



Cromwell Valley Park Council, Inc.
Minutes – March 9, 2026
DRAFT
March Annual Meeting

CVPC Board members in attendance: Rachel Allshouse, Rick Childs, Bill Curtis, Kelly Emerson, Carl Gold, Laura Jenifer, Kate Joyce, Deb Lee, Joe Rector, Ray Reed, Mia Walsh

CVPC Members and Guests in attendance in person: Vanessa Blackner, Marie McCarthy Bollard, Paul Bollard, Jeff Budnitz (Lake Roland Nature Council), Greg Bullard, Jessica Carter, Pat Flanigan, Mary Gregory, Steve Jackson, Jess Jeanetta (BCDR&P), Keith Kridenoff, Laura Lechtzin, Jan Markowitz, David Marks (Baltimore County Council), Mike Mauro, Michelle Monaghan, Kate Murphy, Arthur Stewart, Margie Stewart, Mike Young, Lisa Zanti

CVPC Members in attendance virtually: Bud & Caren Absalom, Laura Baltatzis, Beverly Braun, Ann Greenbaum, Bev Hamilton, Laura Henneman, Leslie Johnston, Janet Kartka, Lynne Kingham, Barbara Newton, Janina O'Brien, Mary Ellen Pluemer, Barbara Plunkett, Lorraine Seiler, Eleanor Simon, Dr. Mary Stapleton, Albert Supik, Patricia Supik, Linda Talley, Cathy Teixeira, Chloe Thio, Kent Underwood, Sheila Underwood, Mike Waltz

Park Staff: Kirk Dreier

1. WELCOME FROM PRESIDENT – Mia Walsh

- a. The President called the meeting to order at 6:03 p.m. The meeting was conducted in-person at the Sherwood House and the Zoom online meeting platform. All CVPC Board members were present and easily more than ten CVPC members, hence a quorum for this general meeting.
- b. Mia welcomed meeting attendees, both in person and attending via Zoom. She explained the meeting format. The meeting served as the Cromwell Valley Park Council's annual report and community update, reviewing accomplishments, volunteer activity, membership, finances, conservation work, and capital projects, with highlights.
- c. Mia introduced the current Board members and Committee Chairs, Park staff present, Kirk Dreier, Jessica Jeannetta for BCDR&P, as well as special guest Councilman David Marks who has been helpful to our Council. David explained that he currently represents the 5th District in the County, but he will be representing the new 7th District if elected, the northeastern district beginning next year. David mentioned a new initiative he is working on affecting development above the Urban-Rural Demarcation Line (URDL)
 - 1) We are looking to fill two open positions on the Board – Communications Committee Chair – responsibilities – newsletter, social media, email communication with constituents. Volunteers Committee – coordinating volunteers for events.

2. Presentation – accompanied by PowerPoint projection

- a. We are an all-volunteer board. Volunteer hours tracking show more than 4000 hours of board members and Buildings and Grounds crew in 2025.. We know this number is low, as we are not consistent in reporting. Board members support many activities and advocate for Park needs.
- b. Membership – Totals are cyclical through the years due to a set expiration date that affects all but Lifetime members. Our numbers are somewhat lower since changes have occurred in our systems of registration; however, a higher portion of our membership are electing to take higher membership levels, greater giving. Membership income is unrestricted.
- c. Some special donations:
 - Deb Lee recognized the need to replace a tattered flag. Senator J.B. Jennings helped obtain the new flag



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and a member of his staff was on site to help raise it.

- Our initiative to save the European beech trees from beech tree leaf disease is getting assistance from David Marks and J.B. Jennings.
 - Deb Lee has been instrumental in helping improve our yield on investments, bringing in about \$5000 in interest income over the past year. Deb has also brought in an accounting firm to assess practices and assist with tax reporting.
 - Our fencing will be looking better as well, thanks to the work of an intern who catalogued every foot of fencing with respect to repair needs and paint, which enabled costing the effort for submission as a Community Parks Improvement Project. Materials should cost under \$5000, and the work will be a big volunteer effort.
- 2) CVPC financial position is strong, with income in 2025 of \$83,000, versus a more typical amount of \$50,000. A grant from the County brought us \$24,000, without which we would have been in a deficit.
- As a non-profit organization we do not always look to have a surplus. Our budget for 2026 shows an anticipated deficit.
 - Trails Committee receives most of the money we spend. Other expenses include administrative costs, programs and events expenses and education.
 - Mike Young, slated to become our Finance Committee Chair, will implement process changes to improve our finance procedures. Ray Reed is assisting with acquiring appropriate insurance.
- 3) Some fun stuff! – Bill Curtis’s Critter Cam
- Critter Cam captures are posted on Instagram and Facebook.
 - An improved process for capturing the recordings is due to purchase of a wireless camera, and data can be downloaded directly to a computer, eliminating the need to climb a tree to access the camera.
 - Captures in 2025 included great shots of beavers and their dam construction on Minebank Run. This video brought lots of beaver fans to the park, and a big dose of sadness when a storm took out the dam.
 - Other sightings from the cam video included fox, mink, raccoon, coyote and deer.
- 4) Our History and Culture Heritage Committee, led by Keith Kridenoff, has taken responsibility for artifacts donated to Baltimore County Historical Society by the descendants of the Shanklins, the family associated with historic limekilns near the Minebank. These have been catalogued and researched and shared with the community through several pop-up museum events.
- Other events include “Women of the Valley” through the Night Out with Nature, recognizing the accomplishments of specific women through the history of the park, and history tours of the limekilns.
 - The committee also produced Land and Labor Acknowledgments, recognizing early land stewards, indigenous, enslaved and indentured people, sharecroppers and settlers that occupied and cared for the land.
- 5) Night Out with Nature Speaker Series is led by Laura Jenifer. The return from cancellation of the program due to COVID was slow, but events in 2025 and into 2026 have been well-attended.
- John Canoles, former CVPC board member and hawk expert, presented a talk on hawk migration to a sold-out crowd. Cromwell Valley Park is on the path of migrating hawks and thousands can pass overhead in one day during the fall migration season.



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- Coming up later this year are: Phoenix Wildlife Center on March 20th, controlled fire-burning in May, Chesapeake Bay Watershed and autumn native planting later in 2026.
- 6) Buildings and Grounds – Our trails crew of dedicated guys and gals put in lots of volunteer hours keeping trails in good shape and supporting our park events, particularly the Fall Festival/Arts in the Park. The committee also does tree pruning, mowing, maintenance of the apple orchard, bench maintenance, and garden preparation.
- 7) Weed Warriors is our habitat restoration team, setting sites on target invasives about every two weeks throughout the year.
- d. Governance Committee is led by Carl Gold. It has several roles, besides this meeting’s focus on election of proposed board nominees put together by Vanessa Blackner.
- Carl provided legal counsel through development of the Memorandum of Understanding with the County, which considered roles of the Council versus the County.
 - Carl and Rick Childs were involved in the review of plans for upcoming work to repair and enhance the pumping station, with initial plans to go through the park grounds. The station serves an area of Baltimore County. Their involvement triggered a positive change in plans that improved impact to the park during the project execution, and it also brought benefits to the project design and implementation.
 - Insurance decisions led by Ray Reed were also managed through the Governance Committee, including a legal document with the Historical Society of Baltimore County.
- e. Major projects are partly supported through donations and membership dues.
- Beech tree leaf disease has been well supported through donations. Trees benefiting from treatment are the European beech trees that line the Sherwood loop. This year’s anticipated cost is \$8500, and \$6000 has already been raised through donations. Baltimore Road Runners is committed to donate for this project through money raised in the spring run in the park.
 - The Nature Center and Children’s Garden receive support through restricted funds.
 - Fundraising is also helping to bring the goat kudzu-eating troops back to the park this fall.
 - A new donor management system, called Bloomerang, is being rolled out. It handles our membership involvement, fundraising and community communication. Mia identified and has been leading the transition to the new system.
 - Signs bearing donation QR codes have been installed around the park, making it easier for visitors to make donations.
- f. Planning survey results – a short survey was sent out through Bloomerang communications and received 253 responses. Some results were as follows:
- Hiking is the dominant park activity (93%), with respondents requesting trail repairs, signage improvements, and erosion/runoff mitigation.
 - Nature Center visits (63%); Event attendance (43%), feedback – under-promoted; Birding (38%); Weekend programs (28%); 42% of those that engage with the park have never attended our park events.
- g. Baltimore County Enhancement Project scope:
- improved entrance to the Barnatorium



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- creation of an accessible path
- expansion of Sherwood and Willow Grove Nature Education Center – road widening and additional parking with total parking spaces at 191, including ADA accessible spaces
- 20 X 20 ft pavilion at Willow Grove
- addition of over 80 shade trees, as well as ornamental trees and bioretention areas
- timeline of 6 to 8 months of interruption, but afterwards a positive difference at the park
 - ◇ interruptions include closure of the Nature Center for the rest of the year, parking restrictions, shuffling of programs as needed
 - ◇ trail access is restricted at Willow Grove, but trails can be reached from the western end of Sherwood area, and these will be moved as needed throughout the construction period.

3. Questions and answers: Management during disruptions

- Kirk answered parking and trail access questions from online participants, staff is working out additional parking at Sherwood in areas west of Sherwood House like we would typically use for Sherwood based events. This area also allows better access to trails during interruptions.
- Mia offered, in response to questions about information availability, that besides intended social media postings, that the information can be posted to the park website. Jess Jeanetta (BCDR&P) said that updates are posted regularly to the County website.
- Carl Gold asked about Gunpowder Valley Conservancy access to stored rain barrels. These will be available.
- Kirk answered a question about locations of port-a-johns, and Kirk said that these have been moved to the parking space in Willow Grove before the bridge.
- Mia addressed the drainage pipeline breach at the Minebank due to a weather event, highlighting the Council role in advocacy. A number of government entities were involved, and the funding has been approved for this small-scale project. This project will be eventually followed by a large sewer line project, discussed earlier.

4. Advocacy

- 1) The beech tree leaf disease project requires approval from the County Council due to its cost. The project will be introduced at the County Council meeting in the March meeting and voted on in the April meeting. David Marks stated that he did not anticipate an issue in the approval process. The timing is critical, as the trees must be treated within a June/July window to be effective.
- 2) Barnatorium restoration anticipated costs have escalated. The concern is that deterioration over time may pose serious risk to the structure. The Council is advocating through the County for stabilization in the near term to save the building from potential demolition due to neglect.
- 3) Talmar buildings are also in serious need of painting and repair. These buildings are iconic and in need of a higher level of maintenance – stabilization of the structures.

5. Special reports

- 1) Talmar Report – Kate Joyce
 - Talmar works on a reimbursement program with the County, but reimbursements have been behind by



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more than 6 months, leaving the organization in a difficult position in payroll support. David Marks has been helpful in assuring immediate payment. Kate says she was able to pick up the first installment from the County earlier in the day. She hopes that the second half will be paid shortly.

- Kate is expecting 15 veterans for the next training program beginning on the 15th of this month.
- Talmar is hosting an event on April 25th. Seedlings that were not needed for Talmar's programs will be available for purchase that day.

2) Park Staff Report –Kirk Dreier

- Work devoted to managing disruptions – rerouting for parking; obtaining and installing a tent at Sherwood for ongoing school programs; anticipating construction noise, but uncertain of degree of impact on the programs
- Community Gardens – first year for this. Approximately 80 plots available at \$29 each. Gardeners will need to follow a set of requirements including contributing some time to maintaining the systems that support the Community Garden.

6. Election of Officers and Directors – led by Vanessa Blackner for Governance

Vanessa read the list of Officers and Directors, those continuing and those up for election. Mia asked for additional nominations from the floor, but none were offered.

President – Mia Walsh – continuing through 3/31/27

Vice-President – Bill Curtis – up for election to serve 4/1//26 through 3/31/28

Treasurer – Deb Lee - continuing through 3/31/27

Secretary – Kim Shapiro - up for election to serve 4/1//26 through 3/31/28

Director – Laura Jenifer - continuing through 3/31/27

Director – Carl Gold - up for election to serve 4/1//26 through 3/31/28

Director – Lisa Zanti - up for election to serve 4/1//26 through 3/31/28

Director – Ray Reed - continuing through 3/31/27

Kim Shapiro explained to those present that eligible voters are CVPC members who have attended CVPC meetings at least twice within the past 12 months.

Mia asked for a motion for the vote – Rick Childs so moved. Joe Rector seconded. All approved.

Michelle Monaghan moved for adjournment, seconded, approved. The meeting was adjourned at 7:42 p.m,

Respectfully submitted by Kim Shapiro for Rachel Allshouse 3/12/26

The next meeting will be held on Monday, April 13th at 6:00 pm at Sherwood House and virtually.