

September 11, 2023 Charlottesville Area Tree Stewards Virtual Board Meeting via Zoom 1:30-3:30 pm EST

Attending: JoAnn Dalley, Robin Hanes, Gregg Korbon, Michelle Cormier, Alison Brill, Mary Spear, Kathy Nepote, Barbara Monfort, Helen Gregory, Barbara White, Ellen Tully, Jennifer Williams, Jean Umiker-Sebeok, Tim Maywalt

JoAnn read a statement she had prepared to convey the difficult previous few days of both contentiousness and support directed toward her in pre-meeting emails and telephone calls she received about how the trainers wanted to carry out the invasives control unit of tree steward training.

The full text of JoAnn's statement follows:

"Welcome everyone. I'd like to start with a moment of silence in memory of all those affected by the tragedy of 9/11. "Even the smallest act of service, the simplest act of kindness is a way to honor those we lost, a way to reclaim that spirit of unity that followed 9/11" Former President, Barak Obama.

When I was convinced to become the President of the Board of CATS I was told to expect to have to deal with contentious issues and personalities. I admit that I did not expect the resulting flurry of emails and phone calls on a current issue before us would cause me to become anxious and to lose sleep. I am left today feeling tired, bruised and bullied. Thankfully I also feel supported and encouraged. My husband reminded me that my service to CATS is as a volunteer and that I was asked to step into this leadership role after 11 years and one prior term on the Board as chair of the Projects committee.

The first line of our Code of Conduct reads: CATS members aspire to respect each other in words and deeds. I feel strongly that this line has been crossed many times this past week. For my part I admit my mistake for not reaching out to Mary and Barbara and for that I am sorry. I was told that, as two members on the working group, both of you were in favor of the Request for the Use of Herbicides on Private Property for 2023 Class and I should have confirmed that as I was trying to get a sense of how the rest of the Board felt about the issue prior to our meeting today.

This weekend I attended a Virginia Society of Ornithology trip to Chincoteague with about 120 members from all across the state.

We learned that herbicide spraying had been delayed due to weather conditions and the Wildlife Loop, three trails and the Assateague Island north beach access would be closed for several days. This caused our schedule to shift, but we appreciated the need to control the invasive, non-native grass species *Phragmites*, the varieties of the weather and concern for our safety. We plan to have a serious discussion on herbicides later in this meeting and the irony of my weekend experience last week is not lost on me.

As a reminder, please keep yourself muted until you are recognized after using the hand raise button. Please refrain from interrupting or talking over the person who is speaking. I will be giving speaking priority to Board members. Questions can be put in CHAT. I've asked Robin to help alert me to raised hands and chat questions."

Secretary: Alison Brill

**The motion was made, seconded and passed to approve the July 2023 board meeting minutes as submitted.**

Past President's Report: Robin Hanes

Robin urged everyone to go view a film she is interviewed in about the Earlysville Oak. It's showing at Ruffin Hall, the UVA art building gallery, until October 26.

Tree sale preparations are going well; the trees look really good.

There will be a work day at The Grove on September 31.

President Elect's Report: Gregg Korbon

Gregg had no report this month.

Treasurer's Report: Michelle Cormier

As is her practice, Michelle forwarded the monthly treasurer's reports via email to all board members prior to this meeting.

She pointed out that there is little happening this time of year.

Since the last board meeting in July, CATS has received two donations in the amounts of \$500 and of \$750.

Tuition payments have been paid in full in the amount of \$5,020.

Current account balances:

Checking:	\$10,430
Money Market:	\$40,140

The credit card balance is zero.

Year to date income:	\$28,125
Year to date expenses:	\$15,190

Present surplus:	\$13,000
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Michelle explained that she is maintaining a high balance in the checking account because of upcoming expenses.

The Board clarified that donations in amounts more than \$200 will receive thank-you notes from the board president while amounts smaller than \$200 will receive acknowledgement from Carol Hunt.

Ellen Tully announced that the grant to CATS from her family foundation in the amount of \$2,200 has been approved and is forthcoming. The grant is unrestricted and may be used for any operating expenses.

### President's Report: JoAnn Dalley

Prior to JoAnn's report, Kathy introduced Jennifer Williams, a current trainee.

JoAnn mentioned that a member expressed concern about members' personal information on the website. Mary confirmed that the information in the Member Portal is secured with the treehugger password.

JoAnn introduced a possible project at the VDoF – stump grinding, which they are unable to presently get funding to do. JoAnn asked for input as to whether CATS could do this for the VDoF. After discussion, the decision was made that Gregg and Barbara W will handle the project details.

JoAnn announced that two board positions will be vacant as of January 2024: recording secretary and president elect. She asked everyone to look out for replacements. Mary said that she would send an email to the membership informing them of the vacancies and asking for volunteers to fill the positions.

JoAnn asked Robin to speak to how the memorial tree project is coming along. Robin reported that she met with Steve Gaines and Rob Mathis, who approved of the project for trees on public land. There may be an ordinance at some point that addresses memorial trees.

The City wants to control invasives (particularly kudzu) on their property abutting Fry's Springs but its efforts would be futile unless the neighboring land is dealt with at nearly the same time. The City is urging the neighborhood to help eradicate the invasives by offering to clear the Fry's Springs land as well as the City land using goats and then herbicide. Steve Gaines contacted JoAnn with a heads up about a possible future planting project following invasives treatment and asked her whether CATS would like to assist.

Steve also alerted JoAnn that the City's Parks and Recreation Department is hosting a guided hike at Ragged Mountain on September 13, 5:30-7:00 pm. Sign up is on the City website.

JoAnn reminded the Board that there are hats available donated by Gregg.

JoAnn asked everyone to remember to log their volunteer hours.

### Education Committee: Barbara Monfort

Barbara reported that the 2023 training class is going well with an enthusiastic group of trainees.

The last tree basics walk attracted about 13-14 people.

The Southern Environmental Law Center hosted a "lunch and learn" session at which Emily spoke.

Mentors and mentees of additional tree walk volunteers continue to meet and advance.

A new tree walk in Waynesboro may be shaping up.

Upcoming tree walks include the American Chestnut walk at Lesesne Park, a walk at Mint Springs on September 24, the Stokes property walk on September 29, and walks at Darden Towe in October.

September's member meeting will be on September 27 from 9:30-11:00 a.m. via Zoom. Our speaker is Erica Smithwick, Distinguished Professor of Geography at Pennsylvania State University.

Incoming president, Gregg Korbon, will be pursuing a new initiative: A Tree for Every Child, which will target fourth graders.

The new trainees have been asked about availability for meeting times; there will be trial meetings in the evenings and at noon.

Natasha and Chris are working on JoAnn's suggestion that CATS resume occasional field trips in lieu of monthly meetings on Zoom.

#### Communications Committee: Mary Spear

Mary will soon send out a survey asking about tee shirt size so that she can place an order in October. She is also going to send out a library use survey.

The website rebuild is proceeding. Mary wanted to thank Barbara W especially for helping clarify the relationship between CATS and the VDoF, Trees Virginia and some other areas important to CATS history and mission.

Mary has recorded a website Member Portal orientation for the 2023 class on Moodle, but a link to the presentation is available for anyone who might need it.

Updating the membership list on the website without having access to Libby's updated version is proving difficult for Mary. Michelle explained Libby's limitations at the moment due to personal responsibilities, which led to a discussion of the monthly email blast as well. Helen has agreed to do the blast until the end of the year but does not wish to write it indefinitely. Mary will advertise the positions in a member mailing.

There is a tabling opportunity on the calendar for the Crozet Arts and Crafts Festival on October 7. Since a couple of scheduling conflicts exist already, Mary said she would leave it on the calendar for now but will cancel it if nobody signs up.

Mary and Robin discussed the possibility of running a print ad in *C'ville* to announce the fall tree sale and other CATS activities. They will continue discussions separately.

#### Tree Commission Liaison: Jean Umiker-Sebeok

Due to a busy agenda, there was unfortunately no time to hear and discuss Jean's report. She emailed it to all board members and it is appended hereto. JoAnn urged everyone to read it.

#### Projects Committee: Kathy Nepote

Projects are posted on TIF as soon as they are arranged. Kathy urged everyone to be sure to check it frequently.

Upcoming projects include invasives control at Walnut Creek on September 16, Day of Caring at VDoF on September 20, and a workday at the Grove on September 30. On September 20 at VDoF, the tree cages will be removed and replaced by new devices designed to protect the trees from damage by weed eaters.

Additional Business: JoAnn Dalley

JoAnn introduced Tim Maywalt to explain the working group's plan for teaching about using herbicides on invasive plants located on private land as part of tree steward training. The concern is that CATS trainees need to experience using herbicide safely and correctly. The board conducted a long and detailed conversation exploring the issue. Everyone had the opportunity to voice opinions and ask questions.

Following the discussion, various solutions were put forth. The board decided to fold the herbicide working group and instead create an *ad hoc* group of people with more varied views and from other committees. It will form and begin work after the current class graduates.

Meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Alison Brill

## **APPENDIX: Charlottesville Tree Commission Report to CATS 9 11 2023**

**Code Issues:** The Charlottesville Tree Commission is submitting final recommendations concerning the fourth draft of the Charlottesville Development Code. It reiterated that, given the continuing drastic loss of tree canopy in the city, it is vitally important that the new Development Code strongly addresses tree preservation and planting. Rather than treating trees as “amenities”, they should instead be treated “as essential infrastructure because of the important role they play in protecting public health and the environment, reducing utility costs, and mitigating the effects of climate change, including excessive heat and flooding.”

Earlier CTC tree-preservation recommendations that have been added to the Code include:

- The Tree Removal Permit requirement (§4.9.1.C),
- Requirements for greenscape zones on streets (§4.4.5), and
- The incorporation of the Best Management Practices for Tree Preservation, Transplanting, Removal and Replacement Manual (BMP’s) and the Comprehensive Tree List (§1.1.8) [**This enhanced list has finally been completed.**]

Past recommendations that have not been included and are now being re-submitted include:

- Add additional incentives for tree preservation and planting by adding “tree bonuses” in the section on development bonuses (§4.2).
- Add meaningful compensation and remediation requirements for seriously damaging or destroying any city-owned tree or any tree designated for preservation on a development plans (§4.9.1.D.2)
- Require installation of tree protection measures *prior* to beginning any site work. (§4.9.D.2)
- Enhance requirements for development plans to ensure that trees are properly protected during construction. (§5.2.9.B.2)
- Enhance notice requirements (Article 5).

**Education and Advocacy Issues:** As a prequel to an effort to create a community-wide Tree Initiative to increase tree planting and invasives removal in our area, this committee is beginning to meet with City staff in various departments to learn more about what role trees play in their plans for creating a city-wide greenway, flood protection, and sustainability efforts and how the City might collaborate with community groups working on such a Tree Initiative.

**D. Jean Umiker-Sebeok**