



**The Mount Vernon Council of Citizens Associations, Inc.**

P.O. Box 203, Mount Vernon, VA 22121-9998

<http://www.mvcca.org>

February 4, 2021

Dear Board Members of the American Horticultural Society:

Terry Hayes, Bob Murray, Tim Conlon, Holly Shimizu, Laura Dowling, Amy Bolton, Skipp Calvert, Marcia Zech, Cindy Tyler

We are writing to you today because we are dismayed that you have failed repeatedly to follow your own mission statement managing your headquarters property.

We are a 501(c)4 representing the many citizens and communities located throughout the Mount Vernon District of Fairfax County Virginia. Many of us are long time members of AHS and have volunteered at River Farm and attended your events there over the years.

The following are some of the ways you have failed the public trust and violated your mission.

Your mission statement, taken directly from your website states:

The American Horticultural Society (AHS) is one of the most respected, longstanding national gardening organizations in the country.

Since 1922, we have been a trusted source of high-quality gardening and horticultural information.

Today, our mission blends education, social responsibility, and environmental stewardship with the art and practice of horticulture. Our vision is a land of

sustainable gardens, cultivated by a diverse population with a common passion for plants.

The American Horticultural Society educates Americans about and advocates Earth-friendly and sustainable gardening practices, as well as models them at our River Farm headquarters in Alexandria, Virginia.

1. The lovely trees at River Farm are dying due to the invasive ivy growing up them and lack of property maintenance. The volunteers can easily and properly remove the vines under their normal maintenance volunteer duties. Yet you fail to ask them to do this.
2. The memorial wildflower meadow is overrun with invasive plants and vines, a result of not being mowed or burned in years, a normal practice in keeping invasive species under control. The previous Boards and Executive Directors would either mow or work with the local fire department to do a burn. Your neglect is destructive.
3. The brick HaHa wall is falling down. Replacing bricks can be done by simply asking your volunteers for help or a donor to fund the repair.
4. The stone seating area and patio in the meadow has been allowed to deteriorate with grasses and weeds growing through the mortar this summer, spring and fall. Again, a task for volunteers had you paid attention and asked them to do it.
5. The Green Garage located at River Farm, which years ago was AHS's display at the Philadelphia flower show, has been allowed to deteriorate. Furthermore, the educational items displayed in it related to being a green sustainable gardener have been removed. Once again this shows your lack of understanding of your mission.

The story told here is that feel no longer invested in your mission, especially as related to River Farm. You have stated repeatedly that you are broke; but when your Form 990's and the auditor reports are reviewed they tell a different story.

Most of you claim to be passionate about sustainable horticultural and gardening, yet you have failed in the simplest leadership actions while you continue to market this property for sale.

You are shamefully allowing this historic property to deteriorate, while refusing to place a conservation easement on it that could bring you somewhere between \$5 million and \$8 million dollars in cash.

We look forward to hearing what you intend to do regarding “AHS in a Nutshell- The American Horticultural Society educates Americans about and advocates Earth-friendly and sustainable gardening practices, as well as models them at our River Farm headquarters in Alexandria, Virginia”.

River Farm was a generous and significant gift to AHS, and we believe that Enid Annenberg Haupt trusted future Boards and Executive Directors to preserve its legacy, and faithfully adhere to the AHS mission.

We encourage you to visit River Farm and to reassess your actions, and to preserve the integrity of the mission and the property as well as make arrangements to keep it permanently open to the public.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Chris Morgan', with a long horizontal line extending to the right.

Christopher Morgan  
Chair, Environmental and Recreation Committee  
Mount Vernon Council of Citizens Associations

Enclosed photo's

cc:  
Attorney General DC and VA  
Virginia Governor  
Supervisor Dan Storck  
Adrian Higgins Washington Post











































