

Minutes

Upper Thames River Conservation Authority (UTRCA)

Board of Directors Meeting

9:30am Tuesday, December 16, 2025 at 1424 Clarke Rd,
London (Hybrid Meeting)

Dean Trentowsky, UTRCA Board Chair, called the meeting to order at 9:30am.

Members Present:

Jean Coles

Jim Craigmile

Peter Cuddy – Online

Skylar Franke – Online

Tom Heeman

Sandy Levin

Hugh McDermid

Paul Mitchell

Harj Nijjar – Online

Brian Petrie

Mark Schadenberg

Dean Trentowsky – Chair

George Way

Scotty Zehr

Regrets: Anna Hopkins

Staff Present:

Jenna Allain

Tracy Annett

Laura Biancolin

Emily Chandler

Erin Dolmage

Karlee Flear

Joe Gordon

Eleanor Heagy

Teresa Hollingsworth

Christine Saracino

Damian Schofield

Chris Tasker

Brent Verscheure

Michelle Viglianti – Recorder

Julie Welker

Brandon Williamson

1. Territorial Acknowledgement

The Chair read the territorial acknowledgement.

2. Modifications to the Agenda

Mover: George Way

Seconder: Jean Coles

THAT the Board of Directors amend the agenda to move items 8.1 and 8.2 to follow item 4.1. Noting at the request of the delegation, they will be not be heard today.
Carried.

It was noted the consultants were not on the Zoom call yet.

Mover: Tom Heeman

Seconder: Jean Coles

THAT the Board of Directors go back to the circulated agenda order due to the consultants not being ready yet.

Carried.

3. Declarations of Pecuniary Interest

There were no declarations of pecuniary interest.

4. Delegations/Presentations

4.1. Mark and Mary McNeil – Legal Ramifications to Homeowners Regarding Proposed Changes to the Mapping of the Regulated Area

Mark and Mary McNeil reached out to staff prior to the meeting asking to defer their delegation to the meeting where the regulated area mapping would be considered for approval.

5. Administrative Business

5.1. Approval of Minutes of Previous Meeting: November 25, 2025

Mover: Mark Schadenberg

Seconder: Scotty Zehr

THAT that the Upper Thames River Conservation Authority Board of Directors approves the Board of Directors' minutes, dated November 25, 2025, including any closed session minutes.

Carried.

5.2. Business Arising from the Minutes

There was no business arising from the minutes.

5.3. Correspondence

5.3.1. Letter from Warden Marcus Ryan

Members discussed the correspondence and asked that staff speak to the questions raised in the letter during budget discussions in February.

Mover: Hugh McDermid

Seconder: Jean Coles

THAT the Board of Directors receive the correspondence from Warden Marcus Ryan as correspondence for information.

Carried.

5.3.2. Motions and Letter from Municipalities and Conservation Authorities Regarding Bill 68

The Board discussed the motions and letters received by the following parties regarding Bill 68:

- The City of Windsor
- The Township of South Stormont
- The Township of Conmee
- The Municipality of Neebing
- Township of O'Connor
- Lakehead Region Conservation Authority
- Lower Thames Valley Conservation Authority
- Ganaraska Region Conservation Authority
- Catfish Creek Conservation Authority
- Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority

It was noted that motions from the following four parties were received after the agenda was distributed:

- Mattagami Region CA
- Town of Ingersoll
- Township of Dorion
- Conservation Sudbury

The General Manager reviewed a list of UTRCA member Municipalities who had considered motions, passed motions, or had motions on their upcoming agendas.

Members discussed further steps that could be taken. They suggested members contact their Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO) representatives and ensure the people who need to know about these proposed changes and concerns of the Conservation Authorities, including local Members of Provincial Parliament (MPPs) and Municipal Councils, are aware.

Mover: Brian Petrie

Seconder: George Way

THAT the Board of Directors receive the correspondence for information, including the letters from Mattagami Region Conservation Authority, the Town of Ingersoll, Township of Dorion, and Conservation Sudbury, AND THAT the letters listed be appended to the agenda package.

Carried.

6. Reports – For Consideration

6.1. UTRCA Strategic Plan 2025-2030

The members discussed the UTRCA Strategic Plan 2025-2030. Members supported the plan and felt it was important to have the strategic plan in place going into any potential changes or consolidations.

Mover: Sandy Levin

Seconder: Scotty Zehr

That the Board of Directors approve the Upper Thames River Conservation Authority's 2025-2030 Strategic Plan.

Carried.

6.2. Draft Comments on Proposed Boundaries for the Regional Consolidation of Ontario's Conservation Authorities ERO #025-1257

The General Manager provided an overview of the draft comments, highlighted changes made since agenda package circulation, and discussed possible further additions including but not limited to infrastructure details and Water and Erosion Control Infrastructure (WECI) funding.

Members voiced concerns and frustration on the difficulty and potential risks of responding to the questions with the lack of information and lack of a clear desired outcome from the Province.

Mover: Jim Craigmile

Seconder: Jean Coles

THAT the Board of Directors delegate responsibility to the General Manager to prepare and submit final comments on the posting in advance of the December 22, 2025, deadline.

Carried.

6.3. 2026 Fees Policy and Fee Schedules

No direction on the continuation of the freeze on planning and regulations fees for 2026 has been provided by the Province. Staff anticipate receiving direction to continue the freeze by the end of the year.

Members raised concerns over the continuing fee freeze, noting every year is a download to levy and a barrier to being able to provide the service.

The Members discussed the new membership program being rolled out for Fanshawe, Wildwood and Pittock and the related infrastructure upgrades that will improve site control, access and security.

Members requested to see what proposed Planning and Regulations fees would be if the fee freeze was lifted. Members suggested reviving the advocacy work around lifting the fee freeze.

Questions were raised around the proposed Conservation Authority amalgamations and the logistics and impacts of standardised fee schedules, noting that Conservation Authorities currently have varying cost recovery percentage goals for planning and regulations fees.

Members shared concerns over the defunding of the billion trees program and its potential impacts.

Mover: Scotty Zehr

Seconder: Paul Mitchell

THAT the proposed revisions to the Fees Policy and 2026 Fee Schedules be approved by the UTRCA Board of Directors for implementation beginning January 1, 2026.

Carried.

7. Reports – In-Camera

There were no reports scheduled.

8. Reports – For Information

8.1. Planning and Permitting Service Delivery Review – Deferred from November 2025

Ian Shelley and John Connolly from Blackline Consulting presented the service delivery review.

Members thanked Blackline Consulting for the report and asked that the slideshow be circulated to the members.

Members asked that staff provide a quarterly report on the progress of the implementation, and that it be added to the monthly Project Status Update report.

Change management was discussed and identified as a significant challenge.

Members confirmed there was adequate funding in the current 2026 draft budget to make progress and provide evidence of success, although it was noted that exact costs are still being determined.

A member noted staff from their Municipality had reported positive changes in levels of responsiveness on regulatory matters in the last six months. Another member shared feedback from constituents on challenges with the regulations process, feeling they did not know what they could or could not do in terms of engineering and architectural solutions. The members discussed the challenge presented and staff confirmed future reports would include service standards and metrics.

A member requested to see how the implementation timeline would change if the current proposed provincial changes were not being considered. It was noted by members that the proposed changes are hindering this work.

A member suggested the metric measured could be initial contact to submission.

Jean Coles left the meeting at 11:25am.

Mover: Brian Petrie

Seconder: Skylar Franke

THAT the Board of Directors receive the Planning and Permitting Service Delivery Review report for information.

Carried.

8.2. Tentative Implementation Plan for Service Delivery Review Recommendations

Peter Cuddy left the meeting at 11:28am.

Members discussed the report and proposed direction to staff for a follow up report that would include the measurables for evidence of success.

Concerns were raised on putting resources into the organization when the future of the organization is uncertain. Board Chair Dean Trentowsky stepped out of the meeting Chair to comment on the concern and motion and turned the meeting over to Vice-Chair Mark Schadenberg.

Board Vice-Chair Mark Schadenberg turned the Chair of the meeting back to Board Chair Dean Trentowsky.

Members suggested the follow up report include a list of steps to be taken to accomplish each recommendation, what will be considered the evidence of success, and a reasonable timeframe to accomplish those tasks. Members also suggested highlighting the recommendations that should not go forward without further Provincial direction.

Mover: Sandy Levin

Seconder: Brian Petrie

Amendment to the recommendation: THAT staff provide the implementation plan at the January meeting, AND THAT the implementation plan include what will be considered evidence of success.

Carried.

Mover: Tom Heeman

Seconder: Scotty Zehr

THAT the Board of Directors receives the Tentative Implementation Plan for Service Delivery Review Recommendations Report for Information,
AND THAT staff provide the implementation plan at the January meeting,
AND THAT the implementation plan include what will be considered evidence of success.

Carried.

8.3. Preparation for January Election

Mover: Paul Mitchell

Seconder: Mark Schadenberg

THAT the Board of Directors receive the report for information.

Carried.

8.4. Thames River Current – December Edition

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

Mover: Hugh McDermid

Seconder: Jim Craigmile

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

There was no report from the Hearing Committee.

10. Notices of Motion

10.1. Discussion on Formalizing the General Manager’s Performance Appraisal Process Chair’s Comments

Skylar Franke presented her motion.

THAT the board engage an external consultant to support the following functions:

- administering a formal 360-degree survey process, including staff, board members, and select external partners;
- administering a self-evaluation of the General Manager;
- compiling, analyzing, anonymizing, and summarizing all results into a clear, actionable report;
- presenting the findings to the board in closed session;
- assisting with the creation a professional development work plan for the General Manager.

The motion will be on the January agenda for consideration with an accompanying staff report, which will include a rough cost estimate.

11. Chair’s Comments

The Chair noted the challenges in comprehending the provincial changes announced Oct 31st due to the lack of communication from the Province on the problem they are attempting to address. The Chair shared his frustration and disappointment with the Province on the lack of engagement, both prior to and since the announcement, and their lack of trust and cooperation in the work done by the Conservation Authorities and the elected officials on their Boards.

The Chair asked for patience and commitment to the process while Authorities navigate the proposed changes.

The Chair wished everyone happy holidays and a happy new year.

12. Member's Comments

Brian Petrie shared what he felt is a lack of respect for what happens at the Municipal level, feeling the Province handed over responsibilities and walked away. He wished everyone happy holidays and encouraged everyone to promote the good work done by Conservation Authorities.

Paul Mitchell thanked the Chair and Brian Petrie for their comments during the meeting and offered congratulations to the Chair for being acclaimed as Warden of Perth County.

Skylar Franke left the meeting at approximately 12:00pm.

13. General Manager's Comments

The General Manager thanked the members who were able to attend the round table discussion hosted by the Ministry and shared that other General Managers voiced their appreciation for the comments provided by UTRCA Board members during the round table discussion.

The General Manager thanked the Board members for their time, noting it was a big meeting initially not on calendars.

The General Manager thanked the management team and coordinators for operationalizing the Strategic Plan, and thanked Eleanor Heagy and Teresa Hollingsworth for pulling everything together.

The General Manager expressed appreciation for the feedback from the municipalities, and for the comments and efforts of the Board members regarding the proposed changes from the Province.

The General Manager wished everyone a restful holiday season.

14. Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 12:13pm on a motion by Hugh McDermid, seconded by Scotty Zehr.

Tracy Annett, General Manager
/mv