



DRAFT Minutes of the Meeting of the Board of Trustees
September 28, 2021
Boat House, Willowsford Lane

Attendees

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

I. Meeting was called to order at 5:33 p.m.

II. Approval of Agenda

Motion to approve agenda passed without dissent.

III. Approval of Minutes [attachment]

Motion to approve minutes from July 27, 2021, board meeting passed without dissent.

IV. New Business

o Amenity Use after Dusk

Residents of Cullen Run Place in The Greens and HOA staff requested the Board discuss amenity use after dark, specifically at Cedar Pond Pavilion following reports of young adults gathering there at night. Staff reviewed security camera footage and there have been no issues with vandalism or disrespectful actions. Following Board discussion about legal issues for outdoor recreation and the difficulty in restricting access to Cedar Pond Pavilion or other Conservancy amenities at night, no action will be taken at this time.

o Easement Request, Fleetwood Road

Timber Ridge LLC has requested (informally at this point) an easement from the land stewardship operations entrance in The Grange to Fleetwood Road for a proposed

housing development. Timber Ridge would pave the driveway apron and provide fencing the Conservancy requires, while then accessing the easement for a temporary period of time. Staff recommends proceeding because of the long-term benefit of fencing and better sight distance at the driveway when completed. Staff is awaiting official easement language; staff and Board chair will execute easement administratively unless the proposal needs additional Board discussion.

V. Old Business

o Executive Director Transition

At the time of the meeting on Sept. 28, an offer had been made to a candidate for the executive director position.

The Board unanimously approved the following resolution for the outgoing (and founding) executive director, Iris Gestram:

RESOLUTION OF THANKS AND GRATITUDE TO IRIS GESTRAM WILLOWSFORD CONSERVANCY BOARD OF TRUSTEES

WHEREAS Iris Gestram served as the first Executive Director of the Willowsford Conservancy from 2015 to 2021;

AND WHEREAS Iris helped build the foundation for the Conservancy's operations, created original programming, recruited its talented staff, and developed its integral role within the then-nascent Willowsford neighborhood and the surrounding community of Northern Virginia;

AND WHEREAS Today the Conservancy is a vibrant organization and an integral part of a now-fully-realized Willowsford;

AND WHEREAS Today the Conservancy is well able to serve its mission to "protect, maintain, and promote the viable, long-term use of the land, integrating farming, recreation, conservation, and education to enhance the quality of life for the residents of Willowsford and the greater community;"

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED that the Board of Trustees of the Willowsford Conservancy expresses our profound thanks and gratitude to Iris Gestram for her years of service;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Board commends her for her multitude of accomplishments as Executive Director;

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED that the Board wishes her every success and happiness in her future endeavors.

o Strategic Planning

Board co-leads Claudette and Greg provided an overview of the strategic planning process. Nearly 1,100 respondents participated in a survey to the whole community, with near equal representation from all four villages. Next steps in the months-long effort will be to seek professional support to analyze survey results, plan focus group sessions and outline a final timeline for a strategic plan to be adopted. With a new executive director joining, there may be some variance to align a new director with the planning. The Board approved proceeding with next steps within funds already allocated in this year's budget (or hold funds over to 2022).

o The Grange south - update (Substation/Data Center; Northstar Blvd).

Staff provided an update on the ongoing planning for two projects in The Grange: 1.) a NOVEC substation and 2.) the extension of Northstar Boulevard. At the time of this meeting, staff was waiting to hear from NOVEC after months of no response. NOVEC had previously indicated it would fund a buffer along the property. Staff noted the planting deadline for the fall has now passed and planting will need to occur in the spring. It was reiterated that this substation project is within the property rights of the owner to proceed; the Conservancy's only role will be to plant and monitor the buffer (the HOA has been working with residents and Loudoun County on possible alterations).

The Virginia Department of Transportation has requested two small easements from the Conservancy for the extension of Northstar Boulevard near The Grange – a temporary construction easement and a permanent stormwater easement. Compensation has been offered and staff has no concerns about these easements.

VI. Committee Updates

o Finance Committee Report - [attachments]

The FY2022 budget will be developed between this meeting and the next meeting on Nov. 9. The budget timeline:

- Oct. 4 –1st Draft (Finance Committee)
- Oct. 25 – 2nd Draft (Finance Committee)
- Nov. 2 – Draft Budget to Full Board and HOA Board
- Nov. 9 – Approval (Conservancy Board) & submittal to HOA Board

VII. Staff Report [attachment]

The meeting was adjourned at 7:01 p.m.

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR'S REPORT

Land Stewardship (Taryn McFarland, Land Stewardship Manager)

Trail Maintenance

Since July, the team addressed various trail maintenance goals. Bridge repairs and removal of hazard trees along trails have continued in The Greens and Grant. The entire Bull Run Overlook trail received pruning of encroaching vegetation and Wetlands Way also had trail clearance performed, including the removal of large rocks and boulders from trail that have caused damage to the mowers, backfilling with soil or crushed stone. In The Grant, trail improvements included the addition of crushed stone and drainage improvements. Volunteers in the deer management program cleared stream crossings of debris and added or stabilized steppers.

Land Management

The Blue Larkspur Meadow restoration project was completed successfully. The meadow finished its transition, and native vegetative cover was established throughout this difficult site. It will continue to be managed under our normal practices including invasive species removal.

Figure 1. Blue Larkspur meadow before (July, 2020) and after (September, 2021) restoration.

With the recent acquisition of Allen Farm Pond, the Land Stewardship team has been improving the conditions of both the water and its surrounding environment. Efforts to combat the algae have been ongoing and additional steps are being taken to bring algae



under control. To reduce the high levels of nutrient runoff and improve water quality, the area will receive riparian buffers this fall.

In partnership with Loudoun Wildlife Conservancy, Willowsford Conservancy will conduct a reforestation project worth \$7,000 in grant funding: 300 trees will be planted downstream from Allen Farm Pond to better protect the impaired Broad Run branch from the impacts of developed areas.

Willowsford Conservancy also received approval from Loudoun Soil and Water Conservation District for \$6,000 in grant funding for a riparian planting directly around Allen Farm Pond. Grant funds will go towards planting 900 tree tubelings in the open area around the pond; total project cost is \$10,500. This project will significantly improve an area frequently visited by residents and turn Allen Farm Pond into an attractive walking area as well as valuable wildlife habitat.

August bushhog buffers were completed in all four villages.

Staff are monitoring the Dominion Pipeline tree planting in The Grant. The success rate of the trees has dropped during the dry summer as predicted. There will be follow up with the project manager to ensure the area is replanted as agreed upon.

To combat invasive vegetation, 6 acres of autumn olive was removed from a meadow adjacent to Beaver Dam Pond in The Greens. The shrubs were cut at the stump and herbicide applied directly to the open cuts. Additionally, lespedeza and mile-a-minute were removed in the Grange and Grant villages.

Figure 2. Before and after removal of autumn olive shrubs.

The bluebird monitoring season concluded in August, and despite concerns of bird fatalities due to the unknown bird illness, it was another successful year at Willowsford. There were 84 fledglings total; 45 of those were bluebirds. The fledgling rate was down by 8% from last year, however no drops in population seemed to occur due to the illness.



Work Orders

The team has consistently been able to close out tree work orders within two weeks of receiving them. There have been 39 tree work orders year-to-date.

Firewood Orders

Between Jan-Sept 2021, there were 49 orders for firewood for a total of 15.9 cords of wood sold compared to 27 orders in 2020 (8.4 cords). Fifteen firewood racks were sold through September compared to 13 racks last year. Total revenue through September is \$9,815 compared to \$6,085 in the same period last year.

Amenity Rentals

For May-September 27, 2021, there were 59 Grant Campsite rental nights, a Cedar Pond Pavilion (CPP) and two Hidden Meadow rentals. Total booked revenue to date: \$4,430. During the same period in 2020, there were 57 campsite booking nights, two CPP and two Hidden Meadow rentals, including a weeklong boy scout camp rental of Hidden Meadow. Total booked 2020 revenue: \$6,061.

Miscellaneous

Boy scout Martin Mosuela worked with the Conservancy to complete his Eagle Scout Project by creating four owl boxes and hanging them in The Greens, Grange, and Grove. He is also writing an article about the project and the value of owls for us to share with the community.

The Land Stewardship team lead several programs for the Willowsford community. These included a Water Conservation & Ecology class and a Pond Life class. The Conservancy also participated in the HOA Discovery summer camps by leading two days of outdoor exploration with the campers. The Conservancy worked with Virginia Cooperative Extension, the DOF, and the DWR to host a 'Forest in Your Backyard' program for homeowners interested in conserving their land and better understanding the environment. Finally, the Conservancy host the sold-out annual Bonfire and Camp Over event September 11-12. It was a successful event and well received by the community.

Willowsford Farm – (Andrew Dunham, Farm Manager)

Staffing

The management team is working on the 2022 staffing plan and budget. We have greatly increased volunteer activities on the farm, freeing staff time to work on other projects.

Sales and Revenue

The summer CSA season continues through Nov. 21. With current shareholders moving out of the area we sold additional pro-rated shares to customers who had been on the waiting list. Through our online marketplace, Farmstand Online, the Farm sells additional produce when availability exceeds the needs of committed shares.

We are preparing to sell 2021 CSA winter shares, consisting of 5 distributions in December, January, and February. Summer 2022 CSA shares will be offered to existing shareholders by December.

The farm will solicit lease proposals from select area farmers to lease the Peach Orchard pastures starting in 2022. This likely will include longer terms (3-5 years) to facilitate brush and invasive species removal. A long-term fertility plan will also be explored. Our current tenant is due to vacate the premises by the end of September.

YTD Financials

January-August sales revenue actuals are below budget, and costs & expenses are also less than projected so we continue to have a bit of a buffer. Reduced revenue is due to

the decision to cap CSA sales 50 shares below the budgeted 400 shares during the farm manager transition, as well as fewer 3rd-party retail product offerings during the transition and changing pandemic buying habits as CSA customers purchased fewer one-time boxes. The lower expenses can be attributed, in part, to open staff positions early in 2021.

Engagement and Outreach

We held two farm walks that were well attended, with over 70 attendees. Residents walked through the fields at the Grange Farm, fed the laying hens, and took a wagon ride to see the vegetable fields. These events provide good networking and educational opportunities and are provided at no cost.

The Farm's 10-year anniversary dinner will be held at the farm stand on October 2 with Chef Emily preparing the meal using ingredients from the farm. We will have live music, games, and activities.

Volunteer engagement has been stepped up in the past month. Volunteer opportunities include washing eggs, CSA box packing, hosting at CSA distribution sites, assisting with the anniversary event, and fence clearing. Having volunteers on the farm is engaging for the crew and allows us to focus crew efforts on other projects.

Weather

After a hot and dry spell, we have received ample rainfall. The crew has been busy planting and cultivating fall crops including spinach, radishes, lettuce, cabbage, and various cover crops to build soils.

Maintenance & Repair

The farm crew continues to work on deferred maintenance of equipment and buildings. Highlights include replacing the nesting boxes on the chicken coops and repairing gates to exclude deer at the Grange Farm. The Farm management team continues to assess existing machinery and equipment with an eye to our upcoming strategic planning.

Conservancy Administration

Staff continue to work with Reserve Advisors to complete the **Reserve Study** which, in turn, will inform investment planning for reserve funds. The site visit was completed on September 8, and we are awaiting the Reserve Study report.

Contracts were signed for the two **septic system projects**: the system expansion at the 25213 Lightridge Farm Road house and the drain field replacement at the 25003 Peach Orchard Lane house.

The Conservancy team helped **host 170 large-scale HOA Managers** for the **Sept. 23 HOA event** at Willowsford. Iris Gestram, Taryn McFarland and Andrew Dunham provided insights into Conservancy and Farm operations and received many questions and much positive feedback from the HOA professionals.

Programs & Events: From Jan-September 2021 more than 700 individuals registered for 26 programs, with total revenue of \$12,720. In July-September, in addition to 307 registrants for the September 11-12 annual Bonfire & Camp-over event, 80 children registered for the Conservancy & Farm HOA Summer Camp activities. The Farm tours and nature programs were also popular.

2021 Conservancy Programs and Events (as of September 27, 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 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 Lockett, 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)
- **Water Conservation and Ecology**, July 29, 4:00-5:00 PM, Grange Wet Meadow Meadow Walk, Taryn McFarland, Willowsford Conservancy (7 of 15)
- **Pond Life**, August 24, 4:00 -5:00 PM at Cedar Pond Pavilion, The Greens Nature Program, Taryn McFarland (15)
- **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 (Farm Team)
 - Nature Exploration (Fridays, July 30 & Aug 6), The Grange and The Greens (Land Stewardship Team)
 - 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 (Farm Team) (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 (Farm Team) (20 – Sold Out)
- **Willowsford Farm Tour**, Thursday, August 19 (50, sold out), The Grange

SEPTEMBER

- **6th Annual Community Bonfire & Camp-over**, Saturday-Sunday, Sept. 11-12, Hidden Meadow Event Field, The Greens (305, sold out)
- **Meadow Walk**, September 16, 4:00-5:00 PM, Grange Wet Meadow, Taryn McFarland, Willowsford Conservancy (max 15) canceled due to low registration
- **Back Yard Field Day** with Virginia Cooperative Extension, Department of Forestry, and Department of Wildlife Resources, Friday, September 17, 1:00-4:00 pm, Grange Wet Meadow (20)
- **HOA Large-scale Managers Meeting**, Thursday, September 23, Conservancy and Farm tours and presentations for 170 participants, The Grange and Greens
- **Willowsford Farm Tour**, Thursday, September 23 (50, sold out), The Grange

OCTOBER

- **10th Anniversary Celebration for Willowsford Farm**. Saturday, October 2, 5:00-8:00 pm. Grange Farm Garden (200 max.; 132 registered to date)