

The Hillside Trust
Minutes of the Board of Trustees
January 9, 2025

PRESENT VIA ZOOM: Rick Block, Dave Cors, Bizzy Driscoll, Arlene Golembiewski, Chris Jenco, Chris Perme, Brian Spitler, Amanda Voss.

Also present: Eric Russo.

CALL TO ORDER: the meeting was called to order at 8:35

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: Rick motioned to approve the November 14, 2024; board minutes seconded by Bizzy. All voted in favor of approving.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT:

Financials: Eric reported the following balances: the Operating Checking Fund has \$79,862; the Operating Savings has \$65,042; the Land Conservation Fund has \$354,936; the Operating Endowment Fund has \$598,780; the Short-Term Investment Fund has \$108,390; the Bahr Farm Restricted Fund has \$10,006; and the Lafayette Woods Escrow Fund has 16,963. The total cash, minus the Lafayette Woods Escrow Fund is \$1,217,016.

DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE REPORT:

Pope Coleman Event: Eric reported that \$18,650 has been committed thus far to the event. Eric is waiting to hear back from the Luther Foundation to see if it will commit the same \$20,000 to the event that it did last year.

Eric reported that he and Rosemary Schlachter took out major donor candidate, Jens Rosenkrantz for lunch on January 7th to discuss a potential major gift. Jens is currently involved in a development campaign for the Clifton Arts Council, indicating that he is not currently able to make a major gift to The Hillside Trust. He did note that once his campaign is finished, he will consider The Hillside Trust's request.

LAND CONSERVATION COMMITTEE REPORT:

Lafayette Woods: Eric reported that it is still unknown who the purchaser/developer of this 27-acre property is, as the closing has not yet occurred. It was delayed until early January because a new survey of the property was required due to the widening of I-75 that cut into the property. Once the purchaser is identified, Eric will work with key Clifton residents to engage the developer in the possibility of creating a conservation-minded development.

Coombe Preserve (Corbin Dr) Hyde Park: the cleanup date set in early December to remove the grass sod was postponed due to cold temperatures. It will be rescheduled in late Winter or

early Spring.

City Forestry Assessment Issue: Eric was pleased to report that State Representative, Bill Seitz responded immediately to his request seeking an advocate to take this issue up with the Ohio legislature. Eric had contacted his office in early December. On December 19th, Eric received this email from Mr. Seitz, “*Well I have good news. Sometimes you just get lucky. But in my very last bill on my very last day in office I got the law changed so Cincinnati can waive your forestry assessments. Merry Christmas!*”

Eric then received this follow-up email on January 5th: “*This bill was HB315. Like most bills, it is not effective until 90 days after the Governor signed it, which he did on January 2 or 3. All it does is permit, but not mandate, the city to excuse you from paying these assessments. So your first move is to go back to Meeka Owens and tell her the law has been changed so she should get Council to waive the assessment. Only when that happens is the Auditor to be notified, though there is no harm in letting Jessica Miranda know of the change now.*”

Eric has contacted Councilmember Owens office and is awaiting the next steps. This may include having to testify in front of city council on behalf of this State Bill. Rick asked that Eric make sure this is a one and done abatement, and that The Hillside Trust does not have to make this a yearly exercise. Bizzy asked Eric to notify the board when this eventually makes it to city council.

LAND USE ADVISORY UPDATE:

Kemper Ln: Eric reported that neighborhood opponents appealed the city hearing examiner’s decision in front of the Zoning Board of Appeals on December 19th. Following a four-hour hearing, the ZBA overturned the hearing examiner’s decision and denied the development. The developer can either appeal the decision at the local court of appeals or return to the city with a different plan.

Clough Pike: Eric reported that a 19-unit development on 9 acres located between Clough Pike and Clough Creek was heard by the Anderson Township Zoning Committee on December 16th. Nine of the 19 units were sited within the Clough Creek floodplain. Eric was one of 5 opponents who testified against this development. The Zoning Committee voted unanimously to deny the project. WCPO TV covered this hearing and aired it later that evening.

2025 PROPOSED BUDGET: Dave motioned to approve the 2025 budget, including a \$6000 salary increase for Eric and a \$15,000 bonus, seconded by Amanda. All voted in favor.

OLD BUSINESS: Eric reported that he contacted The Hillside Trust’s social media professional, Nick Perry, about ways the organization’s media following can be increased. Nick wrote Eric a lengthy email that Eric will forward to the board.

NEW BUSINESS: Eric noted that he would like to re-invigorate the Education Committee. He will send out an email inviting anyone on the board to attend a meeting that will be

scheduled at the office in mid- to late-January.

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 9:25 am.

NEXT BOARD MEETING: Thursday March 13, 2025