

**AMERICAN CHESTNUT LAND TRUST, INC.
Prince Frederick, Maryland**

**Annual Membership Meeting
March 10, 2018
Minutes
Approved May 19, 2018**

Call to Order. The meeting was called to order by President Pat Griffin in the auditorium of the Saint John Vianney Family Life Center at 10:05 a.m. on March 10, 2018.

Enclosures.

- Annual Meeting Announcement
- Power Point slides supporting presentations.
- Nominal Group Technique Questionnaire (used in the Listening Sessions)

Welcome and Introduction. President Pat Griffin welcomed all attendees to the 31st Annual Meeting of the ACLT. He paused for a moment of remembrance for members of the ACLT who had passed away during the past year: Richard Kay, Dan Head, Frank Caldwell, Ed Hacskalo, Mary Dwan and Carolyn Van Mason. He announced that we had 93 new members this past year and recognized Susan Hance-Wells and Buddy Hance, both of who joined this year.

Pat then announced that we were initiating the review and update of our 5-Year Strategic Plan for the years 2019-2022 and, in a departure from previous strategic planning processes which were internal Board of Director events, advised that we would be soliciting attendees input during the first hour of the meeting. He then introduced Greg Bowen, Executive Director, who gave his annual report and provided instructions for the strategic planning exercise.

Minutes of the Annual Meeting of March 11, 2016. A *motion* was made to dispense with the reading of the minutes of the previous annual meeting. The motion was approved unanimously. A *motion* was made to approve the minutes and it was approved unanimously.

Election of Board Members. Pat Griffin provided a list of all Board members and announced that all ACLT Board Members whose term was up for renewal had agreed to serve for another year. In response to some questions he clarified that some members terms had been adjusted from the normal 3 years in order that one-third of Board members' period of service would expire each year. A *motion* was made to renew the appointments of Board members with expiring terms. The motion was approved unanimously.

Pat reviewed some of the changing conditions in Calvert County with regard to county support of land preservation, their impact on the ACLT mission and our need to consider these issues as we began the process to update our 5-Year Strategic Plan. He also announced that, in a departure from previous planning processes that were typically internal to the Board of Directors, we would be seeking membership input today and throughout the process. He then introduced Greg Bowen to deliver his Annual Report to the membership and to explain the Listening Session.

Executive Director's Report – Greg Bowen, Executive Director. Using slides to illustrate the many activities during 2017 Greg reviewed the major events during the year.

- The farm provided about 8,000 pounds of food to the St. John Vianney Food for the Hungry program.
- Under RT's tutelage we partnered with the Tidewater School 4th grade class that planted, tended and harvested a row of peanuts. Following harvest the class dried and shelled the peanuts and then made peanut brittle, chocolate turtles and other peanut food products.
- Under the direction of the new Science Committee and Autumn's and Mike Molina's leadership we conducted baseline forest diversity and fish diversity studies.
- We sponsored the Earth Day 5K trail race and the Parkers Creek Triathlon, an approximately 15 mile bike, kayak/canoe/run race.
- The Wednesday Week Whacker group was active throughout the year tending trails, controlling invasive plants and planting.
- The Thursday Trail Adventures group provided trail maintenance and improvement services throughout the year. Our new intern, Taylor Roswall is involved in many of their activities. In addition to normal maintenance, they developed the new 'North-South' trail linking the two major trailheads.
- Jeff Klapper added some unique metal sculptures to our trails.
- We again sponsored Eagle Scout projects. Notable were their development of a new, more resilient bench design and the installation of 5 new benches at strategic locations along the trails.
- Suzanne Sheldon created several unique Parkers Creek paintings.
- Through the Holly Hill Capital Campaign we were able to purchase and preserve the at risk 405 Holly Hill tract adjacent to our northern and eastern borders.
- We created an Advisory Committee to broaden our reach, improve our awareness and improve the diversity of our leadership.

Five Year Plan (2019 – 2022). What should we continue? What should we change? And what is happening beyond ACLT that should influence our direction?

Greg then discussed some of the ACLT's past major accomplishments, his concerns that County programs used by the ACLT in the past to purchase or otherwise

preserve and manage our properties had been eliminated or were not being funded and that we needed to consider these changed conditions as we developed our plan for the next five years.

- In the 2014-2018 Plan the ACLT Vision modified to include the importance of community conservation in addition to the more narrow focus of just preservation and management of ACLT owned/managed properties. In accord with this vision during the last 5 years notable accomplishments included: (1) LTA Accreditation, (2) Assistance with the formation of the Sustainable Calvert Network (SCN), (3) Management consistent with LTA standards and practices, (4) improved land management practices and (5) a substantially improved outreach effort.
- We also added 4 new properties (Holly Hill, St. John Vianney II, Hance and Harrod), created a new, permanent Science Committee, expanded the trail network to 22 miles of trails and began promoting land conservation throughout the county, not just in our watershed.
- The County support we have enjoyed in the past has significantly vanished in recent years. Preservation facilitators that have been available to, and used by the ACLT, are no longer available:
 - There has been a moratorium on the creation of new Agricultural Preservation Districts (APDS) since 2013, eliminating the ability of an individual land owner to receive marketable Transferrable Development Rights (TDRs) in exchange for preservation of her property.
 - The Purchase and Retirement (PAR) funding intended to purchase TDRs has been diverted to the general fund.
 - The Revolving Loan fund was not funded. In response to an ACLT request the County restored \$300,000 to the fund of which only two-thirds can be used for any one project. The funding limitation renders the fund useless for any but very small projects.
 - There was no county application to the State for Rural Legacy Funds in 2017. Other than Holly Hill, there has been virtually no land preservation by, or supported by, the County during the last 2 years.
- The quality of life in Calvert County remains high, but could certainly deteriorate if future development activities are not balanced with equally important land preservation initiatives.
- The SCN, composed of 11 non-profit member associations will be key to organizing our future efforts to reestablish past programs and to develop new programs that will enable an active, future land preservation program.
- The DRAFT County Comprehensive Plan 5-year update, while maintaining a quality of life vision, does not include any significant initiatives to enable this portion of the vision. The ACLT and other concerned agencies and citizens will need to be active during this last year of plan development to insure that the plan is modified to addresses preservation needs.
- The LTA suggests that some broad roles for local land trusts should include: capacity building—do more, advocacy, collaborative leadership and

convening. The ACLT should consider which of these roles we should adopt as we look forward to the next 5 years.

- Greg then introduced the Listening Session to kick off our 5-Year Plan update.

Listening Session – Pam Shilling and Master Naturalists. To initiate our year-long process to update the ACLT 5-Year Strategic Plan, attendees were broken out into eight groups where their input was solicited. Each group considered two issues: (1) *Over the next five years, what would you like to see ACLT pursue?* and, (2) *What challenges will ACLT be facing in the next five years?* Group discussions were recorded during the sessions and then compiled into a list of recommendations for each question. After the regular session of the meeting each attendee, using 3 colored dots for each question voted on the 3 most important recommendations. Results will be compiled and will provide input as the planning process continues. The general reaction among attendees was that they appreciated the opportunity to provide their feedback and would like feedback as the process continues.

Treasurers Report – Gary Loew for Cheryl Place. Gary summarized the 2017 Treasurers Report.

For 2017 the ACLT had revenues of \$376,139 and expenses of \$331,657 showing a surplus of approximately \$44,500 for the year. That revenues were up over 2016 was impressive given that we were also soliciting donations for the Holly Hill Campaign throughout the year. Our sources of revenue were 31% from grants, 29% from our endowment funds and 37% from memberships and donations. The sources are very close to our long-term goal of achieving 1/3 – 1/3 – 1/3 of our revenues from each major source.

Reviewing expenses he pointed out that only about 21% of all expenses were applied to administration and fundraising activities. This is on the low side of organizations like ours. All other expenses were used for program activities. In response to a question he clarified that our endowment funds are managed by a Baltimore firm that applies an Asset Allocation methodology that conservatively manages assets by category. While we review the firm's performance and make periodic adjustments by category we do not review the individual stocks, bonds, ETF's or other purchases. He invited those who wanted more detailed information to attend the Board meeting next week when the Board would be receiving an annual report from the management firm.

Land Preservation Committee Report. David Farr reported that we had added the Holly Hill tract to ACLT owned and managed properties during 2017. He noted that Maryland State Rural Legacy Grant of \$1.7 million, obtained through the County was essential to the success of the project. He also advised that about \$300,000 accumulated over time in the Land Acquisition Fund was utilized for the purchase.

Land Management Committee. John Little Introduced Autumn Phillips-Lewis who reviewed land management activities during 2017. Under the overall direction of the committee, Autumn, Mike Molina, Taylor Roswall and volunteers:

- collected and analyzed water quality samples at 4 locations
- conducted a Fish Diversity Study in Parkers Creek. The group counted 15 different species.
- initiated a Forest Diversity Study at 4 one acre plots.
- continued to monitor bird boxes and field new ones. An owl and 4 owlets occupied one box.
- continued our bird diversity population counts. They observed that some species had population declines this year.
- made a number of habitat improvements such as: *Phragmites* control in the marsh, new bird boxes, planting meadows, trail repair projects, Earth Day clean up, identifying projects on Holly Hill to include the need to eliminate erosion adjacent to the fields.
- hunter projects of all sorts. The hunters contributed 841 volunteer hours and harvested 47 deer to maintain the population and insure a healthy forest understory.
- Master Naturalist training. To date the ACLT has trained about 90 Master Naturalists who have contributed over 800 hours of volunteer work and who are now expanding their efforts into the protection and preservation of small watersheds throughout the county.

Outreach and Membership Committee Report. Pam Shilling reported on our significant 2017 achievements.

- There was a significant increase in visitors in general and visitation at events

Visitation
(total number of visits during the year)

	2015	2016	2017
Trails	4,200	5,800	7,150
Events	450	450	550

Pam noted that Peter Vogt observed that only about 50% of visitors actually signed the register.

- Sponsored 9 guided canoe trips and 2 guided hikes with about 40 participants each.
- Supported scout group hikes led by Master Naturalist volunteers.
- Led a canoe trip by Chesapeake Biological Laboratory staff and students.
- Conducted the Earth Day 5K.
- Coordinated with Calvert County public schools the 'Beautiful Bins' projects.
- Conducted an Earth Day cleanup.

- Held a popular monthly Sunday Farmers Market at the farm that both generated farm revenue and attracted visitors.
- Supported a Maryland Public Television (MPT) visit during which they filmed ACLT features and activities. ACLT volunteers viewed the 'premier' of the MPT 'Outdoors Maryland' feature at the Green Turtle restaurant on November 21, 2018.
- Greatly increased our presence on social media such as Facebook, Snapchat and Instagram.
- Pam recognized 18 volunteers who contributed more than 100 hours. RT contributed over 500 hours. In addition she recognized the Boy and Girl scout troops, the Saint John Vianney church, the Church of Latter Day Saints, and the Parkers Creek Conservation Society (aka 'the hunters') who all also contributed substantially to ACLT operations

Adjournment. There being no new business, the meeting was adjourned at 12:15 pm.

Approved: 
Gary A. Loew, Secretary