

**Minutes of the Board of Director's Meeting  
American Chestnut Land Trust  
November 15, 2025**

Items mailed to Board Members in advance of the meeting:

Board Packet (Nov. 13)

PP Slides (Nov.15)

Call to Order:

Dawn Balinski called the meeting to Order at 9:04 on November 15, 2025. (Dave was on travel.)

Board Members Present: Dawn Balinski, Vice President; Cheryl Place, Treasurer; BL Johnston, Secretary; Richard Aldrich, Jan Degeneffe, Bob Field, Darleen Harrod, Ron Klauda, Shirley Knight, Melissa McCormick, Penny Moran, Nate Novonty, Mark Smith, Randi Vogt, and John Yoe.

Board Members Absent: Dave Farr, President; José Ballesteros, Peter Daly, Adam Sampson, and Fred Tutman.

ACLT Staff Present: Adam Griggs, Executive Director, and Miriam Gholi, Community Relations Manager.

Approval of Minutes: (Dawn Balinski, Board Packet pps. 3-5):

**A motion was made to approve the minutes of the July 19 Board Meeting. The motion was unanimously approved.**

Treasurer's Report (Cheryl Place, Board Packet pps. 6-10):

Cheryl reported on ACLT's financial activity covering the first ten months of 2025. ACLT had operating receipts of \$415,873 and operating expenses of \$466,743 for a \$50,870 deficit. With the year 83% complete, receipts on October 31 represent 71% of budgeted amounts. General Contributions were impacted by donations to the Greg Bowen Memorial Fund. The Spring Appeal, the Fall Appeal, and Workplace Giving exceed budget for the year. The Fall Appeal was jump started with approximately \$64,000 in paddle raise funds from the Auction. But since the mailings for the Fall Appeal have only recently gone out, ACLT expects that Fall Appeal contributions will rise. ACLT has met the Capacity Grant requirements that it raise \$100,000 in matching funds by year end. Income also includes the appropriation from the Forever Fund of \$46,700. In December, ACLT will assess how much funding it will need to appropriate from the Land Management Endowment.

Total expenses to date are approximately 79% of budget. The significant increase in Auction Expenses is a result of properly reporting the cost of auction item sales, which in past years were netted against auction item income. Additionally, because the auction was not a chili cook-off with most food provided by contestants, catering costs increased.

The Forever Fund was reduced by the \$46,700 appropriation to operations. Pledge payments for the Land and Stewardship Campaign increased the Land Acquisition fund by \$800. The Fund was reduced by \$831 in costs related to the Helfrich property. The Repair and

Replacement fund was reduced by \$962 in costs, the bulk of which related to brake repairs on the truck.

Budget and Finance Committee Report (Richard Aldrich, Board Packet pps. 11-33):

Richard referenced the favorable opinion of the independent auditor's report of ACLT's 2024 financial statements.

**A motion was made to approve the audited annual financial statement and unanimously passed.**

Richard then reviewed the Committee's proposed 2026 budget. Penny requested that proposed budget items re: the auction be increased from \$35,000 to \$50,000.

**A motion to approve the proposed 2026 budget with this change was made and unanimously passed.**

Donor Relations Committee Report (Cheryl Place, Board Packet p. 34):

Cheryl noted the success of the Annual Dinner and Auction, having raised \$64,000 in the paddle raise and approximately \$30,000 net overall. Planning is underway for the Year-End Appeal, featuring a letter drafted by Father Daly, an up-dated "Ways to Give" brochure, and a recorded Auction presentation to be shared via link to our website. The Committee also discussed strategies for enhancing donor engagements in 2026. The Greg Bowen Memorial Fund aims to grow toward a \$125,000 goal in 2026 to support funding for Capacity Grant goals, monies that continue to fund Mary and Clara's positions. Cheryl suggested that \$50,000 currently in CDs could be added to the Capacity Grant funds. **A motion was made and approved to combine the \$50,000 in CDs designated for Capacity Grant funds with the monies in the Greg Bowen Memorial Fund.**

Governance and Bylaws (Miriam Gholl, Board Packet, pps. 44-48):

Miriam presented proposed Governance Committee's recommended changes to Articles II, III, and Article V of ACLT's Bylaws **A motion was made to accept the proposed changes to the bylaws and unanimously passed.**

Dawn noted that the limited six year terms of the President and Vice President were expiring and that Board members should be thinking about nominees to replace the current officers. The Board can discuss proposed candidates at the next Board meeting.

Outreach and Membership Committee Report (Penny Moran, Board Packet pps. 35-38):

Penny reviewed activities and events since our previous meeting. She noted that next year will be ACLT's 40th anniversary and that this theme will be intertwined with each event. For example, the year's hiking challenge will be to hike 40 miles. The anniversary will be celebrated at Dining in the Field, the Dinner/Auction, and an event to be decided in December. She presented a draft calendar of 2026 events. **A motion was made and unanimously passed to approve the draft 2026 calendar of events.**

Dawn was asked if there was "burnout" among volunteers and Penny responded that, on the contrary, they had to turn volunteers away because of the volume of interest. She noted that the annual volunteer appreciation dinner would take place on December 9 at the Scientists' Cliffs Community House and the annual wreath sale on December 6. She asked for volunteers to help make the wreaths on November 29 and 30.

Community Heritage Committee Report (Shirley Knight, Board Packet pps. 39-40):

Shirley reviewed meetings and events since the last Board report. She then noted the Committee's strong interest in the restoration and preservation of the Lemuel Wallace House. The Committee has special interest in the accessibility of the Greg Bowen Memorial Space and its having space for solitude and gathering for remembrance. Signs for the Parkers Creek Heritage Trail are being printed and the Committee hopes to plan a launch event in the spring. Committee members gave a presentation at the Calvert County Historical Society to a full house. Spanish rack cards/pamphlets are being printed.

Land Management Committee Report (Bob Field, Board Packet pps. 41-42):

Bob presented updates on projects including, in particular, Double Oak Farm, meadows, Parkers Creek Heritage Trail, Goldstein tree planting, the "never ending battle" of invasive control, and annual property monitoring. Lantern flies have been spotted on the Gravett East and Russell properties.

Jan reported that over 3,200 lbs. of produce were harvested on the farm and donated to St. John Vianney's food pantry and Calvert County public schools, that Devon was a great help in serving as a bridge between this year's and next's interns, and that the high tunnel's plastic cover was replaced. She praised the "great group of volunteers".

Land Acquisition and Preservation Committee Report (Adam Griggs, p. 43):

Adam reported that ACLT's original contract with Mr. Helfrich expired on September 30 and that he reached out to him; Mr. Helfrich is frustrated by the delay and losing rental earnings. Adam was able to renegotiate the original contract, and our lawyer drew up a retroactive contract amendment under which we are now renting the property on a month-to-month basis at \$1,200 until we reach closing. Adam is looking for contacts with the Bowens and Weems families, to reach out to. He noted that a trail on the Bowen property could connect the Yoe property to our Southside. East View is definitely a priority property; Greg had a plan to collaborate with Scientists' Cliffs to share in its purchase.

Adam is working with Mary to develop a system by which one could plug in an address to get information on possible strategies to preserve properties. Most land trusts usually hold conservation easements but are not managing them. ACLT holds none. He wants to have a bigger impact across the County with responsibility for monitoring, not managing. He's not interested in purchasing easements outside of the County. A property owner along Jug Bay has inquired of our interest; another near Upper Marlboro wants to donate property for a tax write-off. The plan would be to hold an easement for one year, then sell it to, e.g. Rural Legacy. Bob countered that he is concerned about properties on our priority list. He expressed that we need to flush out opportunities so that we are ready to take advantage when they present themselves. Adam asked if we were interested in reaching across counties. We would only consider donated easements. We don't want to overstretch, he emphasized, but we're the strongest land trust in the area. No one else is working to preserve land. Dawn asked if the Board wanted to do an evaluation of costs and potential payback if we could do this easily. Bob countered that we need to spend our resources within the County, not outside. He would not be surprised, he said, to see developers' signs on the Weems' property any day. Nate suggested that it was a good model to look into if we could conserve local land, Dawn remarked that the Committee has a lot to look into and needs new members. SMCA has done a lot; they are "a coordinated group of folks."

Facilities Committee Report (John Yoe, pps. 49-50):

John reviewed the Committee's maintenance projects, including to the Yoe House, Holly Hill, Double Oak, and the Helfrich House trailer. Inspection revealed that structural damage to the

trailer made it unlikely to be rentable without extensive repairs. However, the infrastructure, including the well, electric service, and septic should be retained. John reported that the Committee is building a spreadsheet of all facilities and major repair and replacement items, which will include information on the installation date, expected service life, etc. to better plan and budget for facility maintenance. Adam added additional functionality to the spreadsheet to allow tracking of routine maintenance issues as well as a dashboard to anticipate larger items and better plan and prepare for repair and replacement costs.

Executive Director's Report (Adam Griggs, Board Packet pps. 51-57):

Adam reported on the status of our Capacity Grant. We met our match requirement for 2025 but that 2026 will be the last year of support. He has been working with Mary and Clara to identify the aspects of their work that could be supported with grants. He thinks that he can find grants for Mary's SMCA projects. Her friends groups are going well. With regard to SMARTA, our application to the NPS RTCA program was accepted. The project identified the development of an interactive Patuxent Water Trail as its first goal, building toward recognition as a National Water Trail. Clara has been working with NPS to resurrect and improve this project. She and Adam presented to the Patuxent River Commission; they voted to support this project. There is no available funding now, but we will look for matching funds.

**A motion was made to authorize Adam as a signer on ACLT's Fidelity, Brown Advisory, and Shore United accounts. The motion was unanimously approved.**

Adam presented the 2026 Board Meeting Schedule and Deadlines. He noted that accomplishment reports are due by December 15. He then introduced a slide showing cuts in Rural Legacy Funds to MD's Open Space Program over previous years, warning that it is not a "bright picture". Forever Maryland has hired a lobbyist with the objective of conserving funding for trusts. There will be less support for land acquisition in the next few years.

His next slide covered a donated conservation strategy: he would like ACLT to develop such a program to help conserve lands beyond the Parkers Creek area. Calvert County announced a TDR PAR Program, but an extensive file search produced no TDRs owned by ACLT available for sale.

Adam noted that he has been working to develop a system to track our current grant obligations and document available grant programs. Additionally, he has been working to achieve cost savings by moving off our on-premise server; he is leaning towards migrating all data to Google Business Suite as well as to cancel the lease to our current printer, which requires a separate insurance policy.

Adam also said that he would like to update our Employee Handbook to establish a telework and maternal/paternal leave policy and new timesheets that would incorporate this functionality.

**He then asked for a motion to vote to approve Frank McPhillips' nomination as ACLT's representative to the Cove Point National Heritage Trust (CPNHT) Board of Trustees. The Board unanimously approved the motion.** Adam noted that there is a potential conflict of interest of ACLT's members voting to approve CPNHT grants to ACLT.

Finally, Adam informed the Board that dues/subscriptions to Forever Maryland and the Land Trust Alliance are up for renewal. Membership to LTA provides resources and professional development to Board members and eligibility to TerraFirma insurance. He intends to renew them.

Adjournment

There being no other questions or comments, a motion to adjourn the meeting was unanimously approved at 12:20 pm.

Approved:

BL Johnston, Secretary