



Board of Trustees Meeting – March 25, 2025

Meeting Minutes

Board members in attendance: Greg Licamele, Charles Graybeal, Avi Sareen (by Zoom), Jack Nash, and Ashish Kapoor

Sophie, Andrew R., Andrew D., and Kyle attended on behalf of staff

There were no residents in Zoom, but several residents including three HOA board members attending in person at Sycamore House.

The meeting was called to order at 5:31 pm. The meeting started with board business. Greg asked all board members to introduce themselves and then provided an update that Jake Virag had stepped down as Treasurer and as a Trustee on the board. The board reviewed the agenda for the meeting and Jack moved to approve the agenda. Charles seconded and the agenda was approved unanimously. Finally, the board approved the meeting minutes from the February 12, 2025, meeting. Charles made the motion, Jack seconded, and the minutes were approved unanimously.

There was one public comment from Frank Blackstone, the new HOA board president, in which he shared the results of the HOA board election.

Old Business

- Resident Advisory Committees -- Jack and Ashish provided an update on the progress made creating charters and establishing resident advisory committees. They mentioned that Karyn Moreland is also participating but has had recent health issues. The Purpose of the committees is to have boots on the ground, leverage the resources of the community, and have our Farm and Land Stewardship teams supported through these efforts. There are currently four draft charters (overall for all advisory committees, fundraising, land resources and habitat, and farm operations and engagement).
- Arbor Day Foundation – Earth Week Tree Planting update. Sophie shared that we received a \$37,500 grant from the Arbor Day Foundation, funded by Amazon, to plant over 500 native trees in a meadow behind Lotus Pond Place in The Greens. The planting will help buffer homes and the Conservancy trail from the lights and noise from the future county park.

Staff updates

- Operations and HR (Kyle and Sophie).
 - We have retained an attorney focused on non-profit conversions to assist with our 501c3 application and we have identified a vendor to update our reserve study.

- Our 2024 Audit has kicked off and Kyle is pulling together all the financial reports and materials that they need
 - Security – cameras working at Boat House and the Land team is installing permanent cameras at key locations.
 - Staff still working to fill two open positions (included in our approved budget) - Land Stewardship Manager and a PT Programs and Engagement Associate.
 - Professional Development – Farm staff attended Future Harvest Conference, visited Kinloch and PEC Roundabout Meadow Farm. Land team attended Woods & Wildlife Conference, forest health seminars, completed Red Card certification (for prescribed burns), Chainsaw safety training.
- Farm Update (Andrew D)
 - Andy gave an update on the last six months, which included Community Carrot Harvest in October (60 volunteers joined us and we harvested 20k pounds off a quarter acre), popular Harvest Market ended Farm Stand season, and wrapping up of Winter CSA.
 - Currently, we are in the off season – where we are selling items we have in storage, eggs, and a la carte items – last week 40 boxes and \$700 of sales at Boat House last week.
 - 50,000 seed starts in the greenhouse and volunteers joined us for several seeding sessions.
 - Eric is doing brush hogging for the larger meadows over 2 weeks this month. Andy mentioned a costly repair for a mower pan on our 15 foot batwing mower – rocks in meadow in The Grant potentially from a construction project– hard to see them and could be very unsafe if a rock hit a building or person. And a flat tire from fencing on the ground.
 - Discussion on sharing clear communications about Open Space - field stone can be thrown into wooded area but construction waste needs to be taken to the county landfill. DRC could send reminders during construction process to remind them not to dispose of waste in Open Space. A question was asked if contractors are listed in DRC applications. It was noted that the application states that the homeowner is responsible for any damage that occurs.
 - In addition to seeding, the Farm team is working on maintenance of fences, equipment, and facilities.
 - Egg Room update – old egg room was not designed correctly to serve as an egg room – black mold and moisture damage. Old walk-in cooler was removed. Egg Room relocated to a small new addition under existing overhang, so only added three walls, floor drain, everything to code for a wet location, heated and air conditioned. New egg washing machine is really efficient. The room and machine are much better for volunteers and also removes liability issues that existed before. Question about how many eggs could be washed by hand vs this new machine. Andy shared that 20-30 dozen in an hour by hand and that they can now do 100 dozen an hour!
 - Andy also provided on utility usage from new walk-in cooler completed in 2024 which replaced a beverage cooler which was not the right equipment for our needs. The new coolers have six times the capacity and result in higher-quality produce (take hot product and chill it), yet the electrical use is the same.

- Farm sales update – down year to date with many reasons (economic uncertainty, budget process from fall, lower renewal rates, no canvassing this year, egg shares being paused). Strategies to mitigate include online ads, welcoming packages for new residents, working with neighboring HOAs, in-person events at library. Also, team has also started a referral program if existing customers recruit new customers which is yielding some new customers.
- There were questions about egg shares. Andy updated everyone that we cannot purchase pullets due to shortages as a result of the avian flu and that the team is working on a solution.
- Farm Stand opens on May 15 and 17.
- Land Stewardship (Andrew R)
 - Andrew gave an overview of the key projects undertaken by Land Stewardship team over last six months. First, he covered an update on trail maintenance (40 miles of trails, 250 features, over 400 signs) – they carry out physical survey once a year. Replaced two bridges in The Grove last year.
 - Trail Improvements – new features added each year, such as a new culvert (Grange culvert added due to run off from Hal and Berni Hanson Park), new trail connector in The Grant – Killian's Run – to address flooding & impact of utility work on easement. Bridge will be completed in summer.
 - Charles observed contractors dumping debris near site of new pedestrian bridge by Everfield Park. Team will check it out.
 - A lot of tree work in first quarter. 43 tree work orders so far this year (some need to be contracted out) and savings when we can do them in house.
 - Tree assessments – we assess trees on Open Space if requested by residents. Staff now doing a report on each assessment. We do about 15 assessments per year and about 30% of trees are healthy. We are seeing some damage to ash trees from ash borer beetles. Avi asked how we are doing the assessments. We have lost our trained arborist, but our ranger is studying to take the exam.
 - Wildlife and Habitat – bluebird monitoring underway (new trail in The Greens) and improvements to existing duck and kestrel boxes. Asked community for Christmas trees which were used to create pond habitat and two brush pile habitats. Also, staff conducting wildlife camera survey which will provide a comprehensive look at wildlife diversity in community. Andrew also provided an update on the Deer Management Program – deer harvests down this past season and we served as a county testing site for Chronic Wasting Disease.
 - Firewood sales back open. We had to close down sales in late 2024 since we ran out of stock. Goal is to have 6 cords of seasoned wood in inventory at all times so we can sell year round. Goal is to sell 15 cords this year. Firewood storage canopy included in Phase 1 of CapEx has been submitted for zoning approval. Will be installed in Q2.
 - All amenities open up April 1. Need to do some repairs to access road to Cedar Pond Pavilion and need to add a bear-proof trash can. Discussion about whether Conservancy could approach community waste vendor to seek a donation.
 - Native Plant Nursery – created a logo to promote offering. Sales starting in late April.

- Programs & Events (Sophie)
 - Sophie presented the summary of programs & events from the last six months as prepared by Sarah Uhrig from staff. These included Autumnfest with the HOA, Harvest Market with over 30 vendors and 600+ attendees, community carrot harvests and then nature-based programs – native grass seed collection, guided bird walk, tree trimming crafts, and a foraged wreathmaking class for adults (which is an area we want to explore more).
 - Events held on days when LCPS is closed proved to be the most popular.
 - So far in 2025, the team has hosted a wildlife education event with the Blue Ridge Wildlife Center, participated in the Great Backyard Bird Count, a Volunteer Appreciation Event, and Greenhouse seeding. Many programs and events are planned for Q2 of 2025.

Financials

- Kyle presented a summary of January and February financials.
- In both months, assessment revenue is down since our assessment rate for Q1 is the 2024 rate and then will increase for the rest of the year to reach the total approved in the 2025 budget. Transfer fees were on target in January and then ahead of schedule in February.
- Legal fees are over budget.
- Land sales are negligible for both months since firewood sales are closed and native plants and amenities do not start until spring.
- Land budget is significantly under budget due to weather impacting contract work and savings in benefits and payroll since we are down one FTE.
- Farm sales (farm stand at Boat House and online sales) are down a little but COGS also down.
- Maintenance on vehicles over budget for both teams.
- Our audit accounting firm advised that the \$300k in easement funds received by the Conservancy in early 2025 should be recognized in December 2024 to align with the date when the project application for formally accepted by the county (appeal period ended). 2024 Financial rerun as a result.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at 7:15 pm. The board reconvened into an executive session at 7:36 pm. The executive session ended at 9:25 pm.