



Community Advisory Committee (CAC)
Meeting Minutes – April 22, 2026

In attendance from the committee (in person at Boat House or by zoom): Gene, Naisa, Deborah, Tom, Lee, Julie, Tyler, Jennifer

Others in attendance: Karyn Moreland (Board Liaison to CAC), Ashish Kapoor (Fundraising Board Liaison to CAC), Sophie Lambert (staff), Deborah Dramby (seasonal team member/former farmer), and some residents joined via Zoom

The meeting started just after 5:30 pm. Gene, as Chair, welcomed everyone and recapped last month's meeting. Gene shared that the focus of the meeting would be on the transition of Farm team members and to solicit feedback on possible adjustments to the upcoming CSA season. Gene introduced Deb Dramby who was part of the original farm team when Willowsford started. Recently, Deb has been supporting the Conservancy as the retail lead of the Farm Stand.

In the resident comment period, Gary Sidor appreciated that a letter provided an update on the team transition and leadership change and asked when an update would be provided about the upcoming CSA season as members have concern.

Staff tried to provide some context for the recent departures: 2024 budget process was hard to overcome for the farm team which may have contributed to departures. Some had excellent opportunities. Timing is challenging during the early part of the season, but Daris and Anna left in off season and Anna is working part time during the transition until her replacement starts.

Departures:

- An entry-level farmer left for grad school in January and Anna left for a new opportunity much closer to where she lives in Prince George's County in March. These both seemed to be in line with periodic departures at any organization.
- In early April, we found out that one farmer and his spouse (who worked PT as a farmer) who had moved here from Iowa because of Andy were returning back home and leaving farming.
- A few days later, we found out that Andy was leaving for a position with the county.
- Separately, Sarah is moving back to Chattanooga for a great new position. She gave a lot of notice and will working part time on brochures, design work, event planning, and writing.

Arrivals:

- New farmer Paul Harnden starting tomorrow as new Farm Director. He is moving here from western Maine where he has worked for almost two decades for his family's farm (apple orchards, vegetable production, Farm Stands, education), a dairy farm where he ran organic certification, and in his own cover cropping business which he recently sold.
- Jarrett who replaced Daris started in March.

- An offer is out for Anna's replacement.
- A new delivery driver started in April.
- A part time farmer starts Friday and one more full-time farmer is being interviewed.

Farmer Deb provided context on farm teams and how it is common that team members leave if the manager is looking to leave or that staff leave once a new farm manager starts as there is often loyalty to the manager in this industry. An added challenge for our Farm is that there has been the added stress of part of the community not supporting the farm. The farm was the center of the marketing pitch and the vision of the community at the start, but things have evolved. Many residents still support the agrihood model and many others are concerned with the fees. Meanwhile, the Farm team improved the soil and the buildings/infrastructure and has grown customers outside of the community. The farm has also started to focus more on education and food access which should help quality for more grants. But there needs to be community support that revenue sources will be diversified.

Conversation then shifted to possible adjustments to the Summer CSA Season. Deb noted that the sewer line constructed through part of the farm/across the driveway in a pre-existing sanitary easement for Parkside Village delayed seeding in the greenhouse. Electricity needed to be turned off for the greenhouse and the developer's contractors were delayed in meeting the Farm's March 1 deadline for electricity to be restored. Gene emphasized that CAC members should provide input on possible adjustments to the Farmer's Choice and Farm Stands (there is no needed adjustment to Egg Shares or Flower Shares).

1. higher percentage of partner products until production is increased.
2. delay the season until June.
3. give a discount for egg share if you do a CSA share
4. move Thursday farm stand pickup to the farm as a "drive thru"
5. Pick your own opportunities - any Interface with the farm is positive.
6. 15th Anniversary Event should be cancelled. Will consider something smaller or combine with Wine Down.

The recommendation was to keep things moving forward as much as possible and limiting a delay by including partner produce. For the newsletter to Farm customers, discussion emphasized the need to answer the questions raised in the meeting – why are the staff leaving, how will this impact my share, how will this affect my delivery.

Naisa provided an update on the community survey and the importance of adding more questions about the future direction and possible revenue sources for the Farm. A working group subcommittee meeting will be scheduled to consider adding questions.

The committee discussed possible dates for a May meeting where the new Farm Director could come and meet with the CAC. A final date will be shared once set with the possibility of jointly meeting with the Conservancy Board.

Adjournment

The meeting adjourned at approximately 7:30 PM.