

## Minutes

### Upper Thames River Conservation Authority (UTRCA)

#### Board of Directors Meeting

9:30am Tuesday, March 25, 2025 at 1424 Clarke Rd, London  
(Hybrid Meeting)

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Dean Trentowsky, UTRCA Board Chair, called the meeting to order at 9:40am.

#### Members Present:

Jean Coles

Jim Craigmile

Peter Cuddy – Online

Tom Heeman

Anna Hopkins – Online

Sandy Levin

Skylar Franke

Hugh McDermid – Online

Paul Mitchell

Harj Nijjar – Online

Brian Petrie

Mark Schadenberg

Dean Trentowsky – Chair

Scotty Zehr – Online

George Way

Regrets: None

UTRCA Solicitor: Grant Inglis

#### Staff Present:

Jenna Allain

Tracy Annett

Holleigh Baldwin

Laura Biancolin

Tom Cull

Eric Gaskin

Huda Ghadhban

Joe Gordon

Eleanor Heagy

Teresa Hollingsworth

Jennifer Howley

Tatianna Lozier

Lisa Reynolds

Damian Schofield

Graeme Shaw

Jillian Smith

Chris Tasker

Tara Tchir

Brent Verscheure

Michelle Viglianti – Recorder

Brandon Williamson

## 1. Territorial Acknowledgement

The Chair read the territorial acknowledgement.

**Draft**

## 2. Modifications to the Agenda

Mover: Sandy Levin

Seconder: Tom Heeman

THAT, notwithstanding policy, the Board of Directors modify the agenda to include item

4.1 Delegation by London Mayor Josh Morgan and Councillor and Budget Chair

Elizabeth Pelozo.

Carried with 2/3 majority.

## 3. Declarations of Pecuniary Interest

There were no declarations of pecuniary interest.

## 4. Delegations/Presentations

### **4.1. London Mayor Josh Morgan and Councillor and Budget Chair Elizabeth Pelozo**

Mover: Brian Petrie

Seconder: Mark Schadenberg

Motion: THAT the Board extend the time allowed for the delegation from 10 minutes to 30 minutes.

Carried.

City of London Mayor Josh Morgan and Councillor and Budget Chair Elizabeth Pelozo discussed the Mayor's desire to keep the tax rate increase for the City of London for 2026 under 5% increase. In order to meet that target, they are asking all Boards and Commissions to come up with a collective 5 million dollars in budget cuts.

Mayor Morgan offered to be a partner in any advocacy work the Board identifies and asked for a list of priority advocacy items.

Mayor Morgan shared that London has joined an aggressive advocacy campaign with other Municipalities and they are part of active talks on counter tariffs with the Federal Government. He asked that the UTRCA share with the Mayor's office any items of concern that would be significantly impacted if a counter tariff was imposed.

Questions were raised by Board members on whether the Minister ordered Fee Freeze is still in effect, now that Conservation Authorities are under a new Ministry with a new Minister.

It was clarified that 40% of the UTRCA levy comes from the City of London tax base, while the other 60% comes from water rates, and it is the 40% from the tax base that would be the target of any reductions.

## **Draft**

The Board asked that the Mayor's office provide a letter outlining the information requested for the May City Council meeting and a timeline of dates when future information would be needed.

The Board and Mayor Morgan requested a future report listing all budget reduction considerations made and the reasoning and consequences of the reductions for each item being recommended or not recommended.

There was a discussion on whether capital projects would be impacted by City of London budget cuts. The Mayor clarified that it is the intent of the City of London to maintain capital plans, with hopes of receiving economic support from upper levels of government.

The Board provided direction to staff to provide a list of advocacy pieces as soon as possible to Mayor Morgan.

Board members identified four priority areas to ask for Mayor Morgan's aid in advocacy; base funding, Water and Erosion Control Infrastructure (WECI) funding, ending the fee freeze, and Source Water Protection. Councillor Peloza requested that the UTRCA share the identified advocacy priority areas with neighbouring Conservation Authorities and Water Boards, in order to speak with one voice.

Any formal response to this delegation's request or requests for feedback should be submitted before the City of London's May 22<sup>nd</sup> Budget Committee meeting.

Mover: Brian Petrie

Seconder: Paul Mitchell

THAT staff be directed to report back to the Board on potential opportunities and impacts on the UTRCA, with a first report at the April meeting.

Carried.

## **5. Administrative Business**

### **5.1. Approval of Minutes of Previous Meeting: February 25, 2025**

Mover: George Way

Seconder: Tom Heeman

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

Carried.

## **5.2. Business Arising from the Minutes**

There was no business arising from the minutes.

## **5.3. Correspondence**

### **5.3.1. Perth County Stewardship Program Letter**

The members discussed the letter from the Perth County Stewardship Program.

## **6. Reports – For Consideration**

### **6.1. Fullarton Dam Environmental Assessment Presentation and Report**

Jillian Smith, UTRCA Water Control Structures Technologist, introduced the project and consultant Heather Amirault from Stantec.

The Board discussed the 75% grant funding request passed by West Perth Council and discussed the feasibility of meeting that goal. Staff noted it would be a challenge, but have had success in the past obtaining funding for these types of projects outside of the Water and Erosion Control Infrastructure (WECI) fund.

It was noted that West Perth Municipal Council did not entertain discussion on any of the other options.

Mover: Sandy Levin

Seconder: Tom Heeman

THAT the Board endorse the Environmental Assessment study, including the preferred alternative, and approves proceeding with final posting of the Class Environmental Assessment for consultation.

Carried.

### **6.2. Indigenous Engagement Discussion Paper**

Board members confirmed the training opportunity discussed in the report would be extended to Board members.

A Board member raised the concept of Land Back, and another suggested engaging the Fanshawe Pioneer Village. Staff noted that both suggestions would be considered during the engagement strategy phase.

## **Draft**

Mover: Skylar Franke

Seconder: Harj Nijjar

THAT the UTRCA Board of Directors approve the attached Indigenous Engagement discussion paper.

Carried.

### **6.3. Procurement Under the Buy Canada Movement**

Board members raised concerns over the complexity of identifying what is 'Canadian' and what is not and not wanting to create animosity or harm existing good relationships. Board members supported the 'Buy Local' policy tweak, feeling it was the better solution over what they felt was a more symbolic gesture of not buying products from the United States.

A Board member raised concerns around the number of staff who have the authority to procure, suggesting that a centralized procurement officer may be needed. Staff clarified the Authority belongs to a buying group and are reviewing more group buying opportunities. Staff will report back on the additional procurement opportunities when more information has been gathered.

Board members suggested tracking the impact of tariffs, if possible.

Skylar Franke left the meeting at 11:10am.

Mover: Sandy Levin

Seconder: Tom Heeman

That the Board of Directors approve an amendment to UTRCA Purchasing Regulations which would encourage buyers to consider the source of supply in their best value decisions in procurement. "The UTRCA prefers local supply".

Carried.

## **7. Reports – In-Camera**

Mover: Paul Mitchell

Seconder: Jean Coles

THAT the Board of Directors adjourn to Closed Session – In Camera in accordance with Section C.12 of the UTRCA Administrative By-Law to discuss a matter involving a proposed or pending disposition of land.

Carried.

## **Draft**

The Board moved into closed session at 11:11am.

Anna Hopkins left the meeting at 11:12am.

Peter Cuddy left the meeting at 11:13am.

### **7.1. Proposed or Pending Disposition of Land**

The Board rose from closed session and reported progress at 11:46am.

Mark Schadenberg left the meeting at 11:48am.

Mover: Jim Craigmile

Seconder: Scotty Zehr

THAT the Board of Directors receive the report for information.

Carried.

## **8. Reports – For Information**

### **8.1. Administration and Enforcement – Section 28 Status Report**

Mover: Sandy Levin

Seconder: Scotty Zehr

THAT the Board of Directors receives the Section 28 Status Report for information.

Carried.

### **8.2. Project Status Update**

Mover: George Way

Seconder: Jean Coles

THAT the Board of Directors receives the report for information.

Carried.

### **8.3. Health and Safety Annual Summary 2024**

An error was noted, the rebate was \$176,124.70, not \$127,124.70 as indicated in the report.

It was noted that the three Health and Safety Excellence Program (HSEP) topics identified in the report for 2025 no longer fall into the criteria for the program. Staff will be selecting three additional topics.

Board members noted that Jennifer Howley, current Health and Safety Specialist and former Manager of Conservation Areas, will be retiring soon and recognized and thanked her for her hard work over the last thirty years working at the Authority.

## **Draft**

Mover: Jean Coles

Seconder: Jim Craigmile

THAT the Board of Directors receives the report for information.

Carried.

### **8.4 Administrative Review Officer (ARO) Discretionary Policy Decisions Quarterly Report**

The Board discussed wetland re-location and the work still required with consultants to ensure there is no net loss. Sandy Levin offered to provide staff with the wetland re-location information for 905 Sarnia Rd. London as an example.

Mover: Tom Heeman

Seconder: Harj Nijjar

THAT the Board of Directors receives the ARO quarterly report for information.

Carried.

### **8.5 Thames River Current – March Edition**

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

Board members offered their congratulations to the winner of the 2025 Step Into Nature Art Contest winner.

Jim Craigmile was thanked for welcoming guests and promoting the Thames River Current at the Landowners Workshop held in St. Marys on March 19<sup>th</sup>. Thanks were also extended to Hugh McDermid and the Chair for attending the workshop. The Board members who attended noted that the workshop was well attended and well received by the attendees and complimented staff on the displays and presentations.

Mover: Tom Heeman

Seconder: Paul Mitchell

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. There will be a Finance and Audit Committee meeting following the April Board meeting.

### **9.2. Hearing Committee**

There was no report from the Hearing Committee.

## **10. Notices of Motion**

There were no notices of motion for the next meeting.

## **11. Chair's Comments**

The Chair thanked Tatianna Lozier and her staff for the excellent Landowner Workshop, line of speakers, and chance for engagement. The Chair highlighted the importance of the Conservation Authority's role, not only in regulatory requirements, but through the good work done to contribute to the betterment of the community through stewardship and restoration projects and partnerships.

The Chair asked for the Members' support in getting the word out about the work done by Conservation Authorities, and if there is a disagreement, invite them to contact the Chair to further discuss those concerns.

## **12. Member's Comments**

Brian Petrie reminded the Members that the Green Leaders program is starting again, asked staff to share the list of participating school in each of the Municipalities with the Board members, and noted he was looking forward to supporting the program again this year.

Jim Craigmile informed the Members that the Town of St. Marys Planning Department hosted a seminar, Planning 101, to educate residents on the planning and development process, noting that three UTRCA staff members participated in the seminar.

Jim Craigmile shared an example of UTRCA planning and regulations staff working quickly on a project by the Town of St. Marys to extend tennis and pickle ball courts closer to the Thames River.



## **Draft**

Sandy Levin raised concerns regarding City of London Council and staff bringing reports related to the UTRCA to Committee and Council meetings without showing them to UTRCA staff in advance. He also raised concerns around misinformation being presented regarding the UTRCA regulated areas with no one present to provide correct information. Staff noted that monthly meetings have now been arranged with senior staff from the UTRCA and City of London to share reports.

Sandy Levin informed the Board of an article in Ontario Natural Magazine, which highlighted work done by Erin Carroll, UTRCA Aquatic Biologist.

Members discussed their appreciation for the Mayor of London's delegation, noting the differences between the Mayor of London's delegation and past Municipal delegations around budget reductions. Members showed appreciation for the Mayor of London's offer to work together to find solutions and advocate, and that the delegation was requested almost a year ahead of final budget approval.

### **13. General Manager's Comments**

The General Manager provided the Board with updates on the new Provincial Cabinet, noting the Provincial Government has moved Conservation Authorities back under the Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks.

### **14. Adjournment**

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 12:28pm on a motion by Tom Heeman, seconded by Harj Nijjar.

Tracy Annett, General Manager  
/mv