

Minutes

Upper Thames River Conservation Authority (UTRCA)

Board of Directors Meeting

9:30am Tuesday, November 25, 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

Tom Heeman

Anna Hopkins

Sandy Levin

Hugh McDermid

Paul Mitchell

Harj Nijjar

Brian Petrie

Mark Schadenberg

Dean Trentowsky – Chair

George Way

Scotty Zehr – Online

Regrets:

Staff Present:

Jenna Allain

Tracy Annett

Emily Chandler

Erin Dolmage

Huda Ghadhban

Joe Gordon

Eleanor Heagy

Mark Helsten

Teresa Hollingsworth

Lisa Reynolds

Christine Saracino

Damian Schofield

Graeme Shaw

Carly Sing-Judge

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: Brian Petrie

Seconder: George Way

THAT the Board of Directors adds the letter and resolution from Essex Region Conservation Authority and the resolution from the United Counties of Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry as items on the agenda under item 5.3 Correspondence.
Carried.

Mover: Brian Petrie

Seconder: Sandy Levin

THAT the Board of Directors moves item 8.2 to follow the delegation.

Carried.

Mover: Jean Coles

Seconder: Skylar Franke

THAT the Board of Directors adds item 7.3 Litigation Affecting the Authority – Verbal update.

Carried.

3. Declarations of Pecuniary Interest

There were no declarations of pecuniary interest.

4. Delegations/Presentations

4.1. London Development Institute – Mike Wallace

Mr. Wallace, representing the London Development Institute (LDI), spoke to agenda items 6.2 Regulated Mapping Update Protocol, confirming that LDI did provide some feedback but would like to have further discussion on the definition of ‘significant’ and notification protocols. He noted their wish for LDI to be included in the notification process so they can review any proposed changes in the future.

Mr. Wallace spoke to agenda item 6.3 Thames River Regulated Area Map Update, noting that LDI needs to see the final report before they can provide comments.

Mr. Wallace spoke to agenda item 6.1 Meeting Dates and Committee Meetings, specifically the proposed December 16th meeting when he presumed the Thames River regulated area map update would be on the agenda for approval. He noted that he has a conflict that day and felt that he needed to be present to speak to the report.

Mr. Wallace spoke to agenda item 8.1 Planning and Permitting Service Review, noting that LDI would like to be at the table and work with staff on how some of the recommendation will be resolved.

Mr. Wallace spoke to agenda item 8.2 Provincial announcements, noting LDI doesn't not have a position yet on this item.

A member raised questions to the delegation regarding the expansion of the urban growth boundary. A Point of Order was raised by the Chair that the member was entering into a debate with the delegation and also that they were getting off topic. The Chair requested the member direct their question through UTRCA staff to the City of London outside of this meeting.

***8.2 Provincial Announcements: Bill 68 Schedule 3 Proposed Changes to the Conservation Authorities Act and Environmental Registry of Ontario (ERO) Posting #025-1257 Proposed Boundaries for Regional Consolidation of Ontario's Conservation Authorities**

The General Manager provided an overview presentation of the proposed Provincial changes. The following sample motion for discussion was displayed on the screen for those participating online and circulated on paper to the members present in the room:

WHEREAS the Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks has posted Environmental Registry Notice No. 025-1257 ("Proposed Boundaries for the Regional Consolidation of Conservation Authorities"), proposing to reduce Ontario's 36 conservation authorities to 7 regional entities as part of a broader restructuring that would create a new Ontario Provincial Conservation Agency to provide centralized oversight and direction under the Conservation Authorities Act;

AND WHEREAS under this proposal, the Upper Thames River Conservation Authority (UTRCA) would be merged into anew "Lake Erie Regional Conservation Authority" together with the: Essex Region, Lower Thames Valley CA, St. Clair Region CA, Kettle Creek CA, Catfish Creek CA, Long Point Region CA, and Grand River CA, forming a single organization stretching from Windsor, through London, Brantford, and north of Waterloo region;

AND WHEREAS the Board acknowledges and supports the Province's goals of improved efficiency, consistency, and fiscal responsibility in conservation delivery, but find that the proposed "Lake Erie Region" configuration would create a geographically vast and administratively complex entity; dilute local accountability and municipal partnership; generate substantial transition costs, including human resources integration, governance restructuring, IT migration, and policy harmonization that would divert resources from the front-line service delivery making it hard for applicants to obtain timely local advice, resolve issues, or expedite housing and infrastructure approvals that support the Province's goals;

AND WHEREAS UTRCA has always worked with its member municipalities, the province, and partners to be fiscally responsible while ensuring the conservation, restoration, development, and management of natural resources within the upper

Thames River watershed including modernizing its programs and services and aligning them with provincial guidance and neighbouring CAs and will continue to do so;

THEREFORE BE IT RESOLVED THAT UTRCA Board of Directors does not support the proposed “Lake Erie Regional Conservation Authority” boundary configuration outlined in the Environment Registry Notice 02-1257; and the Board instead requests that the Ministry engage directly with affected municipalities and conservation authorities to evaluate a reduced geographic scope for consolidation that better reflects established relationships and enhances cost-efficient delivery of integrated watershed management, grassroots connections, and local understanding;

AND FINALLY THAT this resolution be forwarded to the Minister of Environment, Conservation and Parks, local members of Provincial Parliament, Association of Municipalities of Ontario, Rural Ontario Municipalities Association, all municipalities and CAs within the proposed Lake Erie Region Conservation Authority, and Conservation Ontario.

Board members had a lengthy discussion on their concerns regarding the provincial announcements.

Members raised concerns over the geographical size of the proposed Lake Erie Regional Conservation Authority and the apparent loss of the local governance model.

Members felt that the proposed changes would not achieve the Province’s stated goal of streamlining and increasing efficiency but would complicate the process and add more levels of bureaucracy.

Members highlighted the importance of engaging municipal councils and partners to make sure they are aware of the significant concerns in a strong, clear and concise manner, emphasizing the importance of them speaking up on behalf of themselves and Conservation Authorities. Members voiced concerns over the lack of engagement with First Nation communities.

Concerns were raised over the effect on current budgets, with reports that some people and organizations considering large donations to Conservation Authorities are no longer considering donations, not knowing where the money will be going with the proposed amalgamations.

Concerns were raised on the significant cost, time and very complicated logistics of amalgamating eight Conservation Authorities. Concerns were raised that the cost would be downloaded to Municipalities.

Members raised concerns that the voices of the rural municipalities will be lost amongst the 81 Municipalities in a proposed region that would include twelve large cities.

Members raised concerns for staff and the impact these changes could have on their jobs.

Mover: Anna Hopkins

Secunder: Tom Heeman

THAT the Board of Directors receive the report for information.

Carried.

The members discussed the proposed example motion. There was a suggestion to change the wording in the proposed motion, that rather than no changes to geographic boundaries be made, that the proposed region be divided into East and West Lake Erie basin.

The Chair noted it was incumbent on the members to ensure their clerks receive the correspondence and that it be included on their council agendas at the earliest opportunity, noting the closing date of the Environmental Registry of Ontario posting.

It was suggested that staff use the wording from the bottom of the second page of the letter from the Essex Region Conservation Authority in the proposed letter to UTRCA member municipalities and First Nation Communities.

Mover: Brian Petrie

Secunder: Anna Hopkins

THAT the Board of Directors dispense with the notice of requirement.

The motion carried with a two thirds majority.

Mover: Skylar Franke

Secunder: George Way

THAT the Board of Directors adopt the proposed motion, as circulated to the board at the start of the meeting, and direct staff to circulate a letter to all member municipalities of the Upper Thames watershed and First Nation Communities affected by the proposed change in geographic boundaries, with a focus on the economic and legal ramifications and other relevant ramifications of the proposed legislative changes by the province.

A recorded vote was requested.

Jean Coles - For

Jim Craigmile - For

Peter Cuddy - Against

Skylar Franke - For

Tom Heeman - For

Anna Hopkins - For

Sandy Levin - For

Hugh McDermid - For

Paul Mitchell - For

Harj Nijjar - For

Brian Petrie - For

Mark Schadenberg - For

George Way - For

Scotty Zehr - For

Dean Trentowsky - For

The motion was carried with fourteen members in favour and one against.

5. Administrative Business

5.1. Approval of Minutes of Previous Meeting: October 28, 2025

Mover: Sandy Levin

Seconder: Mark Schadenberg

THAT that the Upper Thames River Conservation Authority Board of Directors approves the Board of Directors' minutes, dated October 28, 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. Minister's Letter – Source Water Protection

Mover: Paul Mitchell

Seconder: Jim Craigmile

THAT the Board of Directors receive the Source Water Protection letter form Minister McCarthy as correspondence for information.

Carried.

5.3.2. Letter and Resolution from Essex Region Conservation Authority and the Resolution from the United Counties of Stormont, Dundas and Glengarry

Mover: Sandy Levin

Seconder: Brian Petrie

THAT the Board of Directors receive the letter and resolutions for information.

Carried.

6. Reports – For Consideration

6.1. Meeting Dates and Committee Meetings

Mover: Hugh McDermid

Seconder: Tom Heeman

That the Board amends the 2025 Meeting Schedule to add a December Board of Directors meeting on December 16th, 2025;

That the Board approves the attached 2026 Board of Directors Meeting Schedule; and
That the Board approves the attached 2026 Committee Meeting Schedules, pending discussion and approval by the 2026 Committees elected at the January election.
Carried.

Peter Cuddy left the meeting at approximately 11:30am.

6.2. Regulated Area Map Update and Transition Protocol

Members thanked staff for the report and protocol.

The members discussed the definition and controversy around the term 'significant'. It was noted that no definition was provided by the Province or in any other sources relied upon by staff, therefore it is up to the Board approved policy documents to provide the definition. The proposed protocol provides a definition developed by staff and reviewed by UTRCA lawyer Grant Inglis.

Mover: Brian Petrie

Secunder: Scotty Zehr

THAT the Board of Directors approve the Regulated Area Map Update and Transition Protocol as presented.

Carried.

6.3. Thames River Regulated Area Map Update – City of London Approval – Verbal Update (Report deferred to next meeting)

Jenna Allain, Manager, Environmental Planning and Regulations, provided a verbal update on the Thames River Regulated Area Map Update, noting the delay of the final report was due to staff reviewing the final technical comments submitted in the review period. She provided a brief overview of the consultation process and clarified that the title of the report refers to the geographical area that the mapping area update covers, not that the mapping will be approved by the City of London.

The Board discussed the timing of the final report for approval. Members felt that staff should bring the report forward when it is ready and the Board can decide to make a decision at that time or defer the matter if deemed necessary.

A member noted the risk of non-compliance with Ontario Regulation 41/25 made under the Conservation Authorities Act that requires annual mapping updates if the final report is not presented and approved before the end of 2025.

Mover: Hugh McDermid

Seconder: George Way

THAT the Board of Directors receive the verbal update as provided by staff.

Carried.

7. Reports – In-Camera

Mover: Jean Coles

Seconder: Anna Hopkins

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 personal matters about an identifiable individual and plan or instruction to be applied to negotiations.

Carried.

The Board adjourned to closed session at 11:52 am.

Anna Hopkins, Skylar Franke and Jean Coles left the meeting at 12:30pm

The Board rose from closed session at 12:47 pm and reported the following progress:

7.1. Personal Matters about an Identifiable Individual – General Manager’s Annual Performance Appraisal

Mover: Brian Petrie

Seconder: George Way

That the Board receives the report for information and that the Board accepts the endorsement of the Chair and Vice Chair with respect to the performance evaluation rating for the General Manager

Carried.

7.2. Plan or Instruction to be Applied to Negotiations – Fanshawe Land Lease Program Update – Verbal Update

Mover: Paul Mitchell

Seconder: Hugh McDermid

THAT the Board of Directors receive the verbal closed session report for information.

Carried.

7.3. Litigation Affecting the Authority – Verbal Update

Mover: Mark Schadenberg

Seconder: Jim Craigmile

THAT the Board of Directors receive the verbal closed session report for information.

Carried.

8. Reports – For Information

8.1. Planning and Permitting Service Delivery Review

A presentation by Blackline Consulting was planned to accompany this report, but due to the meeting running late they were not able to provide the presentation due to a conflicting appointment. Staff noted the next step would be to provide an implementation recommendation report.

Harj Nijjar left the meeting at approximately 12:55pm.

A member noted that if the report is deferred to the December meeting, they would like to see an implementation plan at that time.

A member highlighted some very positive comments received from Municipal staff on the quick response times over last six months.

Members voiced noted their appreciation for the quality of the report.

Mover: Brian Petrie

Secunder: Paul Mitchell

THAT the Board of Directors move consideration of item 8.1 to the next meeting date of December 16.

Carried.

8.2. Provincial Announcements: Bill 68 Schedule 3 Proposed Changes to the Conservation Authorities Act and Environmental Registry of Ontario (ERO) Posting #025-1257 Proposed Boundaries for Regional Consolidation of Ontario's Conservation Authorities

*Item was moved to follow item 4. Presentations/Delegations.

8.3. Hydro Plant Update

Mover: Brian Petrie

Secunder: George Way

THAT the Board of Directors receive the report for information.

Carried.

8.4. Administration and Enforcement – Section 28 Status Report

An error was noted. Two line items have the number P173-25-A. The first one listed, West London Dyke – Phase 9-13, has not been issued and should be stricken from the report.

Mover: Paul Mitchell

Seconder: Scotty Zehr

THAT the Board of Directors receives the report for information.

Carried.

8.5. Project Status Update

Mover: Tom Heeman

Seconder: Jim Craigmile

THAT the Board of Directors receives the report for information.

Carried.

8.6. Thames River Current – November Edition

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

Mover: Tom Heeman

Seconder: Hugh McDermid

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 a short meeting of the Hearing Committee following the October Board meeting where minutes were approved. There was no other business on the agenda.

10. Notices of Motion

There were no notices of motion.

11. Chair's Comments

The Chair thanked the members for their cooperation, participation, dedication and patience through the lengthy meeting.

12. Member's Comments

There were no comments from the members.

13. General Manager's Comments

The General Manager shared staff's appreciation of the Board's comments on the Provincial changes, recognizing how much the members care about the staff, the organization, the work, and their municipalities. While in the past Conservation Authorities have had significant challenges related to legislative changes, this is the biggest challenge yet. The General Manager expressed her hope that the Province listens to what makes sense, noting the region being proposed is too big and cumbersome to undertake the work the Province intends to streamline.

14. Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 1:05 pm on a motion by Hugh McDermid, seconded by Brian Petrie.

Tracy Annett, General Manager
/mv