



Grand River Conservation Authority Minutes - General Membership Meeting

Date: December 15, 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, Mike Devine, Jim Erb, Susan Foxton, Guy Gardhouse, Gord Greavette, Lisa Hern, Colleen James, Daniel Lawrence, Dave Miller, Natasha Salonen, Sandy Shantz, Rob Shirton, Jerry Smith, Shawn Watters, Chris White, Kari Williams, Pam Wolf

Regrets Gino Caputo, Kevin Davis, Alex Wilson

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, Mark Anderson, Marijan Blazevic, Eowyn Spencer

Others Richard Carpenter, Vic Prendergast, Joy O'Donnell, Chuck Beach

1. Call to Order

The Chair called the meeting to order 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 23 Members attended the meeting.

3. Chair's Remarks

The Chair welcomed the Members and made the following remarks:

- The Chair and CAO attended Conservation Ontario Council on December 10, where agenda items covered Conservation Ontario comments on recent provincial environmental registry postings, as well as updates on various Ontario conservation authority programs.
- The Grand River Watershed Flood coordinators meeting was held on December 5, and was another successful event hosted by the GRCA and attended by area emergency responders and flood coordinators.
- The Chair's Reception will be held in the Office of the CAO immediately following this meeting.

4. Review of Agenda

23-191

Moved By John Challinor II

Seconded By Gord Greavette

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

23-192

Moved By Shawn Watters

Seconded By Lisa Hern

THAT the minutes of the General Membership Meeting of November 24, 2023 be approved as circulated.

Carried

K.Chew and P.Wolf joined the meeting at 9:32 a.m.

7. Business Arising from Previous Minutes

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

C.James joined the meeting at 9:38 a.m.

8. Hearing of Delegations

- The Chair welcomed the delegation to the meeting and provided a reminder to the Board of the topic about which the delegate will be speaking.
- Chuck Beach presented to the Board to share his concerns regarding the proposed changes to the outdoor education program and the Apps' Mill Nature Centre, noting the overall importance of hands-on environmental education and the dedicated learning space that Apps' Mill provides. The delegation also shared concerns related to a virtual learning platform, as well as past donors who helped fund the program and infrastructure, and inquired about the potential for future fundraising opportunities.
- The Chair thanked the delegation for the presentation and reiterated that the recommendation that came to the Board in October was not to close the nature centres or move to a fully virtual format. The proposed change was to move the program to operate from within conservation areas and the inclusion of an aspect of virtual learning is at the request of the school boards who are the main funding partners of the program.
- Following the presentation, the Chair asked if there were questions from the Board. D.Miller thanked Mr. Beach for his presentation, and noted the unique space that is Apps' Mills and inquired if staff will be consulting with fundraising groups during the additional review period. The Chair confirmed that finding a path forward to maintain the program and the centres will include consulting with external groups and fundraising partners.

9. Presentations

There were no Presentations.

10. Correspondence

10.a Brant for Nature - Apps Mill Nature Centre

10.b Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry - Minister's Direction for Conservation Authority Fee Changes

- S.Foxton inquired about how the Minister's direction will impact the fee policy and the 2024 budget draft. S.Lawson and S.Radoja responded, noting that the recommendation under agenda item 12.e will be amended to reflect the change, and that the impact will be addressed in the second budget draft, if required.

23-193

Moved By Susan Foxton
Seconded By Jerry Smith

THAT Correspondence from Tom Sitak on behalf of Brant for Nature regarding the Apps Mill Nature Centre, and from the Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry regarding an extension of the Minister's direction for CAs regarding fee changes for planning, development, and permitting be received as information.

Carried

11. **1st and 2nd Reading of By-Laws**
 See agenda item 12.b.

12. **Reports:**

12.a **GM-12-23-105 – Strategic Plan Update**

- D.Miller inquired about the level of Board engagement for the strategic planning process. S.Lawson noted that the extension to the last strategic plan was during a time of change with the pandemic and the updates to the CA Act. This update will include a more fulsome process that will include Board engagement as well as engagement with other interest holders, possibly with the use of a consultant to oversee the process.

23-194

Moved By Pam Wolf
Seconded By Colleen James

THAT Report Number GM-12-23-105 – 2022-2024 Strategic Plan Update be received as information.

Carried

12.b **GM-12-23-96—Proposed By-law 2-2023**

- K.Armstrong noted that the new budget and apportionment regulation specifies that the apportionment vote is required to be a weighted vote. The budget vote may be a weighted vote if the Board specifies it in the by-laws of the Authority, otherwise it is a typical majority vote for approval. There was general agreement from the Board that a weighted vote is preferred in both cases, and K.Armstrong will make the update to the final version as requested.

23-195

Moved By John Challinor II
Seconded By Doug Craig

THAT By-law 2-2023 be read a first, second, and third time and adopted as amended by the General Membership, to take effect on December 15, 2023;

AND THAT By-law 1-2023 be repealed on December 15, 2023;

AND THAT a copy of By-law 2-2023 be forwarded to the Ministry of the Natural Resources and Forestry and posted publicly on the Grand River Conservation Authority's website.

Carried

12.c GM-12-23-95—Report of the Audit Committee

There were no comments or questions regarding this report.

23-196

Moved By Shawn Watters

Seconded By Guy Gardhouse

THAT the Report of the Audit Committee be received as information;

AND THAT the Asset Retirement Obligations (ARO) Policy dated December 15, 2023 be approved and implemented;

AND THAT the Reserve Funds Policy dated December 15, 2023 be approved and implemented.

Carried

12.d GM-12-23-93—Budget 2024 - Notification to Municipalities

There were no comments or questions regarding this report.

23-197

Moved By Dan Lawrence

Seconded By Bruce Banbury

THAT a letter be sent to participating municipalities on December 22, 2023 advising them of the General Membership meeting to be held on January 26, 2024 to approve the 2024 municipal apportionment and of the General Membership meeting to be held on February 23, 2024 to approve the 2024 Budget;

AND THAT the Grand River Conservation Authority 2024 Budget Draft #1 and apportionment amounts be included with the letter.

Carried

K.Williams and B.Coleman joined the meeting at 9:58 a.m.

12.e GM-12-23-101—Fee Policy, Fee Schedules, and Proposed 2024 Fee Increases

- P.Walther-Mabee provided a presentation that highlighted overall changes in conservation area user fees proposed for 2024. The presentation highlighted comparators for similar types of recreational activities at other conservation authorities and demonstrated the GRCA's effort to maintain recreational programs on a break-even basis while supporting the capital infrastructure expenses of the recreational programs.
- B.Brown continued the presentation, highlighting changes to planning and permitting fees which may be implemented in the future to increase the cost-recovery percentage for planning and permit-related services.
- Both P.Walther-Mabee and B.Brown discussed a recent fee study undertaken by the GRCA, which provided recommendations for potential changes to the GRCA's user fees. The proposed changes in both conservation areas and planning services have considered the suggestions as part of the analysis of the proposed fees.
- The Board thanked staff for the presentation, and some Members commented that some of the GRCA's fees are lower than neighbouring Conservation Authorities.
- R.Shirton noted that a listing of profit and loss for each conservation area along with the same information for the nature centres may be helpful.
- J.Challinor and D.Miller commented about the cost-recovery status of planning services, noting that the aim should be nearer to full cost-recovery than it currently is.

- S.Foxton added that some advocacy on behalf of the GRCA to the province asking for an exception to the fee freeze may be beneficial as the current fees are below average and are not close to recovering true program costs. C.James supported the idea of advocacy. The Chair added that some further review of current rates and program cost information should be evaluated before the question is addressed with the province.

23-198

Moved By Pam Wolf

Seconded By Bruce Banbury

THAT the Grand River Conservation Authority Fee Policy be approved and implemented effective December 15, 2023;

AND THAT Fee Schedule 1 – Outdoor Environmental Education Fees be approved and implemented effective January 1, 2024;

AND THAT Fee Schedule 2 – Conservation Areas Fees be approved and implemented effective January 1, 2024;

AND THAT Fee Schedule 4 – Tree Nursery Fees be approved and implemented effective January 1, 2024.

Carried

K.Chew joined the meeting in person at 10:09 a.m.

12.f GM-12-23-91—Complimentary Grand River Conservation Area Membership Passes

There were no comments or questions regarding this item.

23-199

Moved By Susan Foxton

Seconded By Gord Greavette

THAT Report Number GM-12-23-91 – 2024 Complimentary Grand River Conservation Area Membership Passes be received as information.

Carried

12.g GM-12-23-97—Per Diems and Honorariums 2024

There were no comments or questions regarding this item.

23-200

Moved By Shawn Watters

Seconded By Mike Devine

THAT Report Number GM-12-23-97 – Per Diems and Honorariums for 2024 be received as information.

Carried

12.h GM-12-23-100—Cash & Investment Status Report

There were no comments or questions regarding this item.

23-201

Moved By Christine Billings

Seconded By Brian Coleman

THAT Report Number GM-12-23-100 – Cash and Investment Status – November 2023 be received as information.

Carried

- 12.i GM-12-23-102—Financial Summary**
 There were no comments or questions regarding this item.
 23-202
Moved By John Challinor II
Seconded By Colleen James
 THAT the Financial Summary for the period ending November 30, 2023 be approved.
Carried
- 12.j GM-12-23-94—Supply of Computer Storage Equipment**
 There were no comments or questions regarding this item.
 23-203
Moved By Pam Wolf
Seconded By Jerry Smith
 THAT the Grand River Conservation Authority award the supply of HPE Alletra 5030 computer storage equipment to CDW Canada Corporation of Etobicoke, Ontario in the amount of \$103,979.80 excluding HST.
Carried
- 12.k GM-12-23-92—Administrative Building Exterior Lighting Upgrades**
- D.Miller inquired about the lighting and if it is night sky friendly. B.Heyer confirmed that he would have to review the specifications to confirm.
- 23-204
Moved By Mike Devine
Seconded By Colleen James
 THAT the Grand River Conservation Authority (GRCA) award the tender for the Administrative Building Exterior Lighting Upgrades to Live Electric for the amount of \$101,372.81 excluding HST;
 AND THAT a total budget of \$112,000.00 excluding HST be approved.
Carried
- 12.l GM-12-23-98 - New Guelph Lake Nature Update**
- K.Chew inquired about the funding shortfall of approximately \$300,000. S.Lawson noted that the project remains a priority fundraising target for the Foundation and has been ongoing with support for the project from the GRCA for over ten years. The GRCA is proposing to move forward with the tender and will look at determining a solution to bridge the funding if needed.
- 23-205
Moved By Ken Yee Chew
Seconded By Bruce Banbury
 THAT Report GM-12-23-98 – New Guelph Lake Nature Centre Update be received as information.
Carried
- 12.m GM-12-23-99—Residential Program Wind-down Status Update**
 There were no comments or questions regarding this item.

23-206

Moved By Pam Wolf

Seconded By John Challinor II

THAT Report GM-12-23-99 – Residential Program Wind-down: Status Update be received as information.

Carried

12.n GM-12-23-104 - Grand River Watershed Flood Warning System

- V.Taleban provided a presentation of the Grand River watershed flood notification system which is tested regularly to ensure the system is effective. The presentation highlighted the confirmation of the effectiveness of the system, as well as an overview of the recent flood coordinators' biannual meeting.
- The flood emergency coordinators meeting is held twice per year and provides information related to emergency processes, the fan-out notification system, and the distinct responsibilities of each group of responders during a flood emergency. This meeting included a presentation on the topic of climate change and its impact on severe weather from guest speaker Trudy King.
- D.Miller requested that staff circulate the presentation following the meeting.

23-207

Moved By Pam Wolf

Seconded By Rob Shirton

THAT Report Number GM-12-23-104 – Grand River Watershed Flood Warning System be received as information.

Carried

12.o GM-12-23-103—Current Watershed Conditions

23-208

Moved By Brian Coleman

Seconded By Dave Miller

THAT Report Number GM-12-23-103 – Current Watershed Conditions as of December 6, 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

None.

N.Salonen exited the meeting at 10:34 a.m.

17. Closed Meeting

23-209

Moved By Gord Greavette

Seconded By Susan Foxtton

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

The General Membership convened in closed session and the live meeting stream was paused.

Moved By John Challinor II

Seconded By Colleen James

THAT the General Membership reconvene in open session.

Carried

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

17.a Minutes of the previous closed session

Moved By Kari Williams

Seconded By Rob Shirton

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

Carried

17.b GM-11-23-C11 - Granting of Easement to the Region of Waterloo

23-212

Moved By Gord Greavette

Seconded By Pam Wolf

IN ORDER TO FURTHER THE OBJECTS of the Grand River Conservation Authority by assisting a member municipality in providing municipal infrastructure;

THEREFORE IT BE RESOLVED THAT Grand River Conservation Authority grant an easement over the lands described as northwest side of Bearinger Road between Westmount Road North and Laurelwood Drive to be more particularly described on a Reference Plan to be deposited, to the Region of Waterloo, for the construction and maintenance of a stormwater outlet and for the construction and maintenance of a trail connection, for the nominal consideration of \$2.00.

Carried

18. Next Meeting – January 26, 2024 at 9:30 AM, to include Election of Officers.

19. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 10:49 a.m.

23-213

Moved By John Challinor II

Seconded By Rob Shirton

THAT the General Membership Meeting be adjourned.

Carried

Chair

Secretary-Treasurer