



Grand River Conservation Authority

Minutes – General Membership Composition Review Committee

Date: May 17, 2023
Time: 9:30 a.m.
Location: GRCA Zoom Virtual Meeting
Members Present: Doug Craig, Susan Foxton, Chris White, Alex Wilson, Pam Wolf
Regrets: Ken Yee Chew
Staff: Samantha Lawson, Karen Armstrong, Eowyn Spencer

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by the Chair at 9:30 a.m.

2. Certification of Quorum

Quorum was certified with four Members present.

3. Review of Agenda

Moved by: Pam Wolf

Seconded by: Alex Wilson

THAT the agenda for the General Membership Composition Review Committee be approved as circulated.

4. Declarations of Pecuniary Interest

None.

5. Minutes of the Previous Meetings

Moved by: Sue Foxton

Seconded by: Pam Wolf

THAT the minutes of the previous meeting held on February 10, 2023 be approved as circulated.

6. Reports:

6.1. GRCA General Membership Composition – Options

K.Armstrong noted that in addition to previous options discussed, option five has been added based on input from legal counsel. A letter drafted by legal counsel has been provided, should option five be pursued. The Committee Report and letter are attached to the Minutes as Appendix A.

A.Wilson began the discussion noting that they have received direction from the City of Hamilton that option four would be the City's desired option, which is the population-based method of determining municipal representation. A.Wilson also shared concerns

with option 2, noting that as population growth continues through the watershed a precedent may be set if this option is used and this issue may be repeated in the future.

The Chair reminded the Committee that it was a 2017 provincial ruling that resulted in a significant increase in the City of Hamilton's levy allocation, which subsequently brought on discussions related to representation on the Board. Hamilton's percentage of the weighted vote was increased respectively, and the Chair noted that additional seats will not impact the voting on budgetary or other matters. The Chair also noted that the Members' fiduciary duty on this Board and Committee is with the GRCA as opposed to the municipality.

Committee members discussed the options, weighing in on potential challenges with each option and the reality of disproportionate representation on Boards, Councils, and Committees, which is mitigated in part by implementing a weighted vote on the budget at the GRCA. Members noted that the Board functions well and members have historically acted responsibly and in the best interest of the GRCA.

P.Wolf inquired if the status quo is maintained, or option one, would this be acceptable for all participating municipalities other than the City of Hamilton. K.Armstrong noted that other municipalities have not expressed inquiries or concerns about membership.

There was further discussion regarding representation. A.Wilson noted that not having a citizen representative is an additional concern for Hamilton. They also suggested that it would be helpful if this Committee could narrow the options so that they could be brought back to the City of Hamilton for further consideration. A.Wilson advised that the City of Hamilton requested that membership be reviewed in 2018 and given that the current Order-in-Council is from 1994, the status quo should not continue indefinitely due to the evolving nature of populations.

The Chair noted that there are many unknowns with this current government, and there have been many changes impacting conservation authorities in recent years. There was further discussion related to deferring the matter until regulatory changes and other possible impacts have been completed.

The Committee discussed options two and five, noting that requesting input from the Ministry at this time may also result in a different outcome than what the Board prefers..

In the interest of supporting the City of Hamilton as a participating municipality, the Chair agreed that narrowing the options would be helpful and could provide the Board with a clearer understanding of the overall preference.

There followed a brief discussion regarding proceeding with option one and two, and a variation of option five by requesting a meeting with the Minister. S.Foxton noted that a municipality can request a delegation to the Ministry at the upcoming Association of Municipalities of Ontario conference on behalf of the GRCA for a discussion related to Board Composition and to determine Ministry interest in implementing option two. The Committee agreed on this approach, understanding that the Province has many competing priorities and may wish to table the discussion for future consideration.

On motion by D.Craig, seconded by A.Wilson, the recommendation to consider options one and two as provided in the report was tabled for consideration.

A motion was brought forward by A.Wilson to amend the recommendation to include option four in the consideration, and was seconded by P.Wolf. Committee members previously expressed concern that option four was singularly beneficial, and the vote was lost with the remaining members voting against the amendment.

The following motion was then voted on:

Moved by: Doug Craig

Seconded by: Alex Wilson

THAT the Grand River Conservation Authority General Membership Composition Review Committee recommends to the General Membership that the following options be considered as preferred options to move forward with discussion about General Membership Composition:

- Continue with the status quo Order-in-Council.
- Request a meeting with the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry to discuss amending the Order-in-Council to increase the City of Hamilton's membership from 1 to 2 members.

Carried.

7. Next Meeting – At the Call of the Chair

8. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned by the Chair at 9:59 a.m.