

## Is Board Service Right For You?

### Who and What is Awbury?

Awbury Arboretum is a magical 56 acres of green space in one of the most densely populated sections of Philadelphia—free and open to the public every day of the year. It is a nationally designated historic site, both the buildings and the landscape, and is protected from development by a Natural Lands Conservation easement. Its diverse ecosystems include: gardens, State Champion trees, rolling hills, ponds, a special natural playground known as AdventureWoods, meadows, trails, and an educational center.

Once the exclusive enclave of an extended Quaker family, they gifted it to the public so that everyone could experience their love and reverence for nature. Today, this vibrant and energetic public garden and arboretum is a place where people of all ages come to learn, grow, gather, relax, garden, commune with goats, connect with history, get married, or simply contemplate. During bird migrations, it is a major resting stop for multitudes of birds, and the ponds provide birds and other animals with much needed water year-round. In the summer, the grounds are alive with the sounds of children, laughing, running, and exploring at one of our camps. Year-round people brave the elements on guided morning wellness walks.

### Specific Expectations for Serving on the Awbury Arboretum Association board

The Awbury Arboretum Association (AAA) is a membership organization responsible for the stewardship of the historic Cope House and surrounding historic landscape. Serving on the AAA Board means that you can help shape the future of this 100+ years old green space. You will act both as steward of what is already an incredible community resource and as a visionary of what it can become over the next 100 years.

If this sounds appealing to you, you must also be able to:

- Attend and actively participate in all bimonthly board meetings. Individuals considering board service must be upfront and honest about their ability to commit. *Failure to attend two meetings in a row, without a valid reason, may mean that board service is not for you.*
- Serve on at least one committee and actively participate in its meetings and activities.
- Contribute financially to Awbury. All board members must be current members of AAA (minimum \$50/Single, \$80/Family) and are expected to *give*, or make a commitment to *get*, an additional annual contribution in an amount that is personally meaningful to that member. Each board member will share that amount confidentially with the Board Chair so that it can be used to help set annual development goals and assist the Executive Director (ED) in setting the budget.
- Assist with other fundraising/development including:

Soliciting donations or sponsorship from others, be they individuals, foundations, and/or businesses;

Volunteering in their area of professional expertise;

Volunteering in general to help plan events, set up, staff and break down at events, such as Harvest Fest, lectures, the MLK Day of Service or the winter Greens Sale; and

Ideally all board members will help execute the fall Annual Appeal (e.g., stuff envelopes, write personal notes on letters to board member's contacts) and purchase at least one ticket to our annual spring Gala or otherwise contribute time to that event.

- Monitor AAA's finances including:

Reviewing and approving the annual budget;

Reviewing profit and loss statements at each board meeting and understand how we make and spend our money; and

Understanding the details of our endowments, including the allowable use of funds and the limitations on draws. (Board training on AAA finances is available to new board members or any others who so desire a refresher.)

- Support our strategic goals and our commitment to becoming an anti-racist, inclusive organization, including attending board-wide trainings on these critical matters.
- Be an active ambassador for Awbury, including encouraging family and friends to join, following Awbury on social media and promoting our events, accomplishments, and goals in their personal networks.

#### **Approximate Time Commitment— Average 4-6 hours/month**

- Board meetings - 2 hours every other month plus 1½ hours prep time to read the materials sent out in advance.
- Committee meetings – Typically 1-1½ hour/meeting, plus 1 hour prep time to read committee materials sent out advance and 1-6 hours/month work to further committee objectives.

Committees meet on different schedules. Finance meets quarterly, others such as Diversity, Equity, Inclusion & Accessibility and Landscape meet every other month and Development meets roughly every month but may meet more often before the spring Gala and less often immediately after the Gala. Committee Chairs have a greater time commitment.

- Attend official AAA events such as the Gala, Harvest Fest, Art Exhibition openings or the Juneteenth dinner. 2+ hours/quarter.
- Attend any special meetings such as Strategic Planning sessions.
- Executive Officers, that is the Chair, Vice Chair, Treasurer and Secretary, meet and handle Board business through the year as necessary. The Chair and Treasurer may spend between 6-15 hours additional time monthly.

## The General Duties of All Nonprofit Board of Directors

In general, a nonprofit Board of Directors is responsible for the oversight of the organization, high-level strategic planning, guiding the overall direction of the nonprofit, and ensuring that the organization achieves its mission. The ED, on the other hand, is responsible for day-to-day operations and works directly with staff, accountants, consultants, volunteers, community and civic associations, peer organizations, etc. The ED reports to the Board. The Board is responsible for selecting, hiring and, if necessary, removing the ED. Awbury hired a new ED who started in late December 2022. The ED, in turn, hires and supervises that staff and recommends consultants. The Board provides oversight and guidance to the ED.

The Board is responsible for the financial oversight of the nonprofit. This means reviewing and approving the annual budget prepared by the ED (in consultation with the Board Chair, Treasurer, and/or Finance Committee), approving the borrowing of large amounts of money, and setting plans for large growth, reorganization, or major capital improvements. The Board ensures there are sufficient financial resources to achieve the nonprofit's mission.

The above responsibilities stem from the three legal duties imposed on *all* nonprofit boards.

- **Duty of Care:** Ensuring prudent use of all assets, including facility, people, and good will;
- **Duty of Loyalty:** Ensuring that activities and transactions advance its mission; Recognize and disclose conflicts of interest;
- **Duty of Obedience:** Ensuring that the nonprofit obeys applicable laws and regulations; and follows its own bylaws.

The Board and the ED also have some shared responsibilities. At Awbury, this includes developing a strategic plan to guide the organization (our three-year Strategic Plan was approved late January 2025), developing a Landscape Stewardship Plan (our most recent five-year Landscape Stewardship Plan was completed in November of 2024), developing a fundraising plan to ensure that the organization has the necessary financial resources, and periodically evaluating the organization to ensure that it remains true to its mission and values.

Note: Like most nonprofits, Awbury carries Directors and Officers Insurance which covers all good faith actions of board members but does not cover any criminal actions.

For further information about serving on the board, contact [boardchair@awbury.org](mailto:boardchair@awbury.org).