

The Hillside Trust
Minutes of the Board of Trustees
March 13, 2025

PRESENT: Arlene Golembiewski, Chris Jenco, Chris Perme.

PRESENT VIA ZOOM: Rick Block, Dave Cors, Bizzy Driscoll, Ken Jones, Thea Langsam, Lib Stone.

Also present: Eric Russo.

CALL TO ORDER: the meeting was called to order at 8:40

APPROVAL OF MINUTES: Chris Perme motioned to approve the January 9, 2025, board minutes seconded by Chris Jenco. All voted in favor of approving.

DIRECTOR'S REPORT:

Financials: Eric reported the following balances: the Operating Checking Fund has \$90,938 the Operating Savings has \$70,045; the Land Conservation Fund has \$356,668; the Operating Endowment Fund has \$633,504; the Short-Term Investment Fund has \$109,136; the Bahr Restricted Fund has \$10,006; and the Lafayette Woods Escrow Fund has \$13,963. The total cash, minus the Lafayette Woods Escrow Fund is \$1,270,297.

Eric referred the Board to the YTD budget document that was emailed previously for any questions or comments. Eric also highlighted that \$7204.47 was debited from the Land Conservation Fund in January to cover annual forestry assessments.

DEVELOPMENT COMMITTEE REPORT:

Pope Coleman Event: Eric reported that we have now raised in actual and committed funds, \$96,950 for the Pope Coleman Awards. In the last month, The Hillside Trust received \$25,000 from the Luther Charitable Trust, and \$25,000 from Liz and Frank Blake. Event invitations were mailed out on March 7th.

Major Donor Marketing Piece: in 2008, The Hillside Trust created a marketing piece for soliciting major donor gifts, specifically for its endowment funds. Rick Block recently suggested to Eric that the Trust update this piece to include it with major donor solicitations, rather than simply relying on letters or emails that lack any pizzazz. Eric suggested that this update could be accomplished through the Development Committee, the next meeting of which is on Thursday March 27th.

LAND CONSERVATION COMMITTEE REPORT:

Lafayette Woods: Eric reported that Jason Barron, director of Cincinnati Parks called him to say that he had heard a rumor that the 27-acre green space next to Mt. Storm in Clifton is back on the market. Furthermore, he indicated that Parks is now interested in purchasing this land through a Clean Ohio Fund application. Eric is going to investigate this further to establish whether or not the land is back on the market for sale. In the meantime, a tentative meeting with Clifton neighbors has been set up for Monday evening March 17 to discuss this.

Coombe Preserve (Corbin Dr) Hyde Park: Eric expressed concern that the sod removal date that was postponed in December due to cold weather has only given the grass more time to take root. This could make it more difficult to roll it up. Eric suggested that the Board consider hiring a landscaping company to do this work. Polly is going to explore getting an estimate from a crew that she has worked with before. She will notify Eric once she finds out something.

City Forestry Assessment Issue: Eric reported that this issue is still not worked out. He discovered that State Representative Bill Seitz included all non-profits in the Ohio House Bill that was passed at the end of December, instead of including only non-profit land trusts. The Cincinnati Law Department is not willing to recognize this Bill and abate the forestry assessments until the language is tightened up. Eric is working with Meeka Owens office to work this out, understanding that time is of the essence due to 2025 being a city council election year.

LAND USE ADVISORY UPDATE:

Aston Oaks – North Bend, OH: Eric reported that he collaborated with residents of St. Annes Dr in Aston Oaks to stop the development of a steep 25-acre hillside that had active landslides on it. The hearing took place on the evening of February 3rd and lasted nearly 5 hours. The North Bend Planning Commission voted unanimously to stop the project. WCPO-TV covered the event, an excerpt of which can be found on YouTube.

OLD BUSINESS: Eric reported requested that a new date be set for the Education Committee that was postponed in February. The Board selected the date of Friday March 28 at 2:30pm to meet. This will be an in-person meeting at The Hillside Trust office.

Eric reported he and Brian Spitler had a Zoom meeting with The Hillside Trust's social media and web page professional, Nick Perry. After the meeting, Nick and Eric agreed to part amicably, in that Nick believes he is no longer an appropriate fit for what The Hillside Trust wants to accomplish with social media, especially given the prices that Nick charges. Nick agreed to continue to update the web page until The Hillside Trust finds someone else to take over that job. Eric suggested to the Board that his daughter, Elly has extensive web page building experience and would be a great candidate to revamp the Trust's web page. Eric noted that the current web page is built on a cumbersome platform, and that Elly could rebuild the web page with a more user-friendly foundation. Polly said she supports the recommendation to hire Elly to rebuild the web page. Eric noted that the Trust has roughly

\$6000 remaining in budgeted money for Nick Perry, and that Elly could rebuild the webpage for several thousand dollars.

Eric reminded the Board that he has newly updated board manuals, and encouraged everyone to take an updated copy if they would like. Chris Perne asked if this manual could be linked to a board portal on the web page. Chris Jenco indicated that it could, and Eric will investigate taking care of that. A suggestion was also made to include a board calendar on the web page.

Eric reported that he has put together an office operations manual in the event he is unable to come into work for a long stretch of time. This led to further discussion about check writing privileges. Specifically, Dave Cors inquired as to who else besides Eric has authorization to sign checks. Eric noted that only he has such privileges currently. Dave recommended that we speak with The Hillside Trust's accountant to get her assistance in establishing a check-writing protocol, that includes various signature levels of signing authorization. Thea Langsam indicated that with her background in law, she would like to be part of this discussion. Eric responded that he would contact Melissa Linneman of Whitmer & Company CPAs to set up a zoom meeting with Melissa and Thea.

NEW BUSINESS: None

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 9: 35am. Chris Perme motioned to adjourn seconded by Dave Cors.

NEXT BOARD MEETING: Thursday May 8, 2025