

Grand River Conservation Authority

Report number: GM-03-25-36

Date: March 28, 2025

To: Members of the Grand River Conservation Authority

Subject: Chair's Report

Recommendation:

THAT the Chair's Report for March 2025 be received as information.

Report:

The purpose of my writing is to share with you my activities over the last 30 days.

Special Note:

- The Chair wishes to thank Vice-Chair Shawn Watters for stepping up on rather short notice to chair the GRCA AGM on February 28th. The Chair also wishes to thank the GRCA Board and the GRCA Management Committee for their understanding and best wishes related to his hip injury and related surgery. He is now on the mend and has retired from the sport of hockey.
- Following the recent Provincial election and subsequent cabinet shuffle, changes have been made to certain ministries' areas of authority and responsibilities; the Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks now has responsibility over conservation authorities.
- Letters of congratulations have been sent to two watershed MPPs regarding appointments to Cabinet; Kitchener-Conestoga MPP Mike Harris Jr. as Minister of Natural Resources, and Milton MPP Zee Hamid, as Associate Solicitor General for Auto Theft and Bail Reform, as part of the Ministry of the Solicitor General. Also, as GRCA will now be governed under the new Ministry, a letter has been sent to Durham MPP Todd McCarthy, Minister of the Environment, Conservation and Parks. The Chair has requested a meeting with Minister McCarthy at his earliest convenience to discuss various conservation authority matters.
- With regret, the Chair is sharing the news that Marilyn Murray, a long-time member of the Foundation has passed away at the age of 92. Marilyn was a devoted volunteer on our Board from 1986 to 2006, and after that she remained an active volunteer in her community. Marilyn continued her efforts for the GRCF in her dedication and support of the new Guelph Lake Nature Centre project since fundraising for the project began in 20210 with the Your River, Your Life campaign. On behalf of the Foundation and the Authority, condolences have been sent to the Marilyn's family.
- The March meeting of the GRCA Board of Directors represents GRCA Manager of Corporate Services Sonja Radoja's last day on the job, as she is retiring after 25 years of service to the organization. Sonja has been an exemplary leader, particularly when it comes to overseeing GRCA's increasingly complex financial matters. On behalf of the Board, the Chair thanks her for her many years of committed service.

Administration:

- Whenever there is a matter of concern by a GRCA Board member about a GRCA program or service, to ensure it is dealt with quickly, rather than call staff, Board members are encouraged to contact CAO Samantha Lawson at slawson@grandriver.ca or (519) 621-2763 or Chair John Challinor II at john.challinor@milton.ca or (416) 918-4472 immediately;
- Congratulatory letters were sent to all Grand River watershed Members of Provincial Parliament following the February 27th provincial election and an open invitation to meet to discuss our programs and services was included;

- The GRCA Strategic Plan will be circulated to the Board of Directors in April for its review and approval;
- The draft CAO Performance Review Plan will be circulated to the Board of Directors in June for its review and approval;
- The draft Chair, Vice-Chair and Board Effectiveness Review Plan will be circulated to the Board of Directors in August for its review and approval; and
- The Chair will be working with the Vice-Chair, the CAO and the Deputy CAO to review GRCA Board governance matters over the next several months, with a view to updating the document and addressing matters raised by the Board by the fall of 2026. All matters will be brought to the Board for its review and approval.

Files:

- As promised in the last Chair's Report, a confidential, twice-annual update outlining the status of any liabilities has been distributed to the GRCA Board at its March meeting;
- As promised in the last Chair's Report, a schedule for Board education/department projects/presentations for the remainder of the year will be distributed to the GRCA Board at its March meeting. These presentations will help increase Board knowledge about key GRCA activities and strengthen relations between it and the Management Committee;
- As promised in the last Chair's Report, an updated report on the composition of the GRCA Board with respect to agricultural representation will be distributed to the GRCA Board at its March meeting;
- As promised in the last Chair's Report, an invitation has been circulated to the GRCA Board to attend a Board/Management Committee luncheon following the June meeting of the Board;
- As promised in the last Chair's Report, a delegation template and related process will go live on the GRCA website in April following the review and approval by the GRCA Board at its March meeting;
- GRCA staff will distribute a backgrounder report on nitrates to the GRCA Board at its March meeting; and
- GRCA staff will distribute a report about consideration of a Whistle Blower's Policy at the April meeting of the Board. This recommendation came out of the February 19th GRCA Audit Committee meeting.

Meetings:

- The Chair had a telephone call with Brantford Mayor Kevin Davis and Brantford Councillor Gino Caputo, both GRCA Board members, on March 4th to discuss updates related to the nature centres, water quality and other related matters. The Chair encourages such dialogue with all members of the GRCA Board at any time about any matter they wish to discuss with the Chair;
- Special Flood Coordinators Meeting held on March 4th. Thanks to Vice-Chair Watters for delivering the opening remarks. Vahid Taleban has a full report and presentation later in the March meeting agenda;
- The Chair had a telephone call with the GRCA CAO on March 12th to review the organization's monthly status update;
- The Chair attended virtually the Lake Erie Source Protection Region Management Committee Meeting on March 17th;
- The Chair attended the GRCF Board of Directors meeting on March 19th; and
- The Chair attended the GRCA Board Agenda Review meeting on March 27th.
- Conservation Ontario Council will be hosting its Annual General Meeting on April 14th in Toronto. The Chair plans to attend the AGM on behalf of the Board. An agenda has not yet been posted.