, Land Stewardship Manager)

Trail Management

With two summer interns, the team was able to complete a greater amount of trail work in the four villages. Phase 2 of the **Pinewoods Loop Trail** addition is almost completed, and future work will focus on improving the existing trail portions.

Bridges and other parts of the original trail infrastructure have aged at a greater rate than anticipated this spring and many items had to be moved up in the **trail improvements** schedule. In the last 30 days the team replaced 13 bridges and mats, 5 of which had been scheduled for September repairs. Due to the faster rate of deterioration the team has re-directed our focus on repair and preemptively addressing items that had been scheduled for future repairs. Our goal is to prevent any potential issues by reinspecting infrastructure and addressing them immediately.

The Conservancy met with several residents, including trustee Jake Virag, interested in organizing a **resident trail volunteer group** with the focus of supporting the trail system. The volunteers will aid staff in trail projects, help monitor the state of the trail system, volunteer with basic trail maintenance, and serve as community advocates and staff-resident liaison.

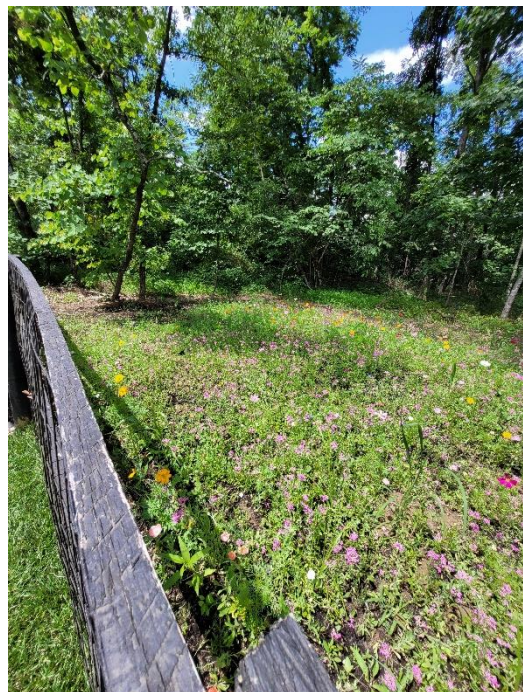
Land Conservation

In June, **Dominion Power completed the pipeline tree planting** and removed remaining BMPs. A month after planting, the trees currently meet their promised success rate. Approx. 17% of the trees have died which is within the acceptable range. It will continue to be monitored; if the percentage of surviving trees drops below 75% the Dominion project manager will be notified.

In early summer, **invasive species control** has focused on removing mile-a-minute and oriental bittersweet. Volunteers stopped pulling Garlic Mustard in late June when the plant set seed.

With increased resident interest in **reforesting or restoring areas around homes**, the Conservancy has been able to guide two approved projects this year with good success. A resident in The Greens removed invasive vegetation and restored the area to a native meadow. A second resident in The Grange reforested a turf area with 40 native trees and shrubs.

The Conservancy is in discussion with Loudoun County to **participate in the County's nutrient credit program**. We are working on an agreement in which the County will reforest an area on Conservancy open space according to Conservancy specifications (within County program guidelines); the County will receive nutrient credits in exchange.



In partnership with Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy, volunteers will be visiting Willowsford streams to conduct **stream surveys** to monitor the water quality in open space. We plan to use the collected data to better manage Conservancy waterways.

In June, the land stewardship team completed **bushhogging** of meadow buffers in all four villages. This is scheduled to take place again in August and November. The fall bush hogging of meadows is scheduled for November, using a contractor.

Work Orders

Tree work orders continue to be received at a consistent rate. YTD, we received 34 tree work orders compared to last year's 33 work orders by July 31. Many work orders involved large trees that needed to be contracted out. We are remaining within budget for tree work and are projecting to remain so for the rest of the year.

Firewood Orders

Between Jan-June 2021, there were 37 orders for firewood for a total of 12.1 cords of wood sold compared to 21 orders in 2020 (6.7 cords). Ten firewood racks were sold through June compared to 7 racks last year. Total revenue through June 30 is \$7,324 compared to \$4,772 in the same period last year.

Amenity Rentals

For May-July 23, 2021, there were 30 Grant Campsite rental nights, a Cedar Pond Pavilion (CPP) and a Hidden Meadow rental. Total revenue to date: \$2,220. During the same period in 2020, there were 21 campsite rental nights, a CPP and a Hidden Meadow rental. Total revenue: \$2,851.

Miscellaneous

The Conservancy has held two **volunteer days** for participants in the Deer Management Program. Both days volunteers removed large quantities of barbed wire fencing and old farm debris from open space in The Greens, Grove, and Grant. Several other volunteers have been aiding the Conservancy in trail repairs and maintenance across the villages.

Staff performed upgrades and maintenance on the **Peach Orchard tenant house** including installation of a water filtration and purification system.

Land Stewardship staff presented several successful **programs** recently including a Farm Walk, a Woodland Walk, and two fishing classes lead by Trout Unlimited. The fishing classes in particular received a lot of interest from residents.

Willowsford Farm – (Andrew Dunham, Farm Manager)

Staffing

Alexandra Burnham, our Harvest & Sales Manager, recently moved on from the Willowsford Farm team with a crew send-off on July 16th. Duties are temporarily being divided between the farm team until the position is refilled.

Ashley Swenson, who had requested to continue as a marketing and communications contractor last fall, ended her engagement with the farm to care for her family. Melissa Dunham is filling the role as a marketing and communications contractor.

Production Manager Eric Morrison joined the Farm team on May 24.

Sales

The Farm sold out of offered Summer CSA shares and utilizes our online marketplace, Farmstand Online, to sell additional produce when production exceeds the needs of committed shares. During each twice weekly CSA distribution, 40-50 customers purchase additional one-time boxes. These boxes are picked up at the Farm Stand or Pin Oak Park; we do not offer home delivery for one-time shares. This is a good avenue for Willowsford residents to access farm products throughout the growing season.

YTD Financials:

January-June sales revenue actuals are slightly above projections, and costs & expenses are less than projected. The Farm's net loss to date is quite a bit more positive than budgeted. Reduced expenses can be attributed, in part, to lower staffing costs due to staff turnover in the beginning of the year as well as savings in production expenses. We plan to use some of the buffer to purchase a few small tools that will save labor and allow us to accomplish more with the same level of staffing.

Engagement and Outreach

The Farm team, led by contractor Melissa Dunham, held the first of two week-long farm camps under the HOA Camp Willowsford umbrella, for children ages of 5-8. Kids learned about soil, harvested vegetables, collected eggs, and had fun playing outdoors. We concluded the week with a farm social at the Farm Stand for the campers and their families that was attended by all 19 camp families. The second farm camp is fully enrolled. The crew really enjoyed interacting with the children on the farm.

Weather

The last few weeks have been hot and dry. The crew is busy irrigating and harvesting crops early in the morning to ensure quality.

Maintenance

The farm crew continues to work on deferred maintenance of equipment and buildings. The farm road between the parcels at the Grange Farm has been repaired, reducing wear on machinery and erosion. The Farm management team continues to assess existing machinery and equipment with an eye to our upcoming business planning.

Conservancy Administration

Board members and staff began the **Strategic Planning** process with an initial planning meeting on June 4, including trustees Greg Licamele and Claudette Papathanasopoulos, and ED Iris Gestram.

Staff continue to work with Reserve Advisors to complete a **Reserve Study** which, in turn, will inform investment planning for reserve funds. Due to delays at Reserve Advisors, the site visit is scheduled for August.

The Conservancy is planning to **host 150 large-scale HOA Managers** for the **Sept. 23 HOA event** at Willowsford. Our team will provide a Conservancy overview at Sycamore House

along with a Land Stewardship presentation at Hidden Meadow Event Field and a Farm presentation at the Farm Stand.

The Conservancy continues to work with NOVEC on the **Grange reforestation project** near Paddock Gate Place, to provide a substantial tree buffer on Conservancy open space in anticipation of the planned NOVEC substation on adjacent commercial property.

Programs & Events: From Jan-July 2021, there were 205 registrations with total revenue of \$3,883; compared to 179 registrations in 2020 with revenue of \$4,507. In addition, 80 children are registered to participate in Conservancy & Farm Summer Camp activities. Registration for the popular Annual Community Bonfire & Camp-over opened in late July.

Executive Director Transition: After six years as Executive Director of Willowsford Conservancy, Iris announced her resignation for personal reasons, effective this fall. Iris is working with the Board on a transition plan.

2021 Conservancy Programs and Events (as of July 23, 2021)

JANUARY

- **Winter Planning for Your Garden** – Live Webinar, Jan 21, 6:30-8:00 PM
Julie Borneman, owner, Watermark Woods native plant nursery. (10 participants)

FEBRUARY

- **Native Plants for the Home Landscape Part I: Perennials, Grasses & Small Shrubs**
Live Webinar, February 4, 6:00-7:30 PM (17 participants)
Iris Gestram and Taryn McFarland, Willowsford Conservancy.
- **Native Plants for the Home Landscape Part II: Trees and Larger Shrubs**
Live Webinar, February 11, 6:00-7:30 PM (19)
Taryn McFarland and Iris Gestram, Willowsford Conservancy.
- **Bears in Your Backyard: Becoming BearWise in Willowsford** – Live Webinar,
Wednesday, Feb. 17, 4:00-5:00 PM. Jordan Green, District Wildlife Biologist for
Northern Virginia, VA Department of Wildlife Resources. (14)

MARCH/APRIL

- **Foster a Feathered Friend**, March 20-27
Willowsford Farm. Limited to 100 family registrations. (100/sold out)
- **Earth Day Volunteer Opportunity** – Trail Clean-up, week of April 22. Fifteen
Families participated.
- **Amphibian Walk** with Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy, April 25, The Greens.
(15/sold out)

MAY

- **Amenity Rental Season:** Cedar Pond Pavilion, Hidden Meadow Event Field, Grant
Family Campsite are open for residents April/May 1-Oct 31.
- **Native Plant Sale**, May 2, 10 AM-2 PM, at Watermark Woods native plant nursery.
- **Mother's Day Farm Pop-Up & Plant Sale**, Saturday, May 8, The Grange
- **Willowsford Farm CSA Season**, May 25 – November 20
- **From Farms to Woods**, May 27, 4:00-5:30 PM, Pinewoods Loop, The Grove
Nature Walk, Steve Luckett, Andrew Richardson, WSF Conservancy (13 of 15)

JUNE

- **Fishing for Beginners**, June 11, 5:00-6:00 PM at Willow Lake, The Greens Willowsford Conservancy and Trout Unlimited's local chapter. (14 of 20)
- **Camping 101**, June 24, 4:00-5:30 PM at the Grant Campsite, Andrew Richardson, Willowsford Conservancy. (Canceled due to low registration)

JULY/AUGUST

- **Woodland Walk**, July 8, 4:00-5:30 PM, Pinewoods Loop, The Grove Taryn McFarland, Rob Gavin, Willowsford Conservancy. (8 of 15)
- **Butterfly Walk**, July 17, 9:30-11:00 am, The Grange Wet Meadow and Farm Loop Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy
- **Advanced Fishing**, July 23, 5:00-6:00 PM at Willow Lake, The Greens Trout Unlimited and Willowsford Conservancy. (12 of 20 participants)
- **Water Conservation and Ecology**, July 29, 4:00-5:00 PM, Grange Wet Meadow Meadow Walk, Taryn McFarland, Willowsford Conservancy (3 of 15 to date))
- **Pond Life**, August 24, 4:00 -5:00 PM at Cedar Pond Pavilion, The Greens Nature Program, Taryn McFarland

Summer Camp

- o Discover Camp Week 1, Week 2 (ages 9-12), 9 am-2 pm (40 – Sold Out)
 - A Day at the Farm (Mondays, July 26 & Aug 2), Grange Farm Garden & Farm (Ashley Swensen)
 - Nature Exploration (Fridays, July 30 & Aug 6), The Grange and The Greens (Taryn McFarland)
- o A Week at Willowsford Farm – Week 1 (ages 5-8), Mo-Fri, July 12-16, 9 am–2 pm; The Grange Farm Garden & Farm (Swensen) (20 – Sold Out)
- o A Week at Willowsford Farm – Week 2 (ages 5-8), Mo-Fri, Aug 9-13, 9 am–2 pm; The Grange Farm Garden & Farm (Swensen) (20 – Sold Out)

SEPTEMBER

- **6th Annual Community Bonfire & Camp-over**, Saturday-Sunday, Sept. 11-12, Hidden Meadow Event Field, The Greens (300 max)
- **Meadow Walk**, September 16, 4:00-5:00 PM, Grange Wet Meadow Taryn McFarland, Willowsford Conservancy (max 15)
- **HOA Large-scale Managers Meeting**, September 23, Conservancy and Farm tours and presentations for 150 participants