



Cromwell Valley Park Council, Inc. (CVPC)

Meeting Minutes

October 20, 2025, 6:00 PM

1. COUNCIL MEETING ATTENDANCE

- The meeting was held in person. No Google Meet participants.
- Board In attendance: Kim Shapiro, Laura Jenifer, Ray Reed, Carl Gold, Bill Curtis, Joe Rector, Mia Walsh, Deb Lee, Rachel Allshouse, Rick Childs, Keith Kridenoff, Kate Joyce
- Park Staff: Kirk Dreier
- Membership/Guests in attendance: Tom Brush, Vanessa Blackner, Mary Gregory
- Absent: Pat Novak, Kelly Emerson

2. WELCOME FROM PRESIDENT, MIA WALSH

- Call to Order at 6:01pm, the agenda was adopted, and a quorum was established
- Welcome to Tom Brush, Maryland Nonprofits
- Thank you all who volunteered & participated in the Fall Harvest Festival (FHF) event.
  - Very successful event
  - Financial summary available at next meeting
- Shining Star Award
  - Not prepared to announce - multiple ties
- Advocacy - Baltimore County Citizen Input Meeting for Capital Projects, 10/16/25
  - Presentation included in Agenda Packet (pp. 34-39)
  - Presented for Merrick Barn; two phases proposed, stabilization and occupancy.
  - Presented for care of all TALMAR Landmark Preservation buildings; interior and exterior, primarily for stabilization.
  - If Board members want to advocate, the following information was shared: "Those who do not wish to speak at the hearing but want to share their thoughts can provide written comments to [jmeacham@baltimorecountymd.gov](mailto:jmeacham@baltimorecountymd.gov) by Friday, October 31." (<https://www.baltimorecountymd.gov/departments/planning/development-land-use/capital-improvement-program>)

3. SPECIAL GUEST, Tom Brush, Maryland Nonprofits - Strategic Initiatives

- Advancement Designs <https://advancementdesigns.com>
- How to work with future direction after Reimagining Recreation & Parks.
- 20 hours with each Nature Council.
- Agenda
  - Talking about what we can control
    - Meeting attendees were invited to share out challenges that are addressable in the near future. Answers included Beech Tree Disease, massive scope of Property Management, fence line paint and repair, improved committee structures/work, recognition and outreach for CVPC.
    - Focus on things we can control. Results can often be out of our control. Missed opportunities for actions we can take and what we can learn from them.
  - Snap shot of the survey results
    - What's Working/What We're Proud Of
      - Deep commitment and volunteer dedication.
      - "People keep showing up"
      - Strong sense of stewardship and pride in park's care/preservation.
      - Proven history of delivering visible results (Lime Kilns, trails, restoration)

- What's Getting in Our Way
  - Frustration with BCRP and slow responses
  - Uneven CVPC Board participation and unclear committee expectations
    - Volunteer/membership ability to help with operations without being a member of the Board.
  - Limited communication flow.
  - These challenges happen in all non-profits, especially those that are volunteer based.
- What's Emerging/What we Can Leverage
  - Renewed focus on advocacy and community engagement
    - Are membership/parkgoers aware of what the needs are?
    - Does the organization reflect the community that we serve?
  - Strong financial reserves. How can it be best leveraged/what are the limitations?
  - Board readiness to refresh mission and clarify purpose, keeping recent changes in mind. Don't forget our vision—what is our why?
- What's Challenging/What we Can't Ignore
  - Risk of volunteer burnout and leadership fatigue.
  - Need for clearer governance and succession planning.
    - How to build a roster of who might be next. When there is transition, clear expectations/understanding of roles and responsibilities.
  - Perception gaps between CVPC and BCRP priorities.
    - County priorities may be out of our control.
- More detailed data points in a report available for view.
- Top Strategic Priorities
  - Strategic Priorities: Advocacy, communication, and preservation were top three.
  - Strategic planning includes creating a list of priorities, ranking priorities, and making a list of actionable steps. Requires implementation plan and progress checks.
- Mission Alignment
  - "Needs Update" was the top response. Everyone needs to be on board with the mission and vision. The mission should not be clear, ideally able to memorize, not confusing.
- Strengths & Challenges
  - Strengths: stewardship, volunteers, preservation
  - Challenges: bureaucracy, succession, communications
- Financial Strength
  - Financial reserved perspectives varied (maintain reserves, strategic use, need policy)
  - Having a clear policy is recommended
- Next Steps
  - What 1-2 priorities should we focus on over the next 12 months?
    - Voted on top 2 (\*)
      - Beech Trees
        - With County approval, it could be a realistic win. Summer 2026.
      - \*Property & Maintenance
        - We aren't allowed to do a lot. How to do this work beyond advocacy?
      - What is law and what is policy?
    - Recognition of CVPC
    - Fences
      - Would be a quick win. This is a repair within our Memorandum of Understanding. Could be complete by Spring 2026.
    - \*Committees/Mission, vision, values and Diverse representation
      - Not as much of an outward, visible win like Beech Trees and Fences. Focusing on this would help us grow long-term.
  - Begin mission refresh conversation
  - Reactivate or re-align committees
  - Draft Reserve Policy Framework
  - Develop short strategic vision framework
  - Support CVPC after Maryland nonprofits 5 one-hour workshops

#### 4. GOVERNANCE

- Approval of September 2025 Minutes – *Rachel Allshouse*
  - The minutes were approved unanimously and will be posted to the CVPC website.
- Treasurer’s Report–Deb Lee (p.3-4)
  - Balance Sheet and P&L available in Agenda Packet (pp.22-25)
  - Year to date financial statements if further discussion is needed
  - Special recognition to Rick Childs for assisting in arrangements to replace flags and flagpole at Sherwood House (additional details in Board Report). Secured flag that had been flown over the Capital Building and will be in honor of a generous donor.
  - Agreement with Scholtes Accounting Firm signed. First meeting last week.
  - Recognize neighborhood grocery stores for apple donations Giant of Parkville E. Towson, Sprouts of Towson, Whole Foods of Towson.
    - Shoutout to Pelican Property Management and Towson Hot Bagels for sponsorship of FHF.
- PROPOSED 2026 BUDGET (pp. 19-21) -Raymond Reed
  - Total income of \$35,100 and expenses \$61,865
  - Run at a deficit, but we have money in reserves.
    - If concerned, choose not to spend.
    - How to offset this with fundraising efforts.
    - Budget aligns with spending focused on our mission.
  - Ray Reed opened up for questions.
    - Children’s Garden expense is from restricted funds. All restricted donations are shown as income on the P&L.
    - Goats -Serves as good public relations only. Does not address the actual need for invasive plant management. It grows back. We need a long-term plan. Suggestion to request a meeting with a new person (Gabby Acampora, Natural Resource Specialist II, gacapora@baltimorecountymd.gov) in charge to make a plan. Discussion of mowing techniques and diversity in the meadow. County-wide Weed Warriors project was just approved. Could we be a site that they focus on? Is this topic being covered in Night Out With Nature (NOWN). Decision to keep the goats, continue fundraising for it, but combine with long-term planning.
    - A motion was made to approve the 2026 Budget as submitted.
      - The motion was passed unanimously.
      - Thank you for the hard work from Finance Committee.
- Background Checks
  - Rachel Allshouse reported everyone up to date until December 2025. Will notify upcoming expirations individually by email prior to next meeting.
- MANAGEMENT
  - Update on drainage pipe along the Minebank Trail is that it is “going through the process” with the County.
  - Memorial Bench/Picnic Table - Under tree where Pool House is located to replace rotted
    - With site manager approval, we can continue to replace benches and picnic tables.
      - Request to replace the picnic table and bench. Will honor a park member who has passed and the family has a meaningful connection to CVP.
        - Laura Jenifer shared that this walnut tree may be a gravesite.
        - Ranger Kirk approves this.
      - Ranger Kirk supports replacements, has reservations about adding more.
        - Consider replacing existing wooden benches that are drying out. Mia has asked that Rick identify specific benches to consider for this. Deb shared that some picnic tables are warped/bent. Ranger Kirk asked for specific locations.
  - Park Staff Report – Ranger Kirk Dreier
    - September and October are always very full of special events and trainings. The Primitive Tech weekend went well, and it was fully attended by the visiting public. Counted about 400 over the two days. All the learning stations were full and of course we had perfect weather.
    - Polliwog started up 9/16. That was fully attended, and the last two autumn ones end 10/21-10/22. We may not have a winter polliwog for budget reasons.

- We had the Trail Guide Training on 9/24-19/26 which split up with Marshy Point Nature Center. Training went well, and we picked up new trail guides who helped us out already.
- 10/3 we had our Hunters Moon Campfire and singalong. That went well. We had 16 people sign up. It was a lot of fun, with a near full moon and a chilly night which made the fire feel good to have. I enjoyed doing that program. I've been teaching these for 37 years or so each seasonal naturalist training, but I stopped doing campfires when I left Oregon Ridge Nature Center.
- This month was the FHF. The weather held and we had some 700 folks attend. Everything for the most part went smoothly.
  - Early start helped with traffic and parking.
  - Introduction of Roving Rangers on weekends and special events.
- For all of you here tonight who assisted with the event we have in the "people refrigerator" at Willow Grove a jar of the home-made apple butter that Ranger Knuth made during the event.
- Jessi Jeanetta said that the Beech Tree proposal is being looked at by the Department of Environment for approval.
- The Nature Center Stakeholders meeting is 11/12 at Van Buren.
- The school schedules are picking up and we will be busy all through November.
- The Fort Garrison Frontier program will be on 11/23, 12:00-3:00PM. We will have activities outside and inside the Fort.
- Leaseholders Report - Talmar - Kate Joyce
  - An agreement has been reached on the lease.
  - TALMAR is a private corporation operating on public land. No ties to BCRP and Office of Therapeutic Recreation. Kate Joyce has always supported a partnership.
  - Who is the name of the person who can approve an improvement? If valued over \$5,000, needs approval from the County Council.
    - Ranger Kirk suggests talking to him first.
  - TALMAR is rebranding over the winter.
    - Worked with MICA on design. New name will be Serviceberry Farm, with tagline "expressive therapy center."
  - Graduation for VA Farms is Thursday, 10/23.
    - Twice a week for the last 6 months 10 completed program, 8 graduating.
  - Selling Christmas trees again this year. Arrive Tuesday before Thanksgiving--strong people encouraged to help this morning.
    - Pre-ordering tall trees
- Standing Committee Reports
  - Governance – Carl Gold (pp.7-9)
    - Report as submitted.
    - Hats off to Rick Childs for submitting an alternative plan to Whiting-Turner's Pumping Station project.
    - Nominating 2026
      - Vanessa Blackner has volunteered to chair the Nominating Committee
      - Carl will draft slate, Vanessa will vet and move forward with this position.
  - Finance - Ray Reed (p.10)
    - Report as submitted.
    - 2026 Budget Proposal discussed in Governance (after treasurer report)
  - Fundraising - Mia Walsh (p.12)
    - Report as submitted
    - Giving Tuesday doesn't happen until December this year as Thanksgiving is so late
    - Two focus areas are Beech Trees and Fence, provided we get responses from the county. Can finalize in November meeting
    - Membership Sub-Committee - Kim Shapiro (p.13)
      - Report as submitted.
  - Building & Grounds
  - Night Out With Nature - Laura Jenifer
    - Committee Updates:
      - Met with Pat Novak to acquire information on past speakers; process for planning and setting-up the event; advertising event; and budget for event.
      - Reached out to Breena Doyle to get available Friday evenings in December (2025), and for next year in January, March, May, September, October and November.
      - A student at Arizona State University reached out offering to assist with the committee

and Laura has emailed them thanking them for offering assistance and asking that they contact me.

- Potential speakers
  - Wayne Bell–Disappearing Birds
  - Jenifer Mallinoff–Controlled fire burning & effects of wildfires on wildlife
  - Dr. Jody Johnson – World Pollinators
  - Kerry Wixted – Beneficial Bats
  - Carrie Engel – Native Plants for Sustainable Landscapes
  - Sam Droege – Native Bees – USGS Patuxent Wildlife Research Center
  - Kathy Woods – Wildlife Rehab – Phoenix Wildlife Center
  - Bill Curtis – Coyotes or Beavers
  - Mia Walsh – Projects in the Park
- Potential for partnership with TALMAR.
- Speaker for Birding? Ranger Laura, Mia has other suggestions.
- Maintain Friday evenings.
- Communications – Mia Walsh (p.14)
  - Apple Orchard Signage
    - Details in Agenda Packet
    - Approved and ordered.
  - Q4 Newsletter
    - It is in progress. Several articles from Carl. Push for donations. Introducing new park rangers.
      - Deb Lee suggested we review how we appeal to volunteers in the newsletter. Use Baltimore County Student Support Network’s newsletter as inspiration.
- Volunteers - Rachel Allshouse for Pat Novak
  - Total CVPC Volunteer Hours for September at time of meeting: 350
  - Please remember to complete tracker every month. Emailed link at the end of meeting.
- Special Committee: History and Cultural Heritage - Keith Kridenoff (p.15)
  - Report as submitted.
  - Looking to host more events.
- OLD BUSINESS
  - No updates.
- The meeting adjourned at 8:07pm.
- Respectfully submitted by Rachel Allshouse, Secretary 10/21/25
- The next meeting will be held on Monday, November 10th, 2025 at 6:00pm at Sherwood House and virtually.