Minutes
Upper Thames River Conservation Authority (UTRCA)
Board of Directors Meeting
Tuesday, October 6, 2026 at 1424 Clarke Rd, London (Hybrid Meeting)

Brian Petrie, UTRCA Board Chair, called the meeting to order at 9:31am.

Members Present:

Jean Coles – Online
Jim Craigmile
Peter Cuddy – Online
Skylar Franke
Anna Hopkins
Sandy Levin
Hugh McDermid
Paul Mitchell
Harj Nijjar - Online
Brian Petrie - Chair
Mark Schadenberg
Dean Trentowsky

Regrets: Scotty Zehr, George Way, Tom Heeman

Presenter: Davin Heinbuck, Western Lake Erie Regional Conservation Authority (WLERCA) Project Executive

Solicitor: Grant Inglis

Staff Present:

Jenna Allain
Tracy Annett
Emily Chandler – AV Operator
Huda Ghadhban
Joe Gordon
Eleanor Heagy
Teresa Hollingsworth
Tatianna Lozier
Chris Tasker
Brent Verscheure
Michelle Viglianti – Recorder
Karlee Flear
Erin Dolmage
Christine Saracino
Damian Schofield
Stephanie Schreiner
Graeme Shaw
Tara Tchir
Julie Welker
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. Presentations/Delegations

4.1. Presentation by Davin Heinbuck, Project Executive, Western Lake Erie Regional Conservation Authority

Davin Heinbuck, Project Executive for the Western Lake Erie Regional Conservation Authority (WLERCA) introduced himself, his background, and provided a presentation on the consolidations.

Members questioned when the transition plan will be presented to the UTRCA and Municipalities, since Day 1 will be too late. Mr. Heinbuck clarified that there will be a consultation period most likely in January 2027 where the plan will be circulated for review and comment.

It was clarified that Municipalities who will be appointing a member(s) to the new WLERCA board will have the option of appointing a citizen or councillor as their representative.

Questions were raised around the allocation of levy.

There was a discussion around the method used to calculate representation on the new WLERCA Board. Concerns were raised on the usage of outdated population data instead of MCVA or disseminated population data. Concerns were also raised around guaranteed representation and lack of bottom threshold for Board representation.

Concerns were raised around the negative impacts and consequences the inevitable change in service levels, resulting from four existing Conservation Authorities standardising their programs, will have on Municipalities.

Concerns were raised around the feasibility and complexity of implementing all 150 noted steps across nine new organization that may require different implementation schedules. Questions were raised around who would pay for the stub year audit of the predecessor Authorities.

Peter Cuddy left the meeting at 10:30am.

Hugh McDermid raised concerns on the high cost of this transition and how those costs will trickle down to the rural Municipalities.

Dean Trentowsky highlighted the increasing pressure on taxes, rural communities, and food production from many difference sources. He felt that the Municipalities and Conservation Authorities are now getting distracted by all the changes and emphasised the need to get back to basics. He noted that there will be fundamental changes going forward with a lot at stake and only one chance to get them correct.

The connection to the Zoom meeting was lost at 10:25am. The meeting broke to fix the issue and was called back to order at 10:32am.

Mover: Anna Hopkins
Seconder: Hugh McDermid
THAT the Board of Directors receives the presentation as information.
Carried.

5. Administrative Business

5.1. Approval of Minutes of Previous Meeting: August 25th and September 15th, 2026

Mover: Skylar Franke
Seconder: Hugh McDermid
THAT that the Upper Thames River Conservation Authority Board of Directors approve the Board of Directors' minutes dated August 25th and September 15th, 2026 including any closed session minutes.
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. 2027 Fees Policy and Fees Schedule

The General Manager introduced the report, noting it was consistent with the Minister's direction regarding the continued freeze on increases to planning and development fees, which have been frozen since January 2023.

Questions were raised around how UTRCA fees compare to the other three Conservation Authorities in the Western Lake Erie Region, and whether there is an expectation that the fees will be significantly higher.

Mover: Dean Trentowsky
Seconder: Skylar Franke
THAT the proposed revisions to the Fees Policy and 2027 Fee Schedules be approved by the UTRCA Board of Directors for implementation beginning January 1, 2027.
Carried.

6.2. 2027 Municipal Apportionment Methods

The General Manager introduced the report and highlighted the benefit-based distribution rates of the operating and capital levy for Fanshawe, Wildwood and Pittock Dams, which were determined at the time of construction.

It was noted that most of the Municipal feedback and questions on the apportionment methods and 2027 Draft Budget were around the benefit-based levies and structures with questions around who will pay the benefit-based levies in the future.

Mover: Hugh McDermid
Seconder: Skylar Franke
THAT the 2027 Municipal Apportionment Methods be approved;

THAT each participating municipality's share of the 2027 Total General Distribution be calculated using "Modified Current Value Assessment." And that the participating municipalities be assessed for payment of Category 1 operating and capital expenses presented in the draft budget.

AND THAT category 3 programs and services also apply the "Modified Current Value Assessment" (MVCA) method for apportioning costs in agreements with municipalities.

AND THAT each participating municipality's share of the 2027 "Benefit-Based Apportionment" method be applied for use with respect to costs for Dams and Water Control Structures as identified in the 2027 Draft Budget Package.

Municipality	For, Against or Absent	Current Value Assessment (CVA) Apportionment Percentage	Voting Weight	Weight Per Member
City of London – Total	-	64.0411	50.00	
City of London Anna Hopkins	For	-	-	12.5
City of London Peter Cuddy	Absent	-	-	12.5
City of London Skylar Franke	For	-	-	12.5
City of London Sandy Levin	For	-	-	12.5
County of Oxford – Total	-	17.1291	23.80	
County of Oxford Brian Petrie	For	-	-	4.76
County of Oxford Paul Mitchell	For	-	-	4.76
County of Oxford George Way	Absent	-	-	4.76
County of Oxford Mark Schadenberg	For	-	-	4.76
County of Oxford Scotty Zehr	Absent	-	-	4.76
City of Stratford Harj Nijjar	For	7.1146	9.91	9.91
Township of Lucan-Biddulph Tom Heeman	Absent	0.3727	0.52	0.52
Municipality of Thames Centre Tom Heeman	Absent	3.1909	4.44	4.44
Municipality of Middlesex Centre Jean Coles	For	2.4810	3.46	3.46
Municipality of West Perth Dean Trentowsky	For	1.4482	2.02	2.02
Township of Perth East Hugh McDermid	For	1.4135	1.97	1.97
Town of St. Marys Jim Craigmile	For	1.4555	2.03	2.03
Township of Perth South Jim Craigmile	For	1.1504	1.60	1.60
Municipality of South	For	0.2031	0.28	0.28

Municipality	For, Against or Absent	Current Value Assessment (CVA) Apportionment Percentage	Voting Weight	Weight Per Member
Huron Jim Craigmile				

The motion carries with 100% of the weighted vote supporting the recommendation.
*Based on UTRCA share of assessment.
Notes: Voting weight is capped at 50% for any municipality unless the number of its representatives exceeds 50% of the total number of municipal appointees. The voting weight of the remaining municipalities is increased proportionally.

6.3. 2027 Final Draft Budget

The General Manager provided a budget overview presentation and thanked Managers, Christine Saracino and Eleanor Heagy for putting this budget together in a much shorter time frame than usual.

Questions were raised on whether this budget was in line with the City of London's four-year budget plan. Staff confirmed there has been an increase over what was previously approved due to the work required on Wildwood Dam, but the City of London has not yet requested a budget business case.

The Board discussed whether the increase included to account for tariffs and increasing construction costs is high enough. Staff noted estimations are getting more accurate thanks to projects done recently, but some factors can't be forecasted.

Board members thanked staff for the work that went into preparing a 2027 budget for consideration in October.

It was noted that, as per direction from the Province, no transition related costs have been included in the 2027 budget being considered for approval at this meeting.

While the consolidation has not had a noticeable impact on grants, a concern has been raised that some grants with caps are accessed by more than one existing Conservation Authority within the WLERCA region. Once the existing Conservation Authorities are one entity, those caps will be exceeded.

The Board discussed the delay of some WECI capital projects by some Municipalities, due to the belief that once the Regional Conservation Authority and new governance structure is formed, the costs of those projects will be borne by the Upper and Single Tier Municipalities.

Jim Craigmile voiced concerns for the smaller Municipalities that costs are continuing to rise, causing them to constantly cut back on services.

Members noted that the water and erosion control structures are assets Municipalities are responsible for and asked that staff communicate to Municipalities that the structures should be included in their Municipal asset management plans.

Mover: Anna Hopkins
Seconder: Skylar Franke
That the Board of Directors approve the budget for 2027 in two parts:

1. A projected operating deficit of $20,251 from $28,919,422 in operating expenses, requiring $8,912,029 of participating member levy, and requiring $683,893 in cost apportioning agreements among members

Municipality	For, Against or Absent	Current Value Assessment (CVA) Apportionment Percentage	Voting Weight	Weight Per Member
City of London – Total	-	64.0411	50.00	
City of London Anna Hopkins	For	-	-	12.5
City of London Peter Cuddy	Absent	-	-	12.5
City of London Skylar Franke	For	-	-	12.5
City of London Sandy Levin	For	-	-	12.5
County of Oxford – Total	-	17.1291	23.80	
County of Oxford Brian Petrie	For	-	-	4.76
County of Oxford Paul Mitchell	For	-	-	4.76
County of Oxford George Way	Absent	-	-	4.76
County of Oxford Mark Schadenberg	For	-	-	4.76
County of Oxford Scotty Zehr	Absent	-	-	4.76
City of Stratford Harj Nijjar	For	7.1146	9.91	9.91
Township of Lucan-Biddulph Tom Heeman	Absent	0.3727	0.52	0.52
Municipality of Thames Centre Tom Heeman	Absent	3.1909	4.44	4.44

Municipality	For, Against or Absent	Current Value Assessment (CVA) Apportionment Percentage	Voting Weight	Weight Per Member
Municipality of Middlesex Centre Jean Coles	For	2.4810	3.46	3.46
Municipality of West Perth Dean Trentowsky	For	1.4482	2.02	2.02
Township of Perth East Hugh McDermid	For	1.4135	1.97	1.97
Town of St. Marys Jim Craigmile	Against	1.4555	2.03	2.03
Township of Perth South Jim Craigmile	Against	1.1504	1.60	1.60
Municipality of South Huron Jim Craigmile	Against	0.2031	0.28	0.28

The motion carries with 94.48% of the weighted vote supporting the recommendation.
*Based on UTRCA share of assessment.

Notes: Voting weight is capped at 50% for any municipality unless the number of its representatives exceeds 50% of the total number of municipal appointees. The voting weight of the remaining municipalities is increased proportionally.

Mover: Skylar Franke
Seconder: Anna Hopkins

2. A projected capital deficit of $1,916,500 from $7,280,400 in capital expenditures, requiring $4,130,900 of participating member levy.

Municipality	For, Against or Absent	Current Value Assessment (CVA) Apportionment Percentage	Voting Weight	Weight Per Member
City of London – Total	-	64.0411	50.00	
City of London Anna Hopkins	For	-	-	12.5
City of London Peter Cuddy	Absent	-	-	12.5
City of London Skylar Franke	For	-	-	12.5
City of London	For	-	-	12.5

Municipality	For, Against or Absent	Current Value Assessment (CVA) Apportionment Percentage	Voting Weight	Weight Per Member
Sandy Levin				
County of Oxford – Total	-	17.1291	23.80	
County of Oxford Brian Petrie	For	-	-	4.76
County of Oxford Paul Mitchell	For	-	-	4.76
County of Oxford George Way	Absent	-	-	4.76
County of Oxford Mark Schadenberg	For	-	-	4.76
County of Oxford Scotty Zehr	Absent	-	-	4.76
City of Stratford Harj Nijjar	For	7.1146	9.91	9.91
Township of Lucan-Biddulph Tom Heeman	Absent	0.3727	0.52	0.52
Municipality of Thames Centre Tom Heeman	Absent	3.1909	4.44	4.44
Municipality of Middlesex Centre Jean Coles	For	2.4810	3.46	3.46
Municipality of West Perth Dean Trentowsky	For	1.4482	2.02	2.02
Township of Perth East Hugh McDermid	For	1.4135	1.97	1.97
Town of St. Marys Jim Craigmile	Against	1.4555	2.03	2.03
Township of Perth South Jim Craigmile	Against	1.1504	1.60	1.60
Municipality of South Huron Jim Craigmile	Against	0.2031	0.28	0.28

The motion carries with 94.48% of the weighted vote supporting the recommendation.
*Based on UTRCA share of assessment.

Notes: Voting weight is capped at 50% for any municipality unless the number of its representatives exceeds 50% of the total number of municipal appointees. The voting weight of the remaining municipalities is increased proportionally.

6.4. Approval of the Thames River Regulated Area Map Update, Delaware Study Area, and South Thames River Regulated Area Map Update

Staff introduced the report. It was noted that the area of the next phase of the regulated area map updates project has not yet been determined, but staff are considering the North Thames and Town of St. Marys.

Mover: Mark Schadenberg
Seconder: Paul Mitchell
THAT the Board of Directors receive this summary of engagement undertaken for:

- Thames River Regulated Area Map Update, Delaware Study Area
- South Thames River Regulated Area Map Update

AND THAT the Board of Directors approve the Thames River Regulated Area Map Update, Delaware Study Area, and South Thames River Regulated Area Map Update.
Carried.

7. Reports – In-Camera

Mover: Dean Trentowsky
Seconder: Hugh McDermid
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 position, plan or instruction to be applied to negotiations and advice that is subject to solicitor-client privilege.
Carried.

The Board of Directors adjourned to closed session at 11:31am.
The Board of Directors rose from closed session at 11:53am and reported the following progress.

7.1. Position, Plan or Instruction to be Applied to Negotiations – Fanshawe Land Lease Program

Mover: Paul Mitchell
Seconder: Sandy Levin
THAT the Board of Directors receive the closed session report for agenda item 7.1 for information.

Carried.

7.2 Advice that is Subject to Solicitor-Client Privilege – Transition Committee Confidentiality Undertaking

Mover: Sandy Levin
Seconder: Anna Hopkins

WHEREAS the Board appointed the Chair and General Manager to the Transition Committee on the Authority's behalf who have knowledge and experience to act in the UTRCA's best interests (the "Appointees");
WHEREAS the Appointees have been asked to sign a Confidentiality Undertaking (the "Undertaking") that bars them from discussing Transition Committee deliberations with the Authority's Board, staff, and municipalities without authorization of the Project Executive;
WHEREAS the Authority has asked the Project Executive, as Chair of the Transition Committee, to provide a letter (the "Authorization Letter") clarifying the Undertaking as it relates to the definition of confidential information, limiting the Appointees' personal liability, and permitting them to communicate with the Authority's Board and municipal members;
WHEREAS the Board wishes to authorize the Appointees to execute the Undertaking and Authorization Letter as they find appropriate;
RESOLVED:

A) THAT the Appointees are authorized to sign the Undertaking and Authorization Letter in their capacity as Appointees of the Authority under the Conservation Authorities Act, in the form they deem appropriate; and
B) THAT the Authority shall indemnify and hold harmless each Appointee, and each former Appointee, from and against all claims, demands, actions, proceedings, liabilities, losses, damages, judgments, settlements, costs, and expenses, including legal fees and disbursements on a full indemnity basis, incurred by or made against the Appointee arising out of or in connection with: (a) the Appointee's service on the Transition Committee; (b) the Confidentiality Undertaking, in whatever form it is ultimately executed, and receipt of the Authorization Letter; or (c) any act or omission of the Appointee in the exercise or performance, or intended exercise or performance, of their powers, duties, or functions as a member of the Transition Committee.

Carried.

Chair Brian Petrie resigned from his position on the Transition Committee and a copy of his letter of resignation has been appended to these minutes.

Due to the number of elected officials missing from the meeting, it was suggested that the nomination of a new appointment to the Transition Committee be discussed at the November meeting. It was also noted that, as a citizen representative on the Board, Sandy Levin is not eligible to sit on the Transition Committee.

Mover: Anna Hopkins
Seconder: Mark Schadenberg
THAT the Board of Directors receive the letter from the Chair and put it on the next agenda.
Carried.

Jim Craigmile and Jean Coles left the meeting at 12:00pm.

8. Reports – For Information

8.1. Western Lake Erie Regional Conservation Authority (WLERCA) Updates

Mover: Sandy Levin
Seconder: Hugh McDermid
THAT the Board of Directors receives the report for information.
Carried.

8.2. Rental House Rates

Mover: Paul Mitchell
Seconder: Hugh McDermid
THAT the Board of Directors receives the report for information.
Carried.

8.3. Administration and Enforcement – Section 28 Status Report

Mover: Hugh McDermid
Seconder: Anna Hopkins
THAT the Board of Directors receives the report for information.
Carried.

8.4. Project Status Update

Mover: Dean Trentowsky
Seconder: Mark Schadenberg
THAT the Board of Directors receives the report for information.

Carried.

8.5. Thames River Current – September Edition

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

Regarding the launch of the Ingersoll Park Naturalization and Riparian Enhancement Project, the Chair thanked Peter Fragiskatos, Member of Parliament, London Centre, for his advocacy and to UTRCA staff for making the project happen.

Mover: Sandy Levin
Seconder: Hugh McDermid
THAT the Board of Directors receives the report for information.
Carried.

9. Reports – Committees

9.1. Finance and Audit Committee

There will be a Finance and Audit Committee meeting at 12:30pm today.

9.2. Hearing Committee

The Hearing Committee met following the August meeting to approve minutes, no other business was conducted or discussed.

10. Notices of Motion for Next Meeting

There were no notices of motion.

11. Chair's Comments

The Chair noted events that took place to recognize the Day of Truth and Reconciliation and thanked everyone involved, specifically with the sunrise ceremony with Mary Lou Smoke at Pittock Conservation Area, which had around 100 people in attendance.

12. Members Comments

Paul Mitchell asked that the motion regarding the Transition Committee Confidentiality Agreement be circulated to the member Municipalities and Board members this afternoon.

Dean Trentowsky thanked staff and Board members for their continued work and dedication in the face of change in their individual responsibilities. Further, he thanked the Chair for his hard work and dedication under the face of adversity and change.

Mark Schadenberg shared that the urbanization of Pittock Park Road is now complete. He thanked the Province for the grant that allowed the City of Woodstock to complete the project.

13. General Manager's Comments

The General Manager thanked staff for the effort that went into the reports this month.

14. Adjournment

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 12:07pm on a motion by Hugh McDermid, seconded by Sandy Levin.

Tracy Annett, General Manager
/mv
Att.