

WORCESTER COUNTY HORTICULTURAL SOCIETY

183rd ANNUAL MEETING OF MEMBERS

June 20, 2024

Kent dur Russell, the Society's President, welcomed the Society's members to its Annual Meeting and called the meeting to order at 4:07pm.

Rick Leif, Society Secretary, presented the Secretary's Report. He reported that 90 members had registered for the meeting satisfying the quorum requirement. He then presented a motion to waive the reading of the minutes of the 182nd Worcester County Horticultural Society Annual Meeting held in 2023. Of the submitted votes to waive the reading of the minutes, there were 77 in favor, 0 opposed, 13 abstain. This motion was seconded and approved. He then presented a motion to approve these minutes. Of the submitted votes to approve the minutes, there were 77 in favor, 0 opposed, 13 abstain. This motion was seconded and approved.

Mike Machnowski, Society Treasurer, presented the Treasurer's report. He reported that the Society achieved excellent financial results in FY24 by bettering its budget by \$336,000 and showing a break-even bottom-line result. Operating expenses were kept under budget and earned income revenue exceeded its budget. Assets increased by \$6.5 million to a total of \$60 million and, since we carry no debt, we are in a very strong financial position. The endowment currently stands at \$27 million. He congratulated the staff on the outstanding job which they have done to achieve these results and reported that we are positioned to achieve great things in the future.

In the President's report, Mr. dur Russell expressed his thanks to the CEO, her staff, the volunteers, and the Board of Trustees for our excellent performance in FY24. Through their efforts, the Society continues to follow its strong history of advancing the science of horticulture, protecting plant species, and preserving the New England landscape. Our efforts towards Pride and Inclusion have exposed an increasing number of people to our facility. We welcomed 230,000 visitors in 2024, the largest attendance in our history, to enjoy our gardens and take advantage of our programs.

Jim Karadimos, chair of the Development Committee, presented the Development report. The Society currently has 12,162 members generating \$1.14 million in membership revenue. Members also spent an additional \$600,000 on site in the shop and café. Donors provided 144 new gifts generating \$1.5 million in revenue. Across the nation, donations by individuals to non-profits have been on the decline and we have experienced this effect as our annual fund revenue has not met budget targets. The Growing Boldly Capital Campaign was completed with great success raising \$33 million which exceeded our plan to raise \$28 million. He expressed his appreciation to Theresa Lee, Chief Development Officer, and her staff for their excellent results in our advancement work.

Grace Elton, CEO, presented the CEO's report. She commented on the great increase in visitation that we have experienced, noting that our FY24 visitation of 230,980 members and

guests far exceeds the 66,000 who visited in 2017, her first year at NEBG. 17,000 people attended our education classes and 6,000 people attended our events. More than 60,000 people attended Night Lights. We are half-way through the time-period covered by our Strategic Plan and the staff focuses its ongoing decision making on the strategies and tactics outlined in the Plan. We continue our efforts to become a more sustainable organization and have converted all our power equipment from gas to electric and have installed solar panels on the roof of the horticulture barn to power the batteries for this equipment. We continue to improve our infrastructure and have renovated Classroom C to a youth education classroom. We are also near completion of the renovation of the theatre into the Reservoir Room, a multi-purpose space for holding special events and wedding receptions with an expanded patio and windows overlooking the Wachusett Reservoir. The outdoor exhibition for 2024, *Flora in Flight*, has been installed and will open to the public on June 22. The Society is completing contracts to enter into management agreements with Botanic Gardens Conservation International and the Ecological Landscape Alliance which will increase our presence in the areas of conservation and sustainability.

Ms. Elton ended her report by recognizing the outstanding work done by her staff and asked each member of the staff in attendance to stand. The audience gave the staff a warm round of applause in appreciation for their contributions to the success of NEBG and the Society.

Gayle Weiss, chair of the Governance Committee, presented the Governance report. She made a motion for the Society to accept the following nominations:

To serve a second three-year term as Trustee
Catherine Colinvault

To serve a first three-year term as Trustees
Taylor Bearden, Lisa Kirby Gibbs, Mark Shelton, Shannon Wall

To serve a one-year term as Trustees to continue serving as an Officer
Michael Machnowski, Matthew Mattus, Lisa McDonough, Kent dur Russell

To serve as Officers of the Society

President	Kent dur Russell
Treasurer	Emily Wood
Asst Treasurer	Michael Machnowski
Secretary	Richard Leif
Vice President	Catherine Colinvault
Vice President	James Karadimos
Vice President	Matt Mattus
Vice President	Lisa McDonough
Vice President	Gayle Weiss

To serve on the Governance Committee for a second three-year term
Catherine Colinvault

To serve on the Governance Committee for a new three-year term
Mark Shelton

To serve on the Governance Committee for a one-year term to complete an unfinished term
Samantha McDonald

Of the submitted votes, there were 75 in favor, 0 opposed, 15 abstain. Motion was seconded and approved.

Ms. Weiss then made a motion to accept two changes to the bylaws recommended by the Board of Trustees for approval. First, that all references to “Executive Director” be changed to “CEO” and second, that all references to “Tower Hill Botanic Garden” be changed to “New England Botanic Garden at Tower Hill.” Of the submitted votes, there were 75 in favor, 1 opposed, 14 abstain. The motion was seconded and approved by the Society.

Mr. dur Russell recognized outgoing Trustees, UlumPixan Athoh’il, Elizabeth Myska, and Diane Robbins, and thanked them for the many years of dedicated service they provided to the Society.

Marissa Gallant, Director of Education, presented the Volunteer of the Year award to Joyce Hyde.

Gitu Jain, Director of Marketing and Communications, presented the Community Greening Awards.

For best storefront:
Page Chiropractic Webster MA
Kennebunk Savings Bank Kennebunk ME

For best municipally sponsored project
Town of Clinton MA
Town of Kennebunk ME

For best use of plants and ongoing sustainability
Gary Phillips, Watson Park Northborough MA

Mark Richardson, Director of Horticulture, presented the Alice Milton Award for Excellence in Horticulture Design to Julie Moir Messervy.

Mr. dur Russell announced that the honor of Trustee Emeritus was being conferred to Howard Jacobson and Alfred “Dix” Leeson Jr.

Mr. dur Russell presented the Society Silver Medal to Frank Bissett.

The audience gave a warm round of applause to each of these recipients.

Mr. dur Russell declared the business portion of the meeting adjourned at 5:35pm at which time Alice Milton Award winner, Julie Moir Messervy, gave a fascinating presentation on her career in landscape design.