

Mason Neck Citizens Association Monthly Board Meeting
February 7, 2024, at Cranford Methodist Church

Attendees

<i>MNCA Officers</i>		<i>Other Members of the Board of Directors</i>	
President	Nancy Wilochka	Peter Weyland	
Vice President	Marvin Miller	Scott Stroh	
Secretary	Jim Martin	Rick Hutson	
Treasurer	Bruce Scott		

President Nancy Wilochka called the meeting to order at 7:34 and presented the agenda. The following were discussed:

Minutes from February Meeting: A motion was made, seconded, and passed to approve the February 2024 Board meeting minutes.

Treasurer Report: Bruce reported that MNCA has \$3616.64 in its account. Jim handed over a \$20 contribution for MNCA received through the mail.

MNCA General Membership Meeting: The Board agreed topics for a meeting will include an update on the Virginia State legislative session, wetlands, Gunston Hall update, and elections to the Board. Marvin said he will be in touch shortly with State Sen. Surovell and Delegate Henson to discuss their involvement. Peter has spoken to Larry Zaragoza, Chairman of the Fairfax County Environmental Quality Advisory Council and to Potomac Riverkeepers about possible participation in a discussion of wetlands and/or Potomac River issues. Marvin suggested an e-mail should go out to the MNCA Listserv announcing the meeting and soliciting new candidates for the Board. The Board agreed that the printed mailing for the event should include the above-mentioned agenda items as well as MNCA accomplishments and our website address. Jim noted that Lorton Post Office suggested MNCA should use flyers instead of postcards. Other members pointed out this had been discussed before and flyers were much more trouble than postcards.

Caisson Horses: Nancy reported that Rep. Beyer's staffer Noah told her the Secretary of the Army had blessed the idea of a search for an area other than Meadowood for the caisson horses. An interim report to Congress on the Army's efforts regarding the horses was due to Congress March 1, but Noah had not seen it yet.

Gunston Hall: Scott updated the Board on Gunston Hall's (GH) new Master Plan, which will include:

- a) Archaeological work in the "East Yard" (where the enslaved population lived). Work so far in the East Yard has uncovered rare cowrie shells, which were important in African and Caribbean societies. The eventual plans are for interpretive programming and a memorial for the enslaved population. The Research and design phase is underway now, with opening estimated for 2026. GH is hiring an interpretive Historian and trying to locate descendants of the original enslaved population, many of whom were sold in the 1840s. The current Director's residence, now in the East Yard, will be torn down and a new residence built elsewhere on the property.
- b) A new archaeology center and maintenance complex to be in the field near the current Visitors Center.
- c) A new Visitors Center, for which the concept study already has been done. The current Visitor Center would stay in place until the new one is complete. A request for funding to support the new Visitors Center, as well as the other elements of the Master Plan, is now under consideration by the Virginia Assembly. Depending upon that funding groundbreaking for the new Center could take place as early as 2026.

GH is also requesting an additional \$1 million funding from Virginia to support its \$3 million annual operating costs, only 28% of which are current covered by the state. This amount was not in the Governor's budget request to the General Assembly.

Scott is also involved in planning for Virginia's celebration of the 250th anniversary of American independence in 2026. Finally, GH plans to become more involved in the local community, including running after-school programs jointly with Gunston Elementary School and providing fresh fruits and vegetables to Lorton Community Action Center from GH's newly renovated gardens.

Digitizing and MNCA Document Storage: Rick noted that he has numerous boxes with old MNCA documents from his tenure as MNCA President; Scott agreed they could be stored at Gunston Hall. Board members suggesting that a High School or College summer intern might help with organizing digitizing MNCA's historical documents.

Meadowood Parking Lot: Marvin reported nothing had changed since the last meeting – he had received no answer from BLM or DOI to his latest submissions.

Cellphone Tower: Bruce noted the ongoing problems with cellphone coverage on Mason Neck and suggested MNCA advocate for a cellphone tower to be located on the Neck. Members discussed ways of determining where the cellphone towers that service us are currently located, who owns them and who could help with this problem. Scott said noted that GH could easily accommodate a tower on its land. Nancy noted a friend in another state whose property now hosts a cellphone tower. The Board agreed contacting Mount Vernon Supervisor Storck's office would be a good idea.

ACTION ITEMS

- Talk to Sen. Surovell and Del. Henson offices about their availability on April 30 to discuss the legislative session **(Marvin)**
- Talk to/Recruit possible speakers on wetlands/RP issue **(Peter)**
- Draft e-mail to send to MNCA membership about upcoming meeting and solicit expressions of interest in joining the Board. **(Jim)**
- Check with P.O. about postcards vs. flyers requirement. **(Jim)**
- Determine content on mailer (to include Board candidates, other speakers, website info, request for donations. **(Jim/Board)**
- Update Accomplishment bullets/meeting date on Website. **(Jim/Peter)**
- Mailers to printer **(Jim)**
- Get together on storage of Rick's MNCA file boxes. **(Rick/Scott)**
- Get digitized files to Peter to put in Googledocs. **(All)**
- **Research Cellphone Tower issues (All)**

Next Board Meeting: Wednesday, April 3 at Cranford Methodist Church

Motion to adjourn: Passed at 8:32.