



Board of Directors Meeting Minutes

Date: October 5, 2021

Time: 9:00 a.m.

Remote

Present: John Brennan, Al Broad, Pat Brown, Terry Burrell, Joe Faas, Chair; Larry Gordon, Vice Chair; Frank Kennes, Brad Loosley, Betty Ann MacKinnon, Kevin Marriott, Mark McGill, Dan McMillan, Steve Miller, Frank Nemcek, Lorie Scott, Mike Stark, Jerry Westgate, Tim Wilkins

Regrets: Bill Dennis, Aaron Hall

Staff Present: Donna Blue, Manager of Communications; Erin Carroll, Director of Biology; Melissa Deisley, Director of Planning and Regulations; Chris Durand, Manager of IT/GIS; Sarah Hodgkiss, Manager of Planning and Natural Heritage; Ashley Fletcher, Administrative Assistant/ Board Coordinator; Tim Payne, Manager of Forestry; Tracy Prince, Director of Finance; Girish Sankar, Acting General Manager/Director of Water Resources;

The Chair welcomed everyone to the meeting and provided an update on Brian McDougall, along with the sentiment that the McDougall family remain in our thoughts and prayers. An update was also provided regarding the hiring process of the position of GM. Preparation and negotiation is ongoing and an announcement will be delivered in the near future.

It was requested that each Director declare a conflict of interest at the appropriate time, on any item within this agenda in that a Director may have pecuniary interest.

Director Terry Burrell noted his relation to Education staff member, Myra Spiller. As this department is not funded by general or special levy, this information is not considered a pecuniary interest.

BD-21-94

Stark – Gordon

“That the Board of Directors adopts the agenda for the meeting as presented.”

CARRIED

Updates to the Conservation Authority Act

- 2022 will likely be the final year for Conservation Authorities to levy for the full range of current services. Amendments to the CA Act will separate our programs into mandatory and non-mandatory programs. Negotiated agreements with member municipalities will be required for non-mandatory services if there is

interest in receiving and paying for those services. At the time of writing this report, regulations to implement the CA Act changes have not yet been finalized

- Changes to the regulations are expected in the very near future
- Once the Regulations are finalized, negotiations with Municipalities for non-mandatory services will take place during 2022 for the 2023 budget year.
- These agreements are expected to be negotiated with multi-year terms
- Board support and alternative funding sources will be required in order for non-mandatory programs to continue.

Customer service delivery standard

In April 2019, Conservation Ontario (CO) Council endorsed the CO Client Service and Streamlining Initiative. This initiative identifies actions to be taken by CAs, in order to help the Province achieve its objective of increasing the housing supply, while protecting public health and safety, and the environment. These actions include:

- a) Improve Client Service and Accountability,
- b) Increase Speed of Approvals, and
- c) Reduce Red Tape and Regulatory Burden

CO developed several documents to assist the CAs with this initiative:

1. CA-Municipality MOU Template for Planning and Development Reviews;
2. Guideline for Client Service Standards for Conservation Authority Plan and Permit Review; and
3. Guideline for CA Fee Administration Policies for Plan Review and Permitting.

It is important to note that a number of CAs already have comprehensive service delivery standards. CO used existing CA resources to form a guideline that includes best practices for client service standards. SCRCA has been reviewing the CO Client Service Standards to create a localized standard within the watershed. The draft customer service charter is provided below:

Customer Service Charter

The St. Clair Region Conservation Authority (SCRCA) strives to provide a reliable and high-quality customer experience for everyone who accesses our programs and services. We work together with our member municipalities, Indigenous communities, federal and provincial governments, and watershed communities to meet the planning, recreation, education, and conservation needs of the communities we serve.

Our commitment to our clients and watershed residents:

- We will respond to your inquiries within 1- 4 business days
- We will accommodate all customers using a variety of communication formats
- We will explain our processes and provide a time estimate on all work
- We will be approachable, professional, and give you our full attention

- We will provide personal service. You can talk to a real person during office hours
- We will welcome feedback to gauge our effectiveness over time
- We will endeavor to communicate using clear and simple language
- We will work to create safer communities by communicating changes in river and weather conditions
- We will protect people and property through policies and regulations
- We will be available 24 hours a day, seven days a week for flood and related emergencies

Directors Comments:

Director Brad Loosley questioned whether the planning department had implemented the recommendation from the Tim Dobbie consultant team to have the staff processing planning applications also issue the permit, to increase efficiency and reduce wait times. Director of Planning and Regulations, Melissa Deisley responded that this particular suggestion may have stemmed from the practices of other Conservation Authority planning departments, however at SCRCA, staff are specialized in either planning or regulations and therefore, this recommendation has not been implemented. Directors expressed that they would like the planning department to reconsider this recommendation and prioritize customer service with an aim to reduce and eliminate complaints. It was also requested that planning department staff manage customer expectations more effectively, avoiding promised timelines that cannot be met. Director Al Broad requested that staff provide regular reporting on timelines, with justifications for applications requiring longer than usual processing times. Acting General Manager/Director of Water Resources, Girish Sankar responded to the concerns, assuring Directors staff working towards improvement, including the transparency and readability of reporting.

BD-21-95

McMillan – Brown

“That the Board of Directors acknowledges the General Manager’s report, dated September 30, 2021 and further that the draft client service delivery charter be adopted to ensure exceptional customer service organization-wide.”

CARRIED

The 2022 preliminary draft budget and accompanying appendices were reviewed.

Directors Comments:

Director Mike Stark referred to a request made in 2020 for the presenting of future draft budgets to include the following:

- Actual audited expenditures by department for the last completed fiscal year

- Current year approved budget
- Draft budget for the coming fiscal year

Director of Finance, Tracy Prince agreed to provide this information going forward and explained the difficulty in providing current year expenditures, due to the time of year we are in and the varying timelines for completion of ongoing projects.

Director Brad Loosley requested that staff investigate the practices of other Conservation Authorities when presenting budget information.

Acting General Manager/Director of Water Resources, Girish Sankar offered that the budget has been presented in the current fashion for over 10 years, however staff have and will continue to make improvements, based on Director feedback, in order to improve transparency and assist Directors in their decision making.

The following suggestions were discussed:

- User fee philosophy for planning applications to recoup costs on a per hour basis
- Allowing County staff to review and process simple planning applications on behalf the CA. Staff believe that due to the Provincial directive, CAs do not have the power to delegate planning application review and processing to non-CA staff, however Acting General Manager/Director of Water Resources, Girish Sankar agreed to investigate
- The use of reserves to reduce the levy. Director of Finance, Tracy Prince strongly advised against this practice, as reserves are depleting and should be maintained to support the costs of unexpected needs (i.e. major repairs to the McKeough Dam). SCRCA is awaiting the implementation of an Asset Management Plan, which is currently out for tender.
- Downsizing

Directors acknowledged the unfortunate timing of the budget process, during a time of change and uncertainty. Acting General Manager/Director of Water Resources, Girish Sankar presented slides to further explain the annual budget process, highlighting that the acknowledgement of the preliminary draft budget is only the first step, which allows staff to forward the budget information to municipalities so that they may discuss, question or comment prior to Director approval.

A friendly amendment to the motion was brought forward by Director Lorie Scott, requesting specification that the draft budget is received and acknowledged for information only.

BD-21-96

Burrell – Miller

“That the Board of Directors acknowledges the 2022 preliminary draft budget, for information only, of \$9,936,847.00 with a proposed municipal general levy of \$1,378,513.00 and further that this preliminary budget will be circulated to member municipalities for information and input based on our budget review process.”

CARRIED

A recorded vote was requested.

In reference to motion BD-21-97

Director	For	Against
Brennan, John	✓	
Broad, Alan	✓	
Brown, Pat		✓
Burrell, Terry		✓
Dennis, Bill	-	-
Gordon, Larry	✓	
Hall, Aaron	-	-
Kennes, Frank	✓	
Loosley, Brad		✓
MacKinnon, Betty Ann	✓	
Marriott, Kevin		✓
McGill, Mark		✓
McMillan, Dan	✓	
Miller, Steve		✓
Nemcek, Frank		✓
Scott, Lorie		✓
Stark, Mike	✓	
Westgate, Jerry		✓
Wilkins, Tim	✓	
Faas, Joe	✓	
Totals	9	9

BD-21-97

Stark - MacKinnon

“That the Board of Directors directs staff to increase the planning and regulations user fees in order to generate an increase of planned revenue from \$40,000 to \$80,000 and further that the general levy be decreased by \$40,000.”

DEFEATED

Under New Business

BD-21-97

Wilkins – No seconder

“That the Board of Directors open the floor to discussion of the budget and timeline of the Highland Glen boat launch repairs.”

DEFEATED

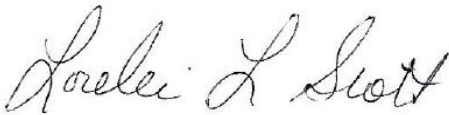
Directors Comments:

Director Pat Brown made a request to staff that the appendices for budget information be clearly labelled with a brief explanation of what it represents.

Chair, Joe Faas requested that an information meeting be organized to present and explain the budget information and process to member municipalities, with invites sent to Treasurers, Administrators and with Chair, Joe Faas; Vice-Chair, Larry Gordon; Director of Finance, Tracy Prince and Acting General Manager/Director of Water Resources present.

BD-21-98

“That the meeting be adjourned.”



Joe Faas
Chair



Girish Sankar
Acting General Manager