



Grand River Conservation Authority

Minutes - General Membership Meeting

Date: October 27, 2023
Time: 9:30 am
Location: Hybrid Meeting of the General Membership
GRCA Administration Centre
Zoom Virtual Meeting

Members Present Bruce Banbury, Christine Billings, John Challinor II, Ken Yee Chew, Brian Coleman, Doug Craig, Kevin Davis, Mike Devine, Jim Erb, Susan Foxton, Guy Gardhouse, Gord Greavette, Colleen James, Daniel Lawrence, David Miller, Natasha Salonen, Sandy Shantz, Jerry Smith, Shawn Watters, Chris White, Kari Williams, Alex Wilson

Regrets Gino Caputo, Lisa Hern, Rob Shirton, Pam Wolf

Staff Samantha Lawson, Karen Armstrong, Beth Brown, Krista Bunn, Ron Gasparetto, Brandon Heyer, Janet Ivey, Katelyn Lynch, Sonja Radoja, Lisa Stocco, Vahid Taleban, Pam Walther-Mabee, Eowyn Spencer

1. Call to Order

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

2. Certification of Quorum

The Secretary-Treasurer certified quorum with more than half of the Members present. A total of 22 Members attended the meeting.

K.Davis joined the meeting at 9:32 a.m.

3. Chair's Remarks

The Chair welcomed the Members and made the following remarks:

- Two of our Guelph Lake Conservation Area staff have recently been awarded for their quick-thinking and lifesaving, selfless actions when faced with a medical emergency experienced by another employee in the workplace. Brad Dixon, superintendent at Guelph Lake received the Ontario Provincial Police Commissioner's Citation for Lifesaving St John's Ambulance Life Saving Award, and Carter McCrossin, Park Operations Technician received an Ontario Provincial Police Commissioner's Commendation. Thanks to these members of staff, and congratulations for the formal recognition.
- Vahid Taleban has accepted a new position as Manager of Flood Operations. Recognizing the critical role of Flood Management at the GRCA and the need to increase support at the leadership level, this new position is responsible for Flood Forecasting and Warning, Natural Hazard Mapping and Management, and

Engineering responsibilities for the Permit/Plan Review function for the GRCA. Vahid has been an integral part of our engineering and flood management team since 2017.

- The Chair and CAO attended Conservation Ontario Council on September 25 where their respective budget for 2024 was approved.
- The Board watershed tour on September 28 was a successful and enjoyable day out in the field. Thanks to all the staff who participated in making that day a success and the Board member who were able to attend.
- D.Miller expressed his appreciation for the tour, noting that it was a great learning experience and an opportunity to get to know staff, and suggested that it be offered to each new Board.
- S.Lawson has been providing, when requested, presentations to participating municipal councils on the Category 2 MOUs, with more scheduled in the next few weeks. The process is going well so far with no major concerns identified.
- S.Lawson shared an update on the organizational structure.

4. Review of Agenda

23-150

Moved By John Challinor II

Seconded By Susan Foxton

THAT the agenda for the General Membership Meeting be approved as circulated.

Carried

5. Declarations of Pecuniary Interest

There were no declarations of pecuniary interests made in relation to the matters to be dealt with.

6. Minutes of the Previous Meetings

23-151

Moved By David Miller

Seconded By Bruce Banbury

THAT the minutes of the General Membership Meeting of September 22, 2023 be approved as circulated.

Carried

7. Business Arising from Previous Minutes

There was no business arising from the minutes of the previous meeting.

8. Hearing of Delegations

23-152

Moved By John Challinor II

Seconded By Brian Coleman

THAT one unregistered delegation be permitted to present for three minutes in accordance with Administrative By-law 1-2023.

Carried

- Peter Pautler addressed the General Membership to share concerns related to the Outdoor Environmental Education Program, sharing some history of the program and discussing the importance of continued hands-on environmental education for students.

K.Chew joined the meeting at 9:48 a.m.

23-153

Moved By Kevin Davis

Seconded By Doug Craig

THAT the unregistered delegation be permitted to present for an additional three minutes.

Carried

- The delegation continued the presentation, sharing concerns related to existing infrastructure and the expansion of virtual programming.

The Chair thanked the delegation for his presentation. M.Devine requested that staff circulate the speaking notes provided by the delegation.

9. Presentations

There were no Presentations.

10. Correspondence

10.a Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing - Proposed legislation to return lands to the Greenbelt and Oak Ridges Moraine

23-154

Moved By Shawn Watters

Seconded By John Challinor II

THAT Correspondence from the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing regarding the proposed legislation to return lands to the Greenbelt and Oak Ridges Moraine be received as information.

Carried

11. 1st and 2nd Reading of By-Laws

None.

12. Reports:

12.a GM-10-23-80 - Budget 2024 - Draft #1

- S.Radoja provided a detailed overview of the first draft of the 2024 budget, highlighting the new framework per Regulations under the Conservation Authorities Act.
- The presentation included detailed information regarding revenue and expenditure estimates, program and operating costs, with comparisons to prior years. There was an overview of the funding methods for category 1, 2, and 3 programs and services as well as general operating expenses under the new budget framework. S.Radoja also provided information about the budget timeline as it relates to municipal notification, consultation, and apportionment approval.
- The first draft budget estimate reflects a 2.5% increase for municipal apportionment as compared to 2023 levy allocations.
- J.Challinor thanked staff for their efforts toward the new budget format and inquired about the use of reserves, and how they are replenished. S.Radoja noted different purposes for the various reserve funds, noting that when they are used for operating costs it is as a method of stabilization to help keep municipal apportionments and program estimates consistent from year to year. Additionally, S.Radoja indicated that the guiding principle of building reserves is followed.
- K.Davis requested that the year-over-year differences be displayed as a percentage in future iterations of the budget, and inquired about plans to move towards a multi-year budget model. S.Radoja noted that five-year forecasts for

water-control infrastructure are prepared annually and that an asset management plan is being developed to inform ongoing capital project and infrastructure expenses.

- S.Shantz inquired about funding for category three programs and discussed the proposed allocation of the reserves. S.Radoja confirmed that category three programs do not receive municipal apportionment and will require self-generated funds or alternate funding sources. Allocating any surplus back to category one or general operating expenses will assist in offsetting the municipal apportionment as proposed for the 2024 budget. K.Armstrong added that any budget surplus will be discussed by the Board annually throughout the budget process as it is a requirement identified in the legislation. Some board members indicated their preference to have the surplus remain in category three since the programs are not otherwise funded.
- S.Shantz asked what happens if there is a deficit overall in category 3 programs and S.Radoja advised that reserves could be used and which reserve would dependent on the nature of the deficit.
- The Chair summarized the discussion, noting that anomalies may be identified and discussed as we transition to the new budget framework. To clarify the note about category three surplus allocations, S.Lawson noted that surplus from category one cannot be allocated elsewhere as they are mandatory programs and services funded by municipal apportionment. S.Lawson reiterated that no new programs or significant expenses are introduced as part of this budget and that the GRCA has traditionally used surplus from some programs to offset expenses in other programs.

23-155

Moved By John Challinor II

Seconded By Ken Yee Chew

THAT Report Number GM-10-23-80 - Budget 2024 - Draft #1 be approved for consultation purposes, circulated to all participating municipalities, and posted to the GRCA website.

Carried

12.b GM-10-23-81 - Budget Draft #1 - Municipal Apportionment

There were no questions or concerns related to this item.

23-156

Moved By John Challinor II

Seconded By Brian Coleman

THAT Report Number GM-10-23-81 - Budget 2024 - Draft #1 - Municipal Apportionment be received as information.

Carried

12.c GM-10-23-75 - Cash and Investment Status

There were no questions or concerns related to this item.

23-157

Moved By Gord Greavette

Seconded By Christine Billings

THAT Report Number GM-10-23-75 - Cash and Investment Status – September 2023 be received as information.

Carried

12.d GM-10-23-82 - Financial Summary

There were no questions or concerns related to this item.

23-158

Moved By Jerry Smith

Seconded By Shawn Watters

THAT the Financial Summary for the period ending September 30, 2023 be approved.

Carried

12.e GM-10-23-73 - 2024 Board Meeting Schedule

There were no questions or concerns related to this item.

23-159

Moved By Brian Coleman

Seconded By Bruce Banbury

THAT the 2024 Grand River Conservation Authority Board Meeting Schedule be approved.

Carried

12.f GM-10-23-74 - New Guelph Lake Nature Centre Update

- D.Miller complimented the common-sense approach to this project as it relates to funding and planning.

23-160

Moved By John Challinor II

Seconded By Dave Miller

WHEREAS the Grand River Conservation Authority remains committed to supporting the construction of a new Guelph Lake Nature Centre;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT staff proceed with tendering the construction of the new Guelph Lake Nature Centre and report back to the General Membership for construction award approval.

Carried

12.g GM-10-23-76 - Outdoor Environmental Education Program Review

- L.Stocco provided a presentation on the review of the program, which was driven by changes to the Conservation Authorities Act and operational changes throughout the pandemic. With the changes to the Conservation Authorities Act, this is a Category 3 program that operates with a deficit. The Board provided direction to achieve breakeven operations within a reasonable time period and that the transition reserve could be used in the interim to offset the deficit.
- The presentation highlighted the current program delivery model and the state of existing infrastructure, risks, and considerations related to funding for maintenance of the facilities, security of the various properties, and the GRCA's reputation as a leader in outdoor education programming.
- The proposed next steps and new direction for the program were identified and include the following key recommendations: transitioning the Outdoor Environmental Education Program to operate from within the GRCA's Conservation Areas, expanding the hybrid program delivery model, and ensuring an appropriate staffing model is in place.
- K.Davis inquired as to whether the operational change is required to generate operational efficiencies or is a result of infrastructure costs, and L.Stocco confirmed that both were considerations highlighted as reasoning to review the program model. K.Davis further inquired about expanding virtual learning and the importance of maintaining hands-on education, and the long-term considerations

of the use of the Apps' Mill Nature Centre property. K.Davis also asked if school boards have been consulted on the review.

- L.Stocco noted that a thorough analysis of potential future uses of the properties has not yet been completed as a first step is to focus on relocating the program, and that extensive discussions with the school boards have been held and have clearly identified the recommendation to relocate the program. She also advised that the transition to hybrid programming could be on-site at Conservation Areas, other GRCA locations, and at schools.
- J.Challinor inquired about revenues and school funding, and suggested that staff provide more frequent updates to the Board as changes progress. L.Stocco noted that the suggested hybrid model of the program has come at the request of the school boards, as transportation costs are becoming unmanageable.
- There was discussion from the Board related to the importance of a hands-on learning model in a natural environment as opposed to virtual programming, and L.Stocco provided responses noting that hands-on environmental experiences will be maintained at GRCA properties, particularly within Conservation Areas with existing infrastructure and resources to support the new programming model.
- Further discussion points from C.James, K.Chew, and D.Miller included looking at other external groups or secondary education as potential partners, looking at community groups, and discussing fundraising opportunities with donors who have supported the education programs in the past.
- D.Miller and K.Davis suggested including this program within category two agreements with municipalities. K.Davis further suggested that no changes be approved until discussions with participating municipalities about funding can be held and introduced a motion to defer the recommendations and that staff discuss funding the program and the facilities with participating municipalities.
- Clarification was provided by staff that the nature centre properties and the relocation of the programming are separate issues. Additionally, outdoor education is a category three program and separate funding agreements with municipalities are permitted for category three programs and services.
- Following discussion, staff and the Chair reiterated that the direction to staff is to bring the issue to participating municipalities to determine their interest in funding the existing program model and infrastructure to support the program. S.Radoja confirmed that the Budget 2024 Draft 1 assumes no change in the education program and a decision today does not impact the draft budget model; however funding to support the program would be needed on an ongoing basis, if kept the same as current.

23-161

Moved By Susan Foxton

Seconded By John Challinor II

THAT the Grand River Conservation Authority endorse the proposed actions and transition plan outlined within this report to move its Outdoor Environmental Education Program towards a breakeven business model that does not rely on municipal apportionment (levy);

AND THAT staff report back to the board at minimum on an annual basis on progress made.

23-162

Moved By Kevin Davis

Seconded By Brian Coleman

THAT the motion 23-161 be deferred until the January 2024 meeting of the General Membership to allow discussion with participating municipalities about funding the program and nature centre facilities.

Carried

12.h GM-10-23-78 - Provincial Offences Act Officer Appointments - Section 30.1

There were no comments or questions regarding this item.

23-163

Moved By Susan Foxton

Seconded By Sandy Shantz

THAT the Grand River Conservation Authority re-appoint all Provincial Offences Act Officers under Section 30.1 of the Conservation Authorities Act, to take effect on the date of proclamation.

Carried

12.i GM-10-23-77 - Conestogo Dam Bridge Deck Rehabilitation - Energy Attenuator - Project Award

There were no comments or questions regarding this item.

23-164

Moved By Bruce Banbury

Seconded By Sandy Shantz

THAT the Grand River Conservation Authority award the contract for the Conestogo Dam Bridge Deck Rehabilitation – Energy Attenuator supply and installation project to Royal Fence Limited for the amount of \$129,500 (excluding HST).

AND THAT an overall project budget of \$142,450 (excluding HST) be approved for this project.

Carried

12.j GM-10-23-72 - Permits Issued under Ontario Regulation 150/06

There were no comments or questions regarding this item.

23-165

Moved By Gord Greavette

Seconded By Colleen James

THAT Report Number GM-10-23-72 – Permits Issued under Ontario Regulation 150/06 be received as information.

Carried

12.k GM-10-23-79 - Current Watershed Conditions

There were no comments or questions regarding this item.

23-166

Moved By Shawn Watters

Seconded By Jerry Smith

THAT Report Number GM-10-23-79 – Current Watershed Conditions as of October 17, 2023 be received as information.

Carried

13. Committee of the Whole

Not required.

14. General Business

There was no General Business.

15. 3rd Reading of By-Laws

None.

16. Other Business

16.a Governance and Attendance

- J.Challinor addressed the Board and noted that it has been one year since hybrid meetings were implemented, and suggested considering how in-person attendance may be encouraged or considered as the default option.
- Many Board members provided input on the benefits and challenges with in-person, virtual, and hybrid meetings. Ultimately while in-person does provide more engagement opportunities, other considerations such as climate impact and carbon emissions, as well as accessibility and increased attendance were noted as positives for the hybrid model.
- The Chair summarized the discussion noting good support for all models, and overarching support to continue the hybrid meeting option. It was suggested that staff can consider revised language in the administrative by-law to encourage attendance at Board meetings be in-person whenever it is feasible.

K.Davis left the meeting at 11:39 a.m.

17. Closed Meeting

23-167

Moved By Brian Coleman

Seconded By Jerry Smith

THAT the General Membership enter a closed meeting in accordance with the *Municipal Act section 239(2)* for the following purpose(s): labour relations or employee negotiations, and litigation or potential litigation.

Carried

23-168

Moved By Susan Foxton

Seconded By Ken Yee Chew

THAT the General Membership reconvene in open session.

Carried

17.a Minutes from the previous closed session

23-169

Moved By John Challinor II

Seconded By Mike Devine

THAT the minutes of the minutes of the previous closed session be approved as circulated.

Carried

17.b Labour Relations or employee negotiations

23-170

Moved By Brian Coleman

Seconded By Bruce Banbury

THAT the Grand River Conservation Authority received Report GM-10-23-C07 Proposed Outdoor Environmental Education Program Staffing Model as information.

Carried

17.c Litigation or potential litigation

23-171

Moved By Gord Greavette

Seconded By Kari Williams

THAT Report No. GM-10-23-C07 Update - Violation of Ontario Regulation 150/06 be received as information.

Carried

18. Next Meeting - November 24, 2023 at 9:30 a.m.

19. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 11:49 a.m.

23-172

Moved By Bruce Banbury

Seconded By John Challinor II

THAT the meeting of the General Membership be adjourned.

Carried

Chair

Secretary-Treasurer