



Cromwell Valley Park Council, Inc.
Minutes – April 13, 2026
April Board Meeting

CVPC Board members in attendance: Rick Childs, Bill Curtis, Kelly Emerson, Carl Gold, Kelly Goles, Laura Jenifer, Deb Lee, Kim Shapiro, Mia Walsh, Mike Young, Lisa Zanti

CVPC Members and Guests in attendance in person: Vanessa Blackner, Margie Stewart

Absent Board members: Kate Joyce, Ray Reed

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 all attendees were in person. A quorum was established.
- b. Mia welcomed meeting attendees and suggested that each person identify themselves and their role at the park.

2. GOVERNANCE

- a. Elections of the Standing Committees - Nominating Committee – *Vanessa Blackner*
 - 1) Vanessa read the slate of nominees up for election by the Board to serve as Committee Chairs for the coming year: Rick Childs (Buildings and Grounds); Mike Young (Finance), Carl Gold (Governance), Kelly Emerson (Programs and Events); Mia Walsh (Fundraising); and Kelly Goles (Volunteers)
 - 2) Mia asked for a move to approve the slate. Carl Gold so moved, and Bill Curtis seconded. The slate was approved unanimously.
 - 3) The Communication Committee Chair position remains open.
 - 4) Mia stated that the organization is running smoothly and welcomed Kelly Goles to the position of Chair of Volunteers Committee, saying that this is an answer to a need that we have had for a while.
- b. Approval of March 2026 Minutes – *Kim Shapiro*
 - Kim said that there was just one response to the draft, with no corrections needed. Carl moved to approve, seconded by Rick, approved unanimously.
- c. Treasurer’s Report – *Deb Lee* (report included in Board packet) Key points:
 - 1) Completion of financial data migration to TechSoup’s discounted Quickbooks online.
 - 2) Following last year’s financial review, Budget vs Actuals report now shows a separate income line item for Project-Specific funds (120a) and expense line item for Restricted Programs funds (295). Budget line 260 (B&G) was adjusted to reflect the change.
 - 3) 990 forms were completed professionally by Marina Strehin of C.E.A. Scholtes & Associates for the first time in many years. The finished form was reviewed by Mike Young and signed by Mia on April 10th.
 - 4) Mia asked about the observed proportions of expenses going towards “programs” rather than “administration”. This is critical in non-profit organizational performance. 60% of expenses should be program-directed. Kelly E asked for explanation of the term “program”, and Mia explained it as spending against our stated mission. Mike said that spending towards programs is the largest; administrative is comparatively low. Mia said that Buildings and Grounds work is helpful in directing those expenses.
 - 5) Stagnant restricted fund line items were discussed, led by Mike and Deb. Butterfly Funds of \$307 was called out in particular. Rick said that these funds could be applied to programs focused on pollinators otherwise in the park. There was general agreement to allocate the Koininia (Butterfly) Funds to the purchase of serviceberry trees (known to attract pollinators) in honor of TALMAR’s upcoming name-change celebration to Serviceberry Farm.
 - Mia made a motion to spend the \$307 Butterfly fund in honor of the renaming of Talmar; Carl suggested waiting on a request expected from Kirk, but Mia said those funds would be unrelated; the motion was seconded and approved.



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- Mike recommended that, when such funds are spent, Deb, as Treasurer, should be made aware for proper accounting.
- Mia suggested that stagnant funds for benches could be spent on bench maintenance.
- 6) Statement of Financial Position – Deb will rebalance the cash position in the checking account to the savings account on a quarterly basis so that the amount does not exceed budgeted expenses for the fiscal year. \$6,000 was transferred at the end of March from Checking to Savings..

d. Background Checks- *Kim Shapiro*

- All Board members except Kelly Emerson are current. Kelly explained that she was concerned about the security of the site, as the data entry page did not show an https address. Mia, via her computer and Sherwood Internet, checked the site and found that the NCSI site itself shows the https in the address. Kelly will register for background check clearance based on this information.

e. Mission and Strategic Plan Updates – *Kim Shapiro and Deb Lee*

- 1) Kim reported that she has shared with the team members (Bill, Deb and Mia) some work done to categorize input from sources: board members, County staff and our community for the purpose of determining Strategic Priorities. A team meeting is planned for May 4th to generate these statements. These will then drive the work on Goals and Objectives by the Board members in a meeting devoted to that work.
- 2) Deb added for Kelly Goles’s benefit, as Volunteers Chair, that community input from the survey showed 80 individuals have an interest in volunteering at Cromwell Valley Park.
- 3) Mia suggested that the results of the planning team meeting be presented at the May 11th Board meeting.
- 4) Regarding the opportunity to promote volunteerism, Mia talked about the capability of tools in Bloomerang to communicate volunteer opportunities.
- 5) Deb suggested that Margie (social media) and Kelly G (volunteers) can be of good help to each other with their related work for the Council.

3. Management

a. Park Staff Report – *Kirk Dreier* Update on Construction Work, Closed Entrances

- 1) Work at the park by Urban N. Zink Contractors, Inc. began in March. Rerouting of traffic is working fairly well. Kirk has set up signs for directing traffic; however, the signs expected from the contractor have not yet been set up. Planned tree removal in the area has begun.
- 2) According to Kirk’s contact Charlie Nass, permit delays have delayed start of work at Sherwood.
- 3) Accomplishments in March include: county-wide volunteer training, staff training on use of chainsaws, truck maintenance and Fall Harvest planning work.
- 4) A section of fence was destroyed at Sherwood due to a vehicle collision. The responsible party is not known, except identification by a witness of a “white SUV” but no other details. Kirk will work with Property Management to advance the repairs to the fence.
- 5) Rick Childs attempted to rescue Talmar’s tractor from a hung-up position on a mulch pile. Kirk said that the rescue may require moving the mulch. Rick said that it will also require that the tractor key be available.
- 6) So far, 16 plots have been rented in the Community Garden. This fills the smaller “A side”. The “B side” is still covered and available. Plots are 100 square feet and are rented for \$29 for the season. Users of the garden are required to contribute 3 hours of time in maintenance of the systems that support the garden. Kirk and Breena will monitor these contributions of volunteer time.
- 7) Mia was responsible for volunteerism by Chesapeake Employers Insurance employees in helping to clear rocks and move mulch for the Honor Garden. They are also interested in volunteering for other tasks, and Mike Mauro has ideas for this.
- 8) The long-unused plastic water tank is planned for movement to a location at Talmar if it is even possible to move it. Kirk is requesting assistance from Property Management.



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- 9) 43 deer were removed from the park in the culling event by sharp-shooters. The meat will be ground by butchers and donated to food pantries.
 - 10) WMAR TV filmed Kirk in a spot at Fort Garrison. [Did you know? The 17th century fort in a Pikesville neighborhood](#)
 - 11) Kirk proposed some opportunities for the Council to contribute funds;
 - \$100 supporting a luncheon for Project Feeder Watch volunteers (Laura Lechtzin)
 - Apple tree ID signs for each of the varieties for a total of 13 signs at a cost of \$356.66. (Mike Mauro)
 - ◇ The proposed signs are aluminum and durable, allows for text and image – each at ~\$30
 - ◇ Deb showed a sample of material produced by Square Signs that would serve the purpose at a cost of \$21, hence a cost savings
 - ◇ Mia suggested that Margie might consider helping with the design of these exhibits and also suggested considering using funds already committed for exhibit expenses.
 - Deb said that funds are available to support Kirk’s requests.
 - 12) Member Appreciation Event – discussion as to whether we will do that this year. Discussion in the direction of not doing the picnic this year but plan a celebration in 2027 at the completion of the massive work at the park.
- b. Leaseholder’s Report – *Kate Joyce is absent but submitted a report. See the Board packet.*
- 1) Key point – Inviting “EVERYONE” to the renaming event, termed “rebranding picnic” from 2 to 5 pm on April 25th. Talmar, Inc. becomes Serviceberry Farm.
 - 2) Kate’s updates include VA program progress, vegetable of the week program, interest in the water tank and asking Council help in advocating for repair and restoration of Talmar structures.
- c. Friends of Sherwood – *Mia Walsh*
- 1) Green Trust Alliance and Chesapeake Employers Insurance gave time to clean up the Honor Garden (also mentioned in Kirk’s report).
 - 2) Mia expressed concern about the care of the herb garden, and Kirk said the garden club had just recently been working on it.
- d. Standing Committees –
- 1) Governance - *Carl Gold*

Grants for non-profits best practices, help in gaining grants, includes:

 - Conflict of Interest – these should be signed by each board member on an established frequency
 - ◇ Deb said that we have a form in the existing CVPC Policies and Procedures document. Carl asked current Board members and Committee Chairpersons to sign and return the Conflict of Interest form to him..
 - ◇ Rick suggested that we set up a system to complete a conflict of interest form when we re-up for positions.
 - Evaluation of performance of Chief Executive – Carl will initiate that process via email
 - Recruiting practices established – Kelly E suggested that this may be included in our current Strategic Planning effort and she will look for information on educational opportunities
 - ◇ Rick suggested using our kiosks to promote volunteerism
 - ◇ Kelly G sees an opportunity for a role of the Volunteers Committee
 - Document Retention Policies
 - ◇ Mia said that we have a program of storing our organizational documents and Board documents on a dedicated Google Drive for which she can assign access as needed
 - ◇ Carl & Bill support a statement to retention that reflects compliance with all relevant laws.
 - 2) Finance (including Insurance) – *Mike Young & Ray Reed (absent)*
 - New Procedure for property purchases for CVPC ownership (Mike presented for Ray)



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From Ray's report: Please report the new purchase of any new property that is to be owned by the CVP Council that is valued at \$100 per item, within 30 days of the purchase, to Raymond Reed, Director, CVP Council at financeandinsurance@cromwellvalley.org. Include the following information about the property: Date Purchased, Item description, Model Number, Serial Number, Where purchased, Cost of item, and location where items will be stored.

- ◇ Applies to purchases of \$100 or more - to be reported to Ray (financeandinsurance@cromwellvalleypark.org) within 30 days of purchase
 - ◇ Rick asked if this also applies to donated property valued at \$100 or more. Mia said that there is an in-kind donation tax receipt for this purpose.
 - Ray moved our insurance policies from the brokerage of Hilb Group to Georges & Company, an agency that specializes in insuring non-profit organizations.
 - Mike said that the Financial Review process is underway and that he is learning a lot from it. Rick is next in line to continue the assessment.
- 3) Fundraising - *Mia Walsh (report attached)*
- Beech Trees - David Marks told Mia that the County Council approved our payment to the County for work to be done this coming season to save the European beech trees. The two companies contracted for the job, A&A and Bartlett Tree Experts have donated, each, one tree treatment, saving almost \$2000 on the project.
 - Membership – Kim said that this is the time of year when membership totals drop significantly due to the mass expiration date of March 31st. Data show that the percentage of higher-level memberships (Contributing, Sustaining, Patron) are much higher than usual. Typically, we would follow up with a mailing; however, we learned from an effort late last year, with a 300-count mailing, that the return on this effort was very low, at no higher than 7%, hardly covering the cost of postage and supplies.
- 4) Building and Grounds - *Rick Childs*
- B&G are working on transferring their equipment from Willow Grove to Sherwood
 - Jim Kelly plans for host some visitors at the park with particular interest in the Willow Grove Nature Center building. Kirk said that it will be accessible for the visit.
- 5) Programs & Events - *Kelly Emerson*
- Fall Harvest Festival – Arts in the Park – Partnered Event Discussion
 - ◇ Mia has proposed that due to limitations in access to the park this year, and the impact of fundraising from the event, we should consider having Towson Arts Collective (TAC) manage their own agreement with the County and not repeat the third-party agreement we have made in the past.
 - ◇ Kelly spoke from a document she provided that shared history of the event, agreement of roles in past years, typical expenses and possible donations, a report on last year's surplus funds. Based on these numbers, she also looked at potential loss in attendance for this year and the impact that may have on surplus.
 - ◇ Kelly supports using the model that has developed, based on the changes over time that have improved the agreements.
 - ◇ Issues presented include:
 1. parking management and possible extra costs if shuttle service to an offsite location is needed
 2. if moving away from third-party agreement, unfavorable to TAC financial outcome, as they would need to pay for certain facilities at the park
 - ◇ Kelly has a strong commitment to the established practice.



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- ◇ Mia asked for a motion to continue to use the third-party agreement and vote – the vote was 7 in favor, 1 opposed, and 5 board members did not vote. More discussion followed, but Mia ultimately called in favor of the using the third-party agreement approach.
- Night Out with Nature– *Laura Jenifer (report included in Board packet)*
 - ◇ Laura is looking for one more speaker for the summer.
 - ◇ Laura asked if the May NOwN event sells out for space in the Sherwood House, would it be possible to move the event to the tent with the potential to sell more tickets. Limitations in the use of the tent were discussed, lack of electricity and light as it is currently set up, and potential issues with readable screen display. Kirk will get more info on seating space in the tent.
- Chesapeake Shakespeare - *Kelly E*
 - ◇ Funding cuts have hurt the program, and it can no longer offer these events as free to the Council.
 - ◇ Vanessa proposed that we pass on it this year due to the closures of areas of the park and consider it again for next year after the work at the park is completed. There was no pushback on this idea.
- 6) Council Hosted Hikes – *Mia Walsh (no discussion)*
- 7) Communications – *Welcome Margie Stewart*
 - Mia asked Margie to mention some of her ideas, and Margie talked about highlighting experiences of park visitors, including the folks in the room, including these in social media posts and newsletter articles.
 - Creating a QR code tour at the park
- 8) Volunteers – *Welcome Kelly Goles*
 - Mia recognized, again, how much help Kelly G will be to the volunteers and the park events.
- 9) Special Committee - History & Cultural Heritage – *Keith Kridenoff (absent) Vanessa Blackburn (report in Board packet)*

NEW BUSINESS 250th Display for July - Night out with Nature / 250 Trunk

Vanessa Blackner (report in Board packet under History and Cultural Heritage)

- Vanessa shared a concept she learned through the County-wide training session this spring – recognizing some real benefit in collaborating with Aleem Allison at Benjamin Banneker Historical Park and Museum.
 - ◇ Commonality in historical and natural perspectives
 - ◇ Care and interest in historic artifacts
- Sign out Banneker’s “250 trunk” (in celebration of the nations 250th birthday) to make available to park visitors at events.

Mia asked for a motion for adjournment, seconded, approved. The meeting was adjourned at 8:13 p.m.

Respectfully submitted by Kim Shapiro 4/14/26

The next meeting will be held on Monday, May 11th at 6:00 pm at Sherwood House and virtually.