

Minutes
Upper Thames River Conservation Authority (UTRCA)
Board of Directors Meeting
Tuesday, August 25, 2026 at 1424 Clarke Rd, London (Hybrid Meeting)

Brian Petrie, UTRCA Board Chair, called the meeting to order at 9:33am.

Members Present:

Jean Coles	Jim Craigmile – Online
Peter Cuddy – Online	Paul Mitchell
Skylar Franke – Online	Harj Nijjar – Online
Anna Hopkins	Brian Petrie – Chair
Sandy Levin	George Way
Hugh McDermid	Scotty Zehr – Online

Regrets: Dean Trentowsky, Tom Heeman and Mark Schadenberg

Solicitor: Grant Inglis

Staff Present:

Jenna Allain	Tatianna Lozier
Tracy Annett – General Manager	Graeme Shaw
Emily Chandler – AV Operator	Chris Tasker
Karlee Flear	Tara Tchir
Huda Ghadhbhan	Brent Verscheure
Eleanor Heagy	Michelle Viglianti – Recorder
Teresa Hollingsworth	Christine Saracino

1. Territorial Acknowledgement

The Chair read the territorial acknowledgement.

2. Modifications to the Agenda

There were no modifications to the agenda.

3. Declarations of Pecuniary Interest

There were no declarations of pecuniary interest.

4. Presentations/Delegations

There were no presentations or delegations.

5. Administrative Business

5.1. Approval of Minutes of Previous Meeting: June 23, 2026

Mover: Hugh McDermid

Seconder: George Way

THAT that the Upper Thames River Conservation Authority Board of Directors approves the Board of Directors' minutes dated June 23, 2026, including any closed session minutes.

Carried.

5.2. Business Arising from the Minutes

There was no business arising from the minutes.

5.3. Correspondence

There were no items of correspondence.

6. Reports – For Consideration

6.1. Draft Budget for Circulation Purposes

A 2027 Draft Budget Overview document was provided to all those present in person and online during the meeting.

The General Manager provided an overview presentation of the 2027 Budget highlighting this year's early and compressed budget timeline due to Minister's Direction.

The Chair asked the members to communicate the importance and value of the category 3 program agreements to their Municipalities, noting these are the programs that are most vulnerable in this upcoming transition period.

The Chair noted that this is a very abnormal budget development timeline and is a status quo budget, both as directed by the Province, not the budget the UTRCA would like to be presenting.

A Board member suggested including the following items in the Budget Overview document: budget timeline, and message that the budget process is happening so early due to direction from the Province.

The Chair urged all Municipalities who do not usually request a budget presentation from the General Manager to ask for one this year. Further, he urged Municipalities to request a delegation from the Western Lake Erie Regional Conservation Authority (WLERCA) Project Executive Davin Heinbuck.

The members discussed the importance of grants and received confirmation that there have been no noticeable changes to grant eligibility, but rather, that competition for the same number of grants continues to increase. It was noted that funders have been asking questions on whether the funding will stay in the area after the consolidations.

A member encouraged any groups who donate money to get their donations in prior to February 1st instead of multiyear donations. The Chair shared that the Province has indicated donations will stay within the intended watershed.

A Board member raised questions and concerns regarding the large budget for legal fees. Staff noted that the cases the UTRCA are involved in span a few disciplines within law, requiring specialized legal counsel. Further, once the cases in front of the Landlord Tennant Board have concluded the legal budget may go back to normal.

The General Manager thanked the management team, coordinators, Christine Saracino, and Eleanor Heagy for their hard work putting together the budget and package.

The Chair encouraged all members to communicate with their Municipalities regarding the budget and the coming changes, noting the importance of this year.

Mover: Paul Mitchell

Seconder: Anna Hopkins

THAT the Board of Directors approves the draft budget for consultation purposes in accordance with section 14 of O.Reg. 402/22 and Minister's Direction 357-2026-1745,

AND THAT written notice of the approval of a draft budget for consultation purposes be provided to the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks in compliance with the Minister's Direction 357-2026-1745.

Carried.

6.2. Flood Spill Areas – Interim Response Mechanism

A member questioned whether the approval of the Interim Response Mechanism could wait a month for more specific information on how this can be applied. Staff emphasized the interim nature of the policy and clarified that the interim response mechanism for flood spill areas will only be applied in very specific circumstances.

A member suggested a “Part B” be added to the recommendation that would direct staff to report back to the Board following the first application of this interim response mechanism.

Mover: Sandy Levin

Seconder: Anna Hopkins

That the Board of Directors:

- Authorizes the Administrative Review Officers (AROs), on an interim basis, to exercise discretionary decision-making in the application of policies contained in the *Environmental Planning Policy Manual (Revised, 2017)* that relate specifically to flood spill areas, where strict application of the existing policy framework may not appropriately reflect site-specific flood conditions, demonstrated flood risk, current technical information, or emerging provincial guidance;
- Direct that the exercise of such discretion be based on sound technical information, consideration of public safety and flood risk, and the objectives and intent of flood management in Ontario;
- Direct staff to report to the Board of Directors on a quarterly basis regarding the ARO’s use of this interim authority.

Part B:

- AND THAT the first time this new approach is implemented, that staff come back with a report to this Board.

Carried.

7. Reports – In-Camera

There were no reports to discuss in closed session

8. Reports – For Information

8.1. Mid-Year Financial Update & Revised 2026 Budget

The General Manager highlighted that more than half of the reserves are surpluses created in campground operations, not through municipal levy.

Mover: Hugh McDermid

Seconder: Sandy Levin

THAT the Board of Directors receives the report for information.

Carried.

8.2. Western Lake Erie Regional Conservation Authority (WLERCA) Update

The General Manager shared that the first meeting of the Transition Committee is tentatively set for September 14th and WLERCA Project Executive, Davin Heinbuck, will

be visiting the Watershed Conservation Centre (WCC) on Thursday of this week to spend the day meeting staff and touring parts of the watershed.

The members discussed 2026/2027 UTRCA Board appointments. The Province has indicated that they are looking for continuity on the Boards during this time of transition, before the Regional Conservation Authority Boards are created. Any exemption requests to the 70% elected official requirement would be processed within 2-3 days, giving the opportunity for current members who are no longer Municipal Councillors following the 2026 Municipal election to stay on the Board during the transition.

A member felt that it was important for new Municipal Councils to know that the appointments to the UTRCA Board of Directors is a short-term appointment and that continuity is very important at this time. And further, they will need to vote and appoint members to the WLERCA Board of Directors, once it has been established.

The Chair shared concerns over the lack of a Terms of Reference for the Transition Committee, lack of agenda for the tentatively scheduled meeting on September 14th, and general lack of governance pieces. He also expressed concerns over the timing, noting how busy everyone is at the moment between budget development and the upcoming election.

The General Manager noted the Transition Committee members will need time to review the information prior to the meeting. She shared that the Project Executives have seen pieces of the first draft of the Playbooks.

Paul Mitchell shared that he has told his current council that, if it is the will of the new council, he would stay on the UTRCA Board.

Members thanked the General Manager and staff for all the information shared with Municipal staff and Councils over the summer.

Mover: George Way

Seconder: Jean Coles

THAT the Board of Directors receives the report for information.

Carried.

8.3. Environmental Registry of Ontario Posting #026-0740 Consultation on Proposed Governance Regulations for Regional Conservation Authorities and the Ontario Provincial Conservation Agency

The Chair expressed concerns and highlighted the problems of using the population model to determine representation, noting that across the province in various regions the upper and single tier Municipalities that fall within more than one Regional Conservation Authority, like the City of London, will be underrepresented in one region, and overrepresented in another.

The General Manager proposed that the new disseminated population information being released by Statistics Canada in February be used for the calculations, and that if Municipalities are capped at a maximum number of representatives there should also be a minimum population threshold for having a member on the Board. The General Manager noted that the feedback to the Province needs to come from Municipalities, and that the four WLERCA General Managers are meeting to organize communications to municipalities.

The Chair and Vice-Chair reported that they had met with City of London Mayor Josh Morgan to discuss the implications of the proposed model to determine representation.

The Chair suggested that the Modified Current Value Assessment (MVCA) would be a better, more equitable model to use.

A member voiced concerns over the potential loss of rural representation on the WLERCA Board of Directors, given the new Board members will be representing whole counties instead of individual Municipalities.

The Chair highlighted the importance of Municipalities having their say, not just on the number of representatives, but on the methodology used to determine representation.

Mover: Paul Mitchell

Seconder: Jean Coles

THAT the Board of Directors receives the report for information.

Carried.

8.4. Environmental Registry of Ontario Posting #026-0329 Technical Guide and Technical Bulletin – UTRCA Comments

It was noted that the technical guide and technical bulletin updates have been anticipated for many years and staff are thankful it is moving forward.

A Board member thanked staff, on behalf of the whole Board, for the deep dive into this posting and all their work on this matter.

Mover: Sandy Levin

Seconder: Hugh McDermid

THAT the Board of Directors receives the report for information.
Carried.

8.5. Hydro Plant Update

A Board member noted that while it is starting to feel it is not worth the effort, they will wait for the cost benefit analysis before making any decisions.

The Chair noted the significant cost savings in the long run.

A Board member cautioned that the Authority should pay close attention to the contract with London Hydro to make sure the pricing is fair.

Mover: Goerge Way

Seconder: Skylar Franke

THAT the Board of Directors receives the report for information.
Carried.

8.6. Administrative Review Officer (ARO) Discretionary Policy Decisions – Quarterly Report

Mover: Sandy Levin

Seconder: Anna Hopkins

THAT the Board of Directors receives the report for information.
Carried.

8.7. Second Quarter Update on Implementation of Service Delivery Review Recommendations

Mover: Hugh McDermid

Seconder: Jim Craigmile

THAT the Board of Directors receives the report for information.
Carried.

8.8. Administration and Enforcement – Section 28 Status Report

Mover: Anna Hopkins

Seconder: George Way

THAT the Board of Directors receives the report for information.
Carried.

8.9. Project Status Update

Mover: Paul Mitchell

Seconder: Harj Nijjar

THAT the Board of Directors receives the report for information.

Carried.

8.10. Thames River Current – August Edition

The August edition of the Thames River Current was presented for the members' information.

Mover: Anna Hopkins

Seconder: Sandy Levin

THAT the Board of Directors receives the report for information.

Carried.

9. Reports – Committees

9.1. Finance and Audit Committee

There was no report from the Finance and Audit Committee.

9.2. Hearing Committee

The Hearing Committee will have a brief meeting to approve minutes following the Board meeting.

10. Notices of Motion for Next Meeting

There were no notices of motion.

11. Chair's Comments

11.1. Water Song

The Chair shared his experience attending a sunrise ceremony earlier in the summer led by Mary Lou Smoke in Ingersoll and encouraged all members to attend a sunrise ceremony when the opportunity arises. The Youtube video The Water Song – Mary Lou and Dan Smoke was played.

12. Member's Comments

There were no comments from members.

13. General Manager's Comments

The General Manager reminded the members of two upcoming public meetings regarding the regulated area mapping updates: Wednesday, September 25th at the Komoka Community Centre in Komoka for the Delaware study area, and Thursday September 27th at the Flight Exec Centre in Dorchester for the South Thames study area.

The General Manager highlighted a number of turtle lab tours that have and will continue to take place throughout the week.

The General Manager noted she will be meeting with WLERCA Project Executive Davin Heinbuck on Thursday.

The General Manager reminded Members to speak to Michelle Viglianti, Administrative Assistant, if they are interested in attending the Latornell Conservation Symposium being held this year back at it's original location, the Nottawasaga Resort and Conference Centre.

The General Manager reminded the members that the date of the next meeting is October 6th and wished good luck to all members campaigning for the upcoming elections.

14. Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 11:21am on a motion by Anna Hopkins, seconded by Hugh McDermid.

Tracy Annett, General Manager

/mv

Att.