

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

**Annual Membership Meeting
March 7, 2020 Minutes
APPROVED MAY 16,2020**

Call to Order. The meeting was called to order by President David Farr in the auditorium of the Saint John Vianney Family Life Center at 10:07 a.m. on March 7, 2020.

NOTE: All slides used for presentations are available on the ACLT Web Site, www.acltweb.org. From the Home Screen select "About" and then, "Reports, Publications and Slides". Accordingly, the meeting discussions and presentations will only be briefly summarized in these notes.

Enclosures.

- Program
 - Agenda
 - Summary of Financial Status for Calendar Years 2018 and 2019
 - List of Board of Directors, ACLT Staff, Key Volunteer Staff & Mission Statement
- 2019 Annual Report
- Power Point slides supporting presentations.
- ACLT 2019 Annual Meeting Survey Form to obtain Members' Views

Welcome and Introduction. David Farr

David summarized the history and present status of the ACLT. The ACLT was founded in 1986 and today has 653 active member families. It owns about 1,400 acres in the Parkers Creek watershed and manages an additional 1,800 acres owned by the State of Maryland and oversees five easements totaling 374 acres. Our neighbors have preserved another thousand acres for a grant total of 4,581 acres protected in our two watersheds. We have developed and maintain 22 miles of trails, grow tons of food each year to support the St. John Vianney "Food for the Hungry" Program, support many other uses and education programs that will be described later. This is all possible because of the support of our members.

Dave also requested that attendees complete the opinion survey form available at the sign-in desk or online. We value member views, opinions and suggestions and use them to formulate our Five-Year Plan and to guide our daily activities.

Minutes of the Annual Meeting of March 3, 2019. 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 they were **approved** unanimously.

Election of Board Members. David Farr advised that the Board was recommending the election of one new member, Penny Moran, whose biography was summarized, and the extension of 6 Board Members for an additional term: Richard Aldrich, Walter Boynton, Stephen Cloak, David Farr, Cheryl Place and Suzanne Shelden. There was a **motion** to approve the Board recommendations. Members voted unanimously to **approve** the slate.

Facing an Environmental Crisis and What ACLT Is Doing About It. Greg Bowen. (See www.acltweb.org)

Greg first summarized the results of the 2019 Annual Member Survey indicating member preferences for ACLT actions and activities and the key challenges the members perceived to ACLT future success and how these issues had been incorporated into our planning and activities.

Greg then presented "Facing an Environmental Crisis" to discuss worldwide, national and local environmental challenges, specifically those caused by global warming and then, how the ACLT is forming its programs and activities to address global, regional and local environmental and smart growth challenges and concerns.

As Hoc Facilities Committee Report. Greg Bowen for Randi Vogt. (See www.acltweb.org)

Greg presented the findings of the *Ad Hoc* Facilities committee which examined how the ACLT might apply its assets towards facilities in the future to support its membership, mission and activities. To develop its recommendations the committee surveyed Board members and staff, discussed these issues with many members and conducted an extensive survey of facilities available in like organizations throughout the county. They then developed tentative conclusions and recommendations, again surveyed Board members and staff and developed a final set of 10 recommendations to guide actions and expenses for the next 10 years. The 10 recommendations are:

1. As a priority, focus ACLT financial resources on acquiring and preserving those key tracts of land recommended by the Land Preservation Committee and approved by the Board.
2. Research the feasibility of constructing a new office/conservation center.
3. Maintain the main office a Double Oak at least until 2030 for current uses only.
4. Hold larger indoor events that cannot be accommodated at the Double Oak offices off-site. Develop a list of activities and programs we would hold in a larger office/conservation center, if available.
5. Hold larger outdoor events at Holly Hill. Minimize any site work necessary to support these events.
6. Promote the availability of outdoor space for gardens, farming operations, research projects at Holly Hill and similar activities.

7. Proceed with developing the Parkers Creek Heritage Trail.
8. Improve signage and build a universal design restroom facility at the North Side Trailhead. It may or may not include a pavilion.
9. After 2025 consider renovating the rental house located at Holly Hill to be used for short term rentals for visiting artists, writers, musicians, photographers, researchers, interns and related personnel.
10. Give primary consideration to Holly Hill as a future location for a new office/conference center (due to its convenient access from Dares Beach Road), but consider other sites as well.

Treasurers Report –Peter Stathis for Cheryl Place. (See www.acltweb.org)

Peter summarized the 2019 Financial Report. ACLT had income of \$457,286 and expenses of \$355,717 for a surplus of \$101,569 in 2019. One large grant typically received in the March timeframe was not received until December this past year which caused us to keep expenses low. Fortunately, this issue has been resolved for 2020 and the future. In addition, the Board supplemented its income with \$97,351 in new, restricted grants designated for specific projects.

Sources of revenues (pie chart) indicate that it is probably no longer realistic to continue our long-term strategy to generate revenue from 1/3rd

Endowment funds, 1/3rd Grant income and 1/3rd Contributions, Membership and Program/Event revenues. This past year 48% of revenues were generated by memberships, donors and events. In general, we are finding that the current external environment will likely not support 1/3rd of our income from grants, especially for general operating fund needs, and we will likely need to focus on increasing endowment income in the future.

We can be proud that only 20% of our operating expenses are spent on Administration and Fundraising activities. The remaining 80% is entirely devoted to community outreach, preserving and managing our land.

Land Preservation Committee Report. David Farr. (See www.acltweb.org)

We have recently completed the purchase of a third tract from St. Johns Vianney to support and protect the head of the Prince Frederick to the Bay (PF2Bay) trail. In cooperation with the Governors Run Development Corporation (GRDC), the County and the State we are still in the process of completing the purchase of the 83-acre GRDC tract located on the north side in the Governors Run Watershed between the Steve Easter Trail and Governors Run Road. We expect to finalize this transaction in the late summer or early fall of 2020.

Science Committee Report. Denise Breitberg. (See www.acltweb.org)

Denise summarized the purpose of the Science committee, the qualifications of its membership and noted that Autumn Phillips and our interns, supported by volunteers,

perform almost all of the work. She then briefly described key 2019 projects. They include:

- The “Water Quality Blitz”. This will be the 3rd year where we have measured key water quality indicators in Parkers Creek and its main tributaries.
- Long term water quality monitoring of Parkers Creek.
- The Effects of Agricultural Runoff on Aquatic Ecosystem Health.
- The Bird Diversity Survey, led by David Curson of the Audubon Society, also in its 3rd year.
- Fish Surveys, also in their 3rd year.
- Forest Diversity. We have identified 18 one-quarter acre plots where we are measuring plant diversity of all flora greater than 1" in diameter at approximately 1.5 meters off of the ground. The measuring techniques are consistent with Smithsonian Institute guidelines so that we can compare our forests with similar forests.
- Herp Diversity Survey.
- Phragmites Control project. Our team has successfully killed the three large patches of Phragmites in the Parkers Creek marsh. In 2020 Our next steps will be to revegetate the areas with native species and maintain the areas to prevent recurrence.
- Tracking Sea Level Rise in cooperation with the Chesapeake Biological Laboratory.

In 2020/21 the committee plans to initiate a deer count to obtain a more accurate assessment of the deer population. Overpopulation by deer can drastically and negatively impact forest diversity.

Membership and Outreach. Miriam Gholl. (See www.acltweb.org)

Miriam summarized the Membership and Outreach Goals stated in the Five Year Plan and then reviewed the major events and activities in 2019 which included: a new weekend welcoming program at trail heads during peak season, booths at county events, e.g. County Fair, the Earth Day 5k + Cleanup, the “Bark in the Park”, participation in the southern Maryland Nature Fest, the “Sip and Save” local and Regional Beer Tasting, the Parkers Creek Challenge, the annual Dinner and Auction fundraiser for which we had 8 corporate and 14 local sponsors and the Wreath-Making Workshops and Greens Sale.

Following the committee’s review of the Five-Year Plan they determined to focus on improving relations, increasing participation by our neighbors and increasing the diversity of our membership.

Miriam suggested how ACLT members could contribute to our mission by spreading the word about ACLT facilities and activities, volunteering for projects, encouraging others to visit trails and attend events, sharing our trail maps., bringing friends and family to events, displaying decals, wearing gear and participating in our social media sites.

Finally, she encouraged all to participate in our upcoming events such as the guided hikes, the Earth Day activities.

2019 Land Management Committee. Autumn Phillips. (See www.acltweb.org)

Autumn described many of the 2019 activities, projects and accomplishments under purview of the Land Management Committee such as the: "Thursday Trail Adventurers" and the, recently renamed, "Wednesday Woods Workers", who maintained trails and conducted invasive management projects, Scout projects, Holly Hill management work such as border plantings to reduce erosion, stabilization of the 200-year old barn at Holly Hill, establishment of a new meadow, preliminary work to develop two new meadows and the food and educational programs at the Double Oak farm.

Autumn recognized the many volunteers who contributed to ACLT preservation and management projects. Volunteers donated more than 5,844 hours valued at about \$148,625. She then recognized by name 17 volunteers who contributed greater than: 100 hours (2), 200 hours (2), 300 hours (1), 400 hours (2) and greater than 500 hours (1) during the year.

She then gave a moving tribute to Jeff Klapper, probably ACLT's most active volunteer over the last several years (350 volunteer hours in 2019) who passed away recently. Jeff contributed significantly to the farm, the Barn, the fish and macroinvertebrates surveys, trail work and numerous other activities up until just 2 weeks before he passed away.

Questions and Responses. Greg Bowen.

Greg opened the floor to member questions.

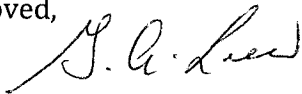
- A member asked, "Who is watching the store?" referring to recent incidents where the ACLT has reported construction activities that caused erosion and other adverse impacts to ACLT property. Greg advised that the State of Maryland is responsible to enforce of storm water management regulations for projects, however the State delegates some of its enforcement responsibilities (single-family lots) to the County. The state has one individual assigned by the Maryland Department of the Environment (MDE) for other projects. Greg observed that enforcement is underfunded, and problems can occur. Residents can help by reporting any failure to obtain permits or improper construction practices.
- A member inquired whether the ACLT had any permitting or zoning barriers to resolve when we purchased property. Greg advised that for properties purchased by the ACLT all uses, activities and facilities are existing, permitted uses. If we want to conduct any activity or construct any facility not already permitted, we would need to obtain a permit.
- There was a question about the extensive potential growth being proposed for the Prince Frederick Town Center which could quadruple the number of households. . "What is Going to Happen. What can we do? "Are we stuck with Board of County Commissioners (BOCC) decisions?" Greg advised that these decisions do ultimately rest with the BOCC and that we (as ACLT and as residents) must stay engaged project by project and seek to change hearts and minds of county residents. He

noted that the 2013 County Charette and the County's most recent expansion plans may be found on the County website.

- A member asked for an update on the status of the purchase of the 83-acre GRDC property. Greg stated that we are still progressing towards the purchase and that he sees no "showstoppers". There have been delays to satisfy county and State regulations however he expects the proposed sale to go before the BOCC in the next couple of months and then to the State Board of Public Works shortly thereafter. He is projecting settlement sometime in late August or early Fall.
- An attendee advised the group that she, along with 3 others has initiated a lawsuit against the BOCC for failure to follow proper processes when it approved the Comprehensive Plan.
- There was a question about the County Transferrable Development Rights (TDR) Program and whether the ACLT was a participant. Greg noted that the ACLT has been an active program participant in past years and has benefitted from the sale of TDRs from properties we have purchased. Unfortunately, the market for TDRs has died for two reasons: (1) The recession lowered the value of properties and the value of TDRs and negatively impacted growth and (2) The BOCC has purposely eliminated the program for practical purposes. Since 2010 the BOCC has not approved most of the funds targeted for purchase of TDRs during slow markets and in 2013 they instituted a moratorium on the creation of new TDR Districts. The ACLT has, and will, continue to work to get the program reinstated.

Adjournment. David Farr concluded the meeting. There being no new business, there was a **motion** to adjourn. The motion was **passed** and the meeting was adjourned at 11:18 am.

Approved,



Gary A. Loew, Secretary