



Grand River Conservation Authority Minutes - General Membership Meeting

Date: October 25, 2024
Time: 9:30 am
Location: Hybrid Meeting of the General Membership

Members Present Christine Billings, Gino Caputo, John Challinor II, Brian Coleman, Doug Craig, Kevin Davis, Mike Devine, Jim Erb, Susan Foxtton, Guy Gardhouse, Gord Greavette, Colleen James, Daniel Lawrence, Dave Miller, Sandy Shantz, Rob Shirton, Shawn Watters, Chris White, Kari Williams, Pam Wolf

Regrets Bruce Banbury, Ken Yee Chew, Lisa Hern, Natasha Salonen, Jerry Smith, Alex Wilson

Staff Samantha Lawson, Beth Brown, Krista Bunn, Joel Doherty, Brandon Heyer, Janet Ivey, Kayleigh Keighan, Murray Lister, Katelyn Lynch, Sonja Radoja, Lisa Stocco, Vahid Taleban, Pam Walther-Mabee, Melissa Larion, Nathan Munn, Eowyn Spencer

Others Martina Cotter, Susan Watson

1. Call to Order

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

2. Certification of Quorum

Quorum was certified with more than half of the Members present. A total of 20 Members attended the meeting.

3. Chair's Remarks

The Chair welcomed the Members and made the following remarks:

- The Conservation Areas finished another successful season with camping and some of the CAs closing for the season on October 15. Belwood, Guelph, Laurel, Pinehurst, Rockwood, and Shade's remain open year-round for various activities.
- The 2024 Latornell Conservation Symposium, co-hosted by Conservation Ontario and the University of Guelph, was held in Woodbridge on October 8th and 9th. Several GRCA staff across multiple departments attended the conference that brings together CA staff, professionals, researchers, policymakers and industry experts to discuss pressing environmental issues with a focus on collaboration. Simion Tolnai presented this year on the GRCA Watershed-wide Wastewater Optimization Program.

4. Review of Agenda

The Chair suggested moving the closed session (agenda item 17) up the agenda to immediately follow declarations of pecuniary interest, and there were no concerns raised from the Board.

24-155

Moved By Brian Coleman

Seconded By Susan Foxtan

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

Carried

5. Declarations of Pecuniary Interest

G.Greavette declared a conflict with the closed agenda item. The conflict will be recorded in the GRCA's official registry in accordance with the *Municipal Conflict of Interest Act section 6(1)*.

J.Erb joined the meeting at 9:36 a.m.

6. Closed Meeting

24-156

Moved By Susan Foxtan

Seconded By Mike Devine

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.

Carried

The General Membership convened in closed session and the live-stream of the meeting was paused. Resolution 24-157 was passed in closed session in accordance with the *Municipal Act section 239(6)*.

24-158

Moved By John Challinor II

Seconded By Doug Craig

THAT the General Membership return to open session.

Carried

The General Membership reconvened in open session and the live-stream of the meeting was resumed.

6.b Labour relations or employee negotiations

24-159

Moved By Pam Wolf

Seconded By Jim Erb

THAT the salary grid for non-union positions be increased by 2.25% on January 1, 2025.

Carried

7. Minutes of the Previous Meetings (includes 6.a Minutes of the previous closed session)

24-160

Moved By Guy Gardhouse

Seconded By Gord Greavette

THAT the minutes of the General Membership Meeting held on September 27, 2024 be approved as circulated, and the minutes of the closed session on the same date be approved as circulated.

Carried

8. Business Arising from Previous Minutes

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

9. Hearing of Delegations

9.a Susan Watson re: Conservation Areas Strategy

- Susan Watson addressed the Board to discuss the results of the public survey related to the Conservation Areas Strategy. Ms.Watson thanked staff for aggregating the comments in the board report, noted the importance of hearing the input of members of the public, and

expressed concern that it is difficult to identify how feedback was incorporated into the final strategy. It was noted that many comments spoke to changes that should be made to considerations of land acquisitions.

- Ms. Watson requested that the Board defer the approval of the strategy to allow more time to incorporate feedback and to provide transparency to the public regarding land acquisitions and dispositions.
- The Chair thanked the delegation for the presentation and there were no comments or questions raised by the Board.

10. Presentations

There were no Presentations.

11. Correspondence

There were no comments or questions regarding the correspondence.

24-161

Moved By John Challinor II

Seconded By Shawn Watters

THAT Correspondence from the Town of Bradford West Gwillimbury to the Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks regarding the Ontario Deposit Return Program, Amy Haertel regarding public safety awareness around low head dams in the Grand River watershed, Hugh Whitely regarding the Conservation Areas Strategy, and Halton Region regarding a municipal alcohol policy be received as information.

Carried

12. 1st and 2nd Reading of By-Laws

None.

13. Reports:

13.a GM-10-24-89 - Elora Quarry and GRCA Membership Pass Pilot Project 2024 Update

There were no comments or questions regarding this report, as the Chair noted the pilot program had been successful in 2024.

24-162

Moved By Pam Wolf

Seconded By Shawn Watters

THAT Report Number GM-09-24-89 - Elora Quarry and GRCA Membership Pass Pilot Project 2024 Update be received as information.

Carried

13.b GM-10-24-91 - Conservation Areas Strategy

- M.Kitchen and J.Ivey presented the Conservation Areas (CA) Strategy and Human Heritage Policy.
- M.Kitchen began the presentation with an overview of the public consultation process undertaken as part of the development of the Conservation Areas Strategy.
- The presentation highlighted the survey results and identified how the received feedback related to the scope of the CA Strategy, discussed the overall themes of the feedback provided, and demonstrated how each of the identified themes correlates to the CA strategy, or are addressed through another GRCA strategic priority or existing plan.
- J.Ivey continued the presentation to highlight that an existing Human Heritage Policy was reviewed alongside the development of the CA Strategy, and has been identified as redundant. The Policy was approved in 2005 with the objectives of fostering stewardship of cultural heritage features of the watershed. Over time, the GRCA's role in this objective has been impacted by changing legislation and priorities and key elements of the Policy that remain in alignment with current priorities have been incorporated into the CA Strategy.

- The Chair thanked staff for the presentation, and Board members had questions regarding the comments heard from the delegation regarding acquisition policies, and regarding giant hogweed and invasive species management.
- S.Lawson responded to questions, noting that the GRCA's Land Acquisition Policy identifies acquisition parameters and has a high threshold to meet requirements for purchases of land, and that invasive species including giant hogweed are managed by the GRCA on GRCA properties, but the GRCA has no legal mechanism to enter private property for the purpose of invasive species management.

24-163

Moved By John Challinor II

Seconded By Daniel Lawrence

THAT Report Number GM-10-24-91 – Conservation Areas Strategy be received as information;

AND THAT the Conservation Areas Strategy be approved and posted on the Grand River Conservation Authority website;

AND THAT the GRCA's Human Heritage Policy 2005 (P-03-05-20) be rescinded.

Carried

13.c GM-10-24-86 - Permits Issued under Ontario Regulation 41/24

There were no comments or questions regarding this report.

24-164

Moved By Rob Shirton

Seconded By Brian Coleman

THAT Report Number GM-10-24-86 – Permits Issued under Ontario Regulation 41/24 be received as information.

Carried

13.d GM-10-24-96 - Water Control Structures Asset Management Plan

- K.Lynch provided an overview of the Water Control Structures Asset Management Plan. The presentation highlighted steps taken to develop the plan and its function to support capital budget decisions for long-term financial forecasting.
- The review, conducted by Hatch Consultants, included reviewing the current dam and dike safety management procedures, condition assessments, a failure mode analysis, and 20-year capital expenditures, with a focus on major flood control dams and dikes owned and operated by the GRCA.
- The Chair thanked staff for the presentation and opened the floor to questions. K.Lynch responded to questions with the following key notes:
- An annual review will be conducted by staff, and if need arises a consultant may be engaged from time-to-time.
- Finance staff were consulted throughout the process of developing this plan, and funding sources have been identified. Water control infrastructure projects are supported by the Province through a biennial cost-share agreement and are eligible to draw funds from the Land Sale Reserve. There are also Federal programs that provide funding through an application process. Staff work closely with Provincial, Federal, and Municipal partners to find available funding sources to supplement the use of reserve funds.
- In the short term (five-year forecast), no new significant concerns were identified and in the longer term (20-years), some items were identified through condition assessments that can now be considered for future budget targets.
- Recommendations regarding smaller dikes will be addressed and the document updated as those items are assessed. A rating of poor may not require immediate priority however any critical items will be prioritized as needed.

24-165

Moved By Pam Wolf

Seconded By Christine Billings

THAT Report Number GM-10-24-96 – Water Control Structures Asset Management Plan be received as information.

AND THAT the Water Control Structures Asset Management Plan be approved and implemented.

Carried

13.e GM-10-24-95 - Shand Dam Spillway Stoplog Gains Refurbishment - Tender Award

There were no comments or questions regarding this report.

24-166

Moved By Dave Miller

Seconded By Shawn Watters

THAT the Grand River Conservation Authority award the contract for the Shand Dam Spillway Stoplog Gains Refurbishment to BGL Contractors Corp for the amount of \$555,860.00 dollars (excluding HST);

AND THAT a contingency of 10 percent be included in the overall project budget for a total project budget of \$611,446.00 (excluding HST).

Carried

13.f GM-10-24-97 - Membership, Ticketing, and Equipment Rentals System - Request for Proposals

- S.Foxton noted that financial impact is more than is currently being spent, and R.Shirton inquired about the location of the vendor.
- M.Lister responded to questions, noting that the reason for the higher cost relates to upgraded services as identified in the report, and that the selected vendor is the closest carrier of the specialty service required for this RFP.

24-167

Moved By John Challinor II

Seconded By Guy Gardhouse

THAT the Grand River Conservation Authority enter into an agreement for a Membership and Ticketing System Solution with ParkPass Inc. based in Toronto, Ontario for a term of three years with an option to extend the agreement up to three additional one-year terms;

AND THAT a total budget of \$215,000 excluding HST be approved.

Carried

13.g GM-10-24-92 - Cash and Investment Status

There were no comments or questions regarding this report.

24-168

Moved By Gord Greavette

Seconded By Brian Coleman

THAT Report Number GM-10-24-92 – Cash and Investment Status – September 2024 be received as information.

Carried

13.h GM-10-24-99 - Financial Summary

There were no comments or questions regarding this report.

24-169

Moved By Brian Coleman

Seconded By John Challinor II

THAT the Financial Summary for the period ending September 30, 2024 be approved.

Carried

13.i GM-10-24-87 - Budget 2025-Draft 1

- K.Keighan provided a detailed overview of the first draft of the 2025 budget.
- The presentation highlighted challenges such as economic conditions, revenue projections, programs in transition, and increased demands on available resources, and identified major assumptions, estimated revenue, and expenditures for capital, operating, and special projects.
- A breakdown of estimated expenses was provided for each of the category 1, 2, and 3 programs, with their identified funding sources.
- As part of the budget process, the municipal apportionment for 2025 has been estimated at a 3.5% increase over 2024.
- The Chair thanked staff for the presentation, and the Board members had questions and discussed the impact of different programs and projects on the budget projection.
- In response to questions, K.Keighan, S.Lawson, and S.Radoja provided the following notes:
 - Estimated revenue for Conservation Areas is very conservative given that revenue is dependent on weather, seasonal impacts, and other socio-economic conditions.
 - Staff positions relying on transition reserves are being phased in to the operating budget, and no new positions are expected for 2025.
 - The Reserve report will be provided to the Board in November and will demonstrate the status of reserve funds and how they are positioned to support capital projects in alignment with strategic priorities.
 - Staff will present the draft budget to participating municipal councils upon request.
 - The draft budget reflects current asset management plans and prioritized capital projects.
 - The Burford tree nursery is a category 3 program operating at a deficit, and K.Keighan confirmed reserves are not being used to fund the program.
 - The assumed surplus will be refined and updated as the budget is finalized, and surplus allocations will be directed by the Board.

24-170

Moved By Shawn Watters

Seconded By Pam Wolf

THAT Report Number 10-24-87 – Budget 2025 - Draft #1 be approved for consultation purposes, circulated to all participating municipalities, and posted to the GRCA website.

THAT staff be directed to forward correspondence regarding the Minister's direction to freeze planning and regulations user fees to the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry.

Carried

D.Lawrence left the meeting at 11:46 a.m.

13.j GM-10-24-88 - Budget 2025-Draft 1 - Municipal Apportionment

There were no comments or questions regarding this report.

24-171

Moved By Susan Foxton

Seconded By Kari Williams

THAT Report Number GM-10-24-88 – Budget 2025 – Draft #1 – Municipal Apportionment be received as information.

Carried

13.k GM-10-24-93 - Fee Policy - Planning and Regulations Permit

- B.Brown provided an overview of the report to illustrate the fee schedules developed based on Board direction at the September meeting of the General Membership.
- The presentation showed the fee schedules and potential schedules based on 85, 90, and 100 percent cost recovery for planning review services and permit fees and showed comparators from other conservation authorities in Ontario. Also included was an estimated revenue schedule based on the various cost-recovery targets and an additional fee schedule for other services such as environmental assessment review services.
- There was discussion from the Board regarding the proposed fees, comparators used and the variance between organizations for similar fees, and next steps.
- B.Brown responded to questions with the following notes:
 - The recommendations to increase fees are a result of the fee review study, which was completed in 2021, and potential revenue was based on 2021 numbers as the fees have been subject to a Minister's freeze order since the same year. Overall revenue has been declining for plan review services and permit fees due to changes in legislation.
 - Overall, at an 85% cost recovery for this fee schedule the GRCA is within a comparable range for fees charged. Variances are a result of differing cost recovery targets and client bases amongst Ontario conservation authorities.
 - The fee scale for environmental assessments may vary significantly based on the level of service or input requested from the GRCA, and the proposed fee includes a low-end rate.
 - There was additional discussion about wanting to remain fair and competitive with the fee structure while balancing the cost-recovery targets and ensuring a general annual increase to address inflation.
 - Staff will provide further detail on new fees and include revisions for other services where minor fees may not increase at the same rate so that it remains a viable option for staff to provide general inquiry responses and base services to the public at a reasonable cost.
 - K.Davis suggested a friendly amendment to the motion, so that the timeframe to reach 100% cost-recovery be phased over five years.

24-172

Moved By Brian Coleman

Seconded By Jim Erb

WHEREAS staff were directed through Resolution 24-146 to prepare a fee structure to reach 85% cost recovery for permits in 2025, and a fee structure to reach 100% cost recovery for Plan Review and Regulations fees over five years;

AND WHEREAS fee amendments require approval by the General Membership;

BE IT RESOLVED THAT the Grand River Conservation Authority provide direction on the fee structure and implementation timeline as presented in report GM-10-24-93;

AND THAT staff bring forward a Fee Schedule at the next General Membership meeting.

Carried

13.1 GM-10-24-94 - Fee Policy 2025

There were no comments or questions regarding this report.

24-173

Moved By John Challinor II

Seconded By Brian Coleman

THAT amendments to the Grand River Conservation Authority Fee Policy as outlined in this report be approved and implemented effective January 1, 2025;

AND THAT Fee Schedule 1 – Outdoor Environmental Education Fees be approved and implemented effective January 1, 2025;

AND THAT Fee Schedule 2 – Conservation Areas Fees be approved and implemented effective January 1, 2025;

AND THAT Fee Schedule 4 – Tree Nursery Fees be approved and implemented effective January 1, 2025.

Carried

13.m GM-10-24-98 - 2025 Board Meeting Schedule

There were no comments or questions regarding this report.

24-174

Moved By Guy Gardhouse

Seconded By Gord Greavette

THAT the 2025 Grand River Conservation Authority Board Meeting Schedule be approved.

Carried

J.Erb left the meeting at 11:56 a.m.

13.n GM-10-24-90 - Ice Management Plan

- V.Taleban provided an overview of the Ice Management Plan, which has been developed as part of the regulatory deliverables required under Ontario Regulation 686/21.
- The presentation highlighted general ice processes in the Grand River watershed and identified various factors affecting ice jams. Factors include reservoirs, low-head dams, wastewater and groundwater discharge, all of which play a part in the formation and movement of ice in the watershed.
- There was information provided with respect to forecasting capabilities and mitigation techniques and projects, and climate change considerations.
- The Chair thanked staff for the presentation and Board members had questions for staff related to the ability to forecast ice events, trends in weather and climate resilience, and current projects underway to mitigate ice-related issues in vulnerable areas.
- K.Davis addressed staff to inquire about the ongoing ice mitigation project underway in Brantford, which began following a serious ice event in the Brantford reach of the Grand River. K.Lynch responded, noting that the project is underway and was stalled due to staff turnover, but it has been identified as a priority in 2025 and 2026, with a plan to move through the EA process and complete design in 2025. K.Davis initially requested an amendment to the staff recommendation to expedite the project in Brantford, but instead offered support following staff's response to the inquiry.
- In response to forecasting ice events, V.Taleban noted that ice jams are difficult to predict but GRCA has a strong flood messaging system in place and actively monitors weather data and river flows. Identifying potential ice jams is a part of routine monitoring through flood response and river watch.

24-175

Moved By Shawn Watters

Seconded By Mike Devine

THAT the Ice Management Plan be approved and implemented.

Carried

M.Devine left the meeting at 12:19 p.m.

13.o GM-10-24-100 - Current Watershed Conditions

There were no comments or questions regarding this report.

24-176

Moved By John Challinor II

Seconded By Doug Craig

THAT Report Number GM-10-24-100 – Current Watershed Conditions as of October 15, 2024
be received as information.

Carried

14. Committee of the Whole

Not required.

15. General Business

There was no General Business.

16. 3rd Reading of By-Laws

None.

17. Other Business

18. Next Meetings

- General Membership: Friday, November 22, 2024 at 9:30 a.m.
- Audit Committee: Immediately following the November meeting of the General Membership

19. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 12:20 p.m.

24-177

Moved By John Challinor II

Seconded By Brian Coleman

THAT the meeting of the General Membership be adjourned.

Carried

Chair

Secretary-Treasurer