

Minutes

Upper Thames River Conservation Authority (UTRCA)

Board of Directors Meeting

Tuesday, August 29, 2023

Brian Petrie, UTRCA Board Chair, called the meeting to order at 9:30am.

Members Present:

Jim Craigmile

Peter Cuddy - Online

Skylar Franke

Anna Hopkins

Sandy Levin

Hugh McDermid

Paul Mitchell

Harj Nijjar

Brian Petrie - Chair

Mark Schadenberg

Dean Trentowsky

George Way

Scotty Zehr - Online

Regrets: Tom Heeman, Debbie Heffernan

Solicitor: G. Inglis

Staff Present:

Jenna Allain

Tracy Annett

Amy Bumbacco

Ben Dafoe – Online

Sarah Hodgkiss

Teresa Hollingsworth

Tatianna Lozier

Christine Saracino

Damian Schofield

Chris Tasker

Tara Tchir

Michelle Viglianti – Recorder

Brandon Williamson

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. Delegations/Presentations

There were no delegations or presentations.

5. Administrative Business

5.1. Approval of Minutes of Previous Meeting: June 20 and July 17, 2023

Mover: G.Way

Seconder: S.Franke

THAT that the Upper Thames River Conservation Authority Board of Directors approve the Board of Directors' minutes dated June 20 and July 17, 2023, including any closed session minutes, as posted on the Upper Thames River Conservation Authority web-site.

Carried.

5.2. Business Arising from the Minutes

There was no business arising from the minutes.

5.3. Correspondence

There was no correspondence.

6. Reports – For Consideration

6.1. 2024 Budget Discussion

(Report attached)

Staff presented slides to summarize the report and included four alternative scenarios for discussion. Members thanked staff for their hard work in putting this draft budget together.

Staff confirmed meetings had begun with Environment and Climate Change Canada on a contract for the UTRCA to deliver programs, but more information will hopefully be presented at the October meeting.

Members discussed reducing the 3% cost of living increase, but dismissed the idea when informed of how small an impact each quarter percent reduction would have on the overall budget.

Members felt the biggest pieces of the budget and biggest challenges facing the 2024 budget were a result of the unintended consequences of not consulting Conservation Authorities when the Provincial government made legislative changes affecting Conservation Authorities. Further, what was supposed to be a cost saving exercise has now increased the UTRCA draft budget by 1.5 million dollars in order to implement all the Provincial requirements. Members directed staff to create a communications plan to explain the changes and challenges of the 2024 budget to the member Municipalities.

Concerns were raised around the proposed additional 9.4 Full Time Equivalent (FTE). They felt adding 9.4 FTEs while still carrying on with other programs would be a very tough sell to their Municipalities.

There was discussion on the feasibility of using reserve funds to cover the draft projected Category 1 deficit. Staff noted that if the proposed deficit was taken from reserves, there would be only two months of operating reserves left. Members felt there should be a minimum of six months of operating costs in reserves.

Staff noted the 2024 budget year is bearing the brunt of the financial hit from Provincially mandated changes, acting as the re-set year, and the budget should be more stable going forward. Members encouraged Municipalities to communicate frustrations with the downloads to the Province.

Through the lengthy discussion, the following direction was given to staff:

- Report back on status of contract discussions with Environment and Climate Change Canada.
- Provide supporting information for the 9.4 proposed additional Full Time Equivalent (FTEs), including whether they would be permanent or contract positions.
- Develop a communications package explaining the changes and challenges of the 2024 budget, including the unavoidable costs downloaded from the Province.
- Provide a reserve calculation for 6 months of operating costs.
- Provide updated numbers in October for the proposed Category 1 deficit (currently calculated at just over \$800,000) and the proposed category three levy (currently calculated at \$600,000).

Mover: P.Mitchell

Seconder: A.Hopkins

1. THAT the 2024 Budget Discussion report be received.
2. THAT the 2024 Draft Budget be developed in conformity to the updated Conservation Authorities Act (CAA) and Ontario Regulation 402/22: Budget and Apportionment.
3. THAT staff BE DIRECTED to include a provision for an economic increase (COLA) of 3% and address inflationary pressures consistent with municipal

budget assumptions.

4. THAT staff BE DIRECTED to prepare a Draft Budget based on feedback received by the members.

Carried.

6.2. Committee Meeting Schedule

(Report attached)

Mover: H.McDermid

Secunder: H.Nijjar

THAT the Board of Directors approve the following Committee meeting schedule for the remainder of 2023:

- Finance and Audit Committee – September 26, 2023 12:30pm
- Hearing Committee – October 31, 2023 12:30pm

Carried.

6.3. Land Inventory Update

Concerns were raised over the potential definition of developable land.

Mover: S.Franke

Secunder: G.Way

1) THAT staff complete a Land Inventory, as a mandatory program and service within Ontario Regulation 686/21,

2) that the costs associated with completing the land inventory be covered under 2023 lands operating budget, and

3) that the Board of Directors be updated at key milestones in the process.

Carried.

The Chair called for a short break at 11:09am.

The meeting was called back to order at 11:19am.

7. Reports – In-Camera

Mover: H.McDermid

Secunder: G.Way

THAT the Board of Directors adjourn to Closed Session – In Camera, in accordance with Section C.13 of the UTRCA Administrative By-Law to discuss a plan and instruction to be applied to negotiation and a proposed or pending acquisition or disposition of land by the Authority.

Carried.

7.1. Plan and Instruction to be Applied to Negotiation – Property Acquisition

The Board rose from closed session and passed the following motion:

Mover: M.Schadenberg

Seconder: D.Trentowsky

THAT the Board of Directors approve the recommendation as presented in closed session.

Carried.

8. Reports – For Information

8.1. Administration and Enforcement – Section 28 Status Report

(Report attached)

Mover: S.Franke

Seconder: J.Craigmile

THAT the Board of Directors receive the report for information.

Carried.

8.2. Project Status Updates

(Report attached)

Mover: A.Hopkins

Seconder: H.Nijjar

THAT the Board of Directors receive the report for information.

Carried.

8.3. 2023 Mid-Year Financial Update

(Report attached)

Mover: S.Franke

Seconder: D.Trentowsky

THAT the Board of Directors receive the report for information.

Carried.

8.4. Hazard Mapping and Modelling Consultation Update – UTRCA Regulation Limit

(Report attached)

It was noted that while the hazard mapping and modelling update and the Dingman creek work are related, they are two separate projects with different timelines.

Mover: G.Way

Seconder: S.Franke

THAT the Board of Directors receive the report for information.

Carried.

8.5. Wetland Compensation Policy Update

(Report attached)

Members encouraged each other to speak to their Municipalities on wetland compensation, if required, for ecological values, noting the UTRCA policy will be narrow and focused only on interference with, or removal of, wetlands from a natural hazard perspective because of Provincial regulation changes.

Mover: A.Hopkins

Seconder: S.Franke

THAT the Board of Directors receive the report for information.

Carried.

8.6. Fall 2023 Events

(Report attached)

Mover: P.Mitchell

Seconder: J.Reffle

THAT the Board of Directors receive the report for information.

Carried.

8.7. August For Your Information Report

The August For Your Information Report was presented for the member's information.

Mover: S.Levin

Seconder: G.Way

THAT the Board of Directors accept the report for information.

Carried.

9. Reports – Committee Updates

Mover: S.Franke

Secunder: P.Mitchell

THAT the Board of Directors receive both 9.1 and 9.2.

Carried.

9.1. Finance and Audit Committee – Review of Potential Change to Long-Term Investments

The report was received for information as noted above.

9.2. Hearing Committee – June 20 and 29 Hearing Outcomes

The report was received for information as noted above.

10. Notices of Motion for September 26, 2023

There were no notices of motion.

11. Chair's Comments

The Chair thanked the members for their discussion on the 2024 budget, noting the new budget discussions will bring many challenges this year. He encouraged members to advocate and help educate their fellow councillors.

The Chair thanked staff for all their hard work already put into the draft budget, noting the unintended consequences of the Provincial changes understood and feared by the Board four years ago are now being realized.

12. Member's Comments

H.McDermid requested an update report on the Watershed Conservation Centre, in light of the building being open for more than ten years, including what has worked well, what didn't work, and how much money has been saved.

13. General Manager's Comments

The General Manager noted that registration for the Latornell Conservation Symposium opens September 6th. Interested Board members were asked to get in touch with staff.

14. Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 12:03pm on a motion by H.Nijjar.

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read "Tracy Annett", with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Tracy Annett, General Manager
Att.