

Minutes

Upper Thames River Conservation Authority (UTRCA)

Board of Directors Meeting

9:30am Tuesday, May 27, 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

Anna Hopkins

Sandy Levin

Hugh McDermid

Paul Mitchell

Harj Nijjar - Online

Mark Schadenberg

Dean Trentowsky – Chair

George Way

Scotty Zehr – Online

Regrets: Tom Heeman, Brian Petrie

Staff Present:

Jenna Allain

Tracy Annett

Joe Gordon

Eleanor Heagy

Teresa Hollingsworth

Huda Ghadhban

Mike Knox

Graeme Shaw

Chris Tasker

Brent Verscheure

Michelle Viglianti – Recorder

Brandon Williamson

Damian Schofield

Christine Saracino

Carly Sing-Judge

1. Territorial Acknowledgement

The Chair read the territorial acknowledgement.

2. Modifications to the Agenda

There were no modifications made to the agenda.

3. Declarations of Pecuniary Interest

There were no declarations of pecuniary interest.

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4. Delegations/Presentations

There were no delegations or presentation.

5. Administrative Business

5.1. Approval of Minutes of Previous Meeting: April 22, 2025

Mover: George Way

Seconder: Jean Coles

THAT that the Upper Thames River Conservation Authority Board of Directors approves the Board of Directors' minutes, including any closed session minutes, dated April 22, 2025.

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. Budget Concepts

The Chair noted that Budget Chair Pelozza and Mayor Morgan have been kept up to date on the 2026 budget progress. The Board discussed the percentage of UTRCA levy that is funded through the City of London's tax base, feeling that it could be useful for UTRCA staff to discuss possible changes to the levy amounts split between the tax base and water and wastewater rates with City of London Finance staff. Staff confirmed more information would be provided at the June meeting. The Chair noted he will be setting up a meeting with Mayor Morgan to discuss the 2026 budget further.

Mover: Paul Mitchell

Seconder: Sandy Levin

1. THAT the 2026 Budget Concepts report be received.
2. THAT the 2026 Draft Budget be developed in conformity to the Conservation Authorities Act (CAA) and Ontario Regulation 402/22: Budget and Apportionment.

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3. THAT staff BE DIRECTED to include a provision for a wage grid increase of 3% and address inflationary pressures as expected.
4. That staff BE DIRECTED to prepare a budget communications overview to circulate to the Finance and Audit Committee for feedback before being finalized.

Carried.

6.2. Administrative By-Law Annual Review

The Board discussed the order of items on the agenda, as listed in the By-Law, as well as length and timing of meetings. Concerns were raised around the length of meetings with some members needing to leave by 11:30am every month. The Board left the matter with the Chair, Vice-Chair and General Manager to examine further, keeping in mind meeting length when developing the meeting agendas, and making agenda order adjustments as needed.

Staff confirmed no agricultural representative has been appointed by the Province yet, but will ensure to update the Board if information is provided by the Ministry.

Mover: Sandy Levin

Seconder: Anna Hopkins

That the Board approves the amended Administrative By-Laws updated May 27, 2025, effective June 1, 2025 for the Upper Thames River Conservation Authority.

Carried.

6.3. Provincial Offences Officer Designation for Shane Butnari, Dustin Patrick and Carly Sing-Judge

Mover: Sandy Levin

Seconder: Jim Craigmile

That pursuant to section 30.1 of the Conservation Authorities Act, the Board of Directors appoints Shane Butnari as an officer for the purposes of enforcement and compliance with the regulation enacted under section 29 of the Act and on Upper Thames River Conservation Authority (UTRCA) owned or controlled property, as a requirement of the position of Land Management Technician,

and further,

That pursuant to section 30.1 of the Conservation Authorities Act, the Board of Directors appoints Dustin Patrick as an officer for the purposes of enforcement and compliance with the regulation enacted under section 29 of the Act and on Upper Thames River

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Conservation Authority (UTRCA) owned or controlled property, as a requirement of the position of Land Management Technician,

and further,

That pursuant to section 30.1 of the Conservation Authorities Act, the Board of Directors appoints Carly Sing-Judge as an officer for the purposes of ensuring compliance with the regulation enacted under section 28 of the Act and within the Upper Thames River watershed.

6.4. Water and Erosion Control Infrastructure Report

The members discussed the Wildwood Dam gates, with staff noting the concern was the impact on the ability to maintaining water levels for summer flow augmentation.

Members discussed the hoist removal, confirming there would be no negative impacts to operations.

Members discussed the dam safety boom and the possibility of needing to remove any future debris caught by the boom during flooding events.

Mover: Anna Hopkins

Seconder: Mark Schadenberg

That the Board receives the Water and Erosion Control Infrastructure (WECI) report for information.

Carried.

6.5. Draft UTRCA Encampment Response Strategy

The members discussed the approximately eight encampments currently on UTRCA land and the impact that pending legislation could have on the final response strategy. Members confirmed the UTRCA strategy aligns with the City of London, County of Oxford, and other larger Conservation Authorities strategies where possible, with a Human Rights based approach.

The Response Strategy will come back in early fall for approval.

Staff confirmed the floodplain lands acquired through Section 39 are generally under management agreements with the City/Municipality. Staff are working with the City of London to define the active floodplain areas and when to move encampments located in those areas. It was recognized that the lengthy process of updating Section 39 management agreements is in progress.

Members thanked staff for the report and communications with Municipal partners.

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Mover: Jean Coles

Seconder: Peter Cuddy

THAT the Board of Directors approve the draft UTRCA Encampment Strategy to enable staff to receive input on the strategy from municipal partners and other interest holders, to end encampments on UTRCA owned or controlled lands.

Carried.

7. Reports – In-Camera

There were no Closed Session reports.

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 report for information.

Carried.

8.2. Project Status Update

An error was noted in the report, under Report Back Items, Green Leaders Participating Schools should be marked complete.

Mover: Skylar Franke

Seconder: George Way

THAT the Board of Directors receives the report for information.

Carried.

8.3. Asset Management Program Update

Mover: Paul Mitchell

Seconder: Harj Nijjar

THAT the Board of Directors receives the report for information.

Carried.

8.4. Bill 5 and Bill 17 Environmental Registry Postings

Staff noted the comments from Conservation Ontario on the Endangered Species Act were missing from the agenda package and will be circulated to the Board members for their information following the meeting.

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The General Manager informed the Board that Conservation Ontario had a delegation to Standing Committee of the Interior to comment on Bill 5 on May 26th. The delegation highlighted the Conservation Authorities' streamlining and permitting accomplishments and the importance of natural hazard management to protect people and property in Ontario. Updates will be provided to this Board as regulations are provided.

Mover: Anna Hopkins

Seconder: Jean Coles

THAT the Board of Directors receives the report for information.

Carried.

8.5. Strategic Plan Update

Staff noted there will be another report to the Board in September, and the final plan will be brought to the Board for adoption by the end of this calendar year.

Mover: Scotty Zehr

Seconder: Harj Nijjar

THAT the Board of Directors receives the report for information.

Carried.

8.6. Thames River Current – May Edition

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

Mover: Hugh McDermid

Seconder: Skylar Franke

THAT the Board of Directors receives the report for information.

Carried.

9. Reports – Committees

9.1. Finance and Audit Committee – April 22nd Decisions

Sandy Levin, Chair of the Finance and Audit Committee, provided an overview of the April 22nd Committee meeting.

The Board discussed the Conservation Area reserves and why the campgrounds do not pay into flood control capital.

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The Board discussed the operating reserves. Staff noted the first step in building operating reserves was to fully fund Category 1 programs, which was approved in policy in 2024. The next step is to complete the asset management plan and create a reserve plan. The Finance and Audit Committee will be tasked with the initial discussion and brainstorming for the reserve plan.

The General Manager noted that the audited financial statements are posted annually on the Governance page of the UTRCA website.

Mover: Hugh McDermid

Seconder: George Way

THAT the Board of Directors accepts the audited financial statements for 2024, as attached, on the recommendation of the Finance and Audit Committee,

AND FURTHER THAT the Board of Directors accepts the recommendation from the Finance and Audit Committee to appoint Seebach & Co. as the Authority's audit firm for the current fiscal year.

Carried.

9.2. Hearing Committee

There will be a very short Hearing Committee meeting directly following the adjournment of this meeting.

10. Notices of Motion

Councillor Peter Cuddy provided the following notice of motion for June 24, 2025:

It being noted that the Board of Directors direct staff to identify budget reduction opportunities of a minimum of 1.5% of UTRCA's municipal levy funded budget, with priority given to amendments that result in permanent budget reductions, as part of the development of the 2026 Budget.

11. Chair's Comments

The Chair noted the impact the asset management plan will have on the long term vision for the Authority, especially when tied together with the strategic plan into the duties and responsibilities given to the Conservation Authority by Provincial legislation.

12. Member's Comments

Paul Mitchell noted him, and his wife attended the Perth County Children's Water Festival and thanked staff for the event, noting the good attendance and many different organizations who participated.

Jim Craigmile thanked the UTRCA, on behalf of the Town of St. Marys, for holding the event noting it was very well done.

Mark Schadenberg shared that he attended the Oxford Children's Water Festival, which hosted 3,000 students over four days.

Mark Schadenberg shared that the City of Woodstock is working on a wetland project on retired lands from the Cedar Creek Golf Course. Phase 1 included planting trees, building a wetland, and planting wetland plants. The project was done in partnership with Ducks Unlimited, UTRCA, City of Woodstock, Environment and Climate Change Foundation, the Cowan Foundation, and Freshwater Conservation Canada.

Sandy Levin thanked Damian Schofield and the Wildwood Conservation Area staff for the invitation to attend their staff orientation day.

Sandy Levin shared that he participated in a turtle nesting habitat repair project with UTRCA staff and Green Leaders. He also participated in a tree planting project, along with Jean Coles, with the Friends of Medway, students, and UTRCA staff on a property adjacent to Medway Creek.

Mark Schadenberg noted the accident at the Pittock gatehouse and asked staff to share any further details. Damian Schofield, Conservation Areas Coordinator, noted there were no staff in the building at the time of the accident, and no one was injured. Staff spent most of last week securing the site and ensuring continued access to day-use. D.Schofield thanked UTRCA IT staff who helped get Wi-Fi, phone connections, and Point of Sale (POS) systems back online in time for the weekend. Information is still being gathered for the insurance company. The Chair thanked staff for being able to react and pivot to keep park operations rolling.

Peter Cuddy noted the recent tragedy on Cobble Hills Road and highlighted the motion Tom Heeman passed at Thames Centre Municipal Council to improve road safety measures. He also urged everyone to stay safe on the roads. The Chair noted that everyone was touched in some way by the tragic event and it is a reminder to all to keep safety top of mind. He extended the Board's sympathies to the families impacted, their friends, and the community of Walkerton.

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13. General Manager's Comments

The General Manager thanked Sandy Levin and Jean Coles for attending the seasonal staff orientation sessions.

The General Manager noted the UTRCA hosted a Clean Water Agency staff event, which included presentations and a tour of the Thorndale Demonstration Farm.

The General Manager noted approximately 1500 people attended the Oxford Children's Water Festival family night, thanking Mark Schadenberg for attending, and Teresa Hollingsworth, Linda Smith and the entire team of staff who helped organize the event.

The General Manager noted approximately 800 people attended the Perth Children's Water Festival in St. Marys, and thanked Jim Craigmile and Paul Mitchell for attending.

The General Manager noted she would be away for the June meeting and one of the Managers will be filling in in her place.

14. Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 11:34am on a motion by Jean Coles, seconded by Anna Hopkins.

Tracy Annett, General Manager
/mv