

Hamilton Region Conservation Authority

Minutes

Board of Directors Meeting

September 3, 2020

Minutes of the Board of Directors meeting held on Thursday, September 3, 2020, at Woodend Auditorium, 838 Mineral Springs Road, Ancaster, Ontario and by teleconference, commencing at 7:15 p.m.

PRESENT: Lloyd Ferguson – in the Chair
Jim Cimba Brad Clark
Susan Fielding Tom Jackson – by phone
Cynthia Janzen Santina Moccio

Margaret Reid – Foundation Chair

REGRETS: Dan Bowman, Chad Collins, Esther Pauls, Maria Topalovic

STAFF PRESENT: Lisa Burnside, Gord Costie, Neil McDougall, Scott Peck, Jaime Tellier

Grace Correia, Bruce Harschnitz – by phone

OTHERS: None

1. Call to Order

The Chair called the meeting to order and welcomed everyone present.

2. Declarations of Conflict of Interest

The Chair asked members to declare any conflicts under the Board's Governance Policy. There were none.

3. Approval of Agenda

The Chair requested any additions or deletions to the agenda.

BD12, 2790

MOVED BY: Susan Fielding

SECONDED BY: Jim Cimba

THAT the agenda be approved.

CARRIED

4. Delegations

There were none.

5. Consent Items for Applications, Minutes and Correspondence

The following consent items were adopted:

- 5.1. Applications – Development, Interference with Wetlands, Alterations to Shorelines and Watercourses
- 5.2. Approval of Board of Directors Minutes – June 4, 2020
- 5.3. Thank you letter from the Honourable Lisa McLeod, Minister of Tourism, Culture and Sport to Lisa Burnside for hosting her visit at Westfield Heritage Village – July 17, 2020
- 5.4. HCA Low Water Advisory Media Release – July 27, 2020
- 5.5. Wild Waterworks River Ride Resurfacing Tender Email Poll Results – July 29, 2020
- 5.6. Letter from Honourable John Yakabuski, Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry to Conservation Ontario Regarding Client Service and Streamlining Initiative – August 11, 2020
- 5.7. Email from Reuven Dukas, dated August 16, 2020, and response from Lisa Burnside, dated August 18, 2020

6. Member Briefing

6.1. Covid-19 – Verbal Update

In light of the continuing COVID 19 pandemic, Lisa Burnside provided a summary of HCA's finances, capital projects and office operations.

Staff had presented to the Budget and Administration Committee a worst-case scenario financial projection, being a \$1.5M deficit situation to be covered by the operating reserve. Staff have revisited the initial projection to reflect the much-improved situation since June. The federal wage subsidy assisted with the first half of the year and the start of the second half of the year has been strong. Staff now predict a low chance we will use our reserve. The revised projection is tentative and dependent on weather and impacts of any second wave of the pandemic that may occur. Staff continue to closely monitor our finances and will bring an updated year end projection to the Budget & Administration Committee meeting this fall.

There are several significant capital projects underway; including those for the Spencer Gorge reservation system, Wild Waterworks and the Valens Cabins.

Preparations for the Spencer Gorge reservation system are nearing substantial completion, including parking lot enhancements, a new gate house with automatic gates, a revised trail route to Dundas Peak, and fencing at the Peak. Covid-related disruptions in construction supplies for fencing and other site enhancements delayed the anticipated early September launch date. The official reopening of the area with the new advance reservation system will be Saturday September 19.

Credit Valley Conservation Authority just released a new mandatory reservation system for Belfountain Conservation Area and the Cheltenham Badlands for fall colours joining the growing list of organizations that have moved to reservation visitor management systems over the past few months.

The closure of Wild Waterworks has allowed for capital upgrades required by the Hamilton Public Health Department to be undertaken. The resurfacing and painting of the small children's area, Squirtworks has been completed and the easy river is underway. The project is currently on schedule to be completed by end of October.

Final completion of the cabins at Valens Lake is scheduled for late spring 2021.

Beginning after Labour Day, while remote work will continue for all office staff, we will be returning to the main office on a staggered basis. The office will only be open to the public by advance appointment with COVID protocols in practice. Virtual and teleconference meetings remain in place as the preferred way to interact and meet with staff. HCA has created updated COVID Procedures incorporating Hamilton Public Health guidelines regarding COVID-19 outbreaks in the workplace. Our procedures were reviewed and endorsed by Hamilton Public Health Services.

Lisa recognized staff for their tremendous resilience and flexibility to ensure our business continuity and the Board of Directors and Chairman for their support.

The members congratulated staff on their efforts over the past months.

S. Fielding inquired about potential impacts of the Brock Road reconstruction on the opening on the Spencer Gorge reservation system. Lisa advised that construction will be completed in the next two weeks. The Greensville Optimist Club parking lot will be accessible in time for the re-opening of the conservation area.

S. Fielding also requested an update on interactions with the Greensville community. Local residents that previously delegated to the Board of Directors have been in contact with Ward Councillor Arlene Vanderbeek and MPP Donna Skelley. HCA staff have been in communication with both Councillor Vanderbeek and MPP Skelley to respond. The local residents would like the areas to remain closed and reopen when a reservation system for the shuttle operation can be implemented. It is not possible to safely run the shuttle operation during the pandemic. Staff are optimistic this will be a new operation to manage visitors in this area.

C. Janzen inquired about the social and traditional media campaign for the reservation system. Lisa advised that HCA's marketing and communications staff have developed geotargeted desktop ads and are working with Tourism Hamilton and Destination Ontario to promote the system. There is also a page on HCA's website dedicated to the system. Staff also managed to gain control of Google's information regarding these areas and the area will now show as reservation required.

C. Janzen inquired about thoughts among senior staff regarding how we may proceed should there be a second wave and if would we close the areas again. Lisa responded that the high visitation levels and feedback from the public has highlighted the importance of green space. Staff have discussed and reflected back on the initial closure. The conservation areas were closed out of abundance of caution and in line with Public Health directions and in consultation with city of Hamilton Emergency Operations Centre. We may consider closing amenities and facilities but remaining open passively, should there be a second wave, subject to any Provincial direction and regulations.

7. Business Arising from the Minutes

7.1. Enbridge Gas Inc. Proposed Pipeline Expansion Environmental Impact Study Process and Timeline

Scott Peck presented a summary of the memorandum and answered the members' questions. Scott highlighted that Enbridge staff advised they do not have any objection to HCA sharing the Environmental Impact Study (EIS) and peer review document with members of the public. Their only request is that the two documents be shared at the same time.

B. Clark expressed gratitude to staff for the work they have done on the file to date. He is grateful the Ontario Energy Board (OEB) has granted an oral hearing and that the peer review was also added. He added that the joint release of the EIS and peer review is most appropriate. He thanked all staff for their efforts.

BD12, 2791**MOVED BY: Santina Moccio
SECONDED BY: Cynthia Janzen****THAT the memorandum entitled Status Update – Easement Request – Enbridge Gas Inc. (Union Gas) Kirkwall Hamilton Project be received as information.****CARRIED****8. Reports from Budget & Administration Committee, Conservation Advisory Board, and the Foundation****8.1. Budget & Administration Committee – August 20, 2020****BA 2008 Governance Review – Revisions to 2019 approved Administrative By-laws**

Lisa Burnside thanked David Outerbridge of Torys LLP for his pro bono work on the annual review of HCA's Administrative By-laws. Santina Moccio provided a summary of the changes to the document.

BD12, 2792**MOVED BY: Santina Moccio
SECONDED BY: Jim Cimba****THAT the Budget & Administration Committee recommends to the Board of Directors:****THAT the Board of Directors Administrative By-Law approved, September 5, 2019, be amended with the revisions noted in the attached draft, subject to and including any further revisions as noted during the August 20, 2020 meeting.****CARRIED****BA 2009 Minimum Wage Increase for Casual Wage Rates**

Santina provided a summary of the report.

BD12, 2793**MOVED BY: Santina Moccio
SECONDED BY: Tom Jackson****THAT the Budget & Administration Committee recommends to the Board of Directors:**

THAT the revised October 1, 2020 Casual/Seasonal wage grids for Hamilton Conservation Authority and Confederation Beach Park/Wild Waterworks and the 2021 Construction/Millgrove casual wage grid as attached in the August 20, 2020 report be approved.

CARRIED

8.2. Foundation Chairman's Remarks

Margaret Reid reported on the following:

Donations

We received a total of **\$58,707** in donations from June 1 to August 31. They break down as follows:

- \$25,245 for Outdoor Environmental Education
- \$22,500 for the Saltfleet CA Wetland Project
- \$3,675 for the Area of Greatest Need Fund
- \$3,000 for a Tribute Bench
- \$1,725 in Tribute Tree Fund which supports HCA tree and shrub plantings wherever they're needed most
- \$1,220 for Westfield Heritage Village
- The remaining \$1,342 came in donations for Land Securement, the Dundas Valley Trails Fund, General Trail Development and the Dundas Valley CA Fund

This brings our **Fiscal Year-to-Date (Dec 1, 2019 to August 31, 2020) total to \$195,295.**

Our Annual General Meeting of Members will take place on Tuesday, September 29, at the Westdale Theatre. This will be a short business meeting to approve our Financial Statements, Director Actions and elect new Directors before we reach the end of our current Fiscal Year. The event will not include a reception or Appreciation Evening as it has in the past.

Staff and Foundation Board members continue to engage with donors and shifting project priorities to raise funds needed for priority projects.

One of the Foundation's Strategic Goals for this year is to create a pro-active legacy giving program; during this down time, we have been focusing our efforts on creating effective communication and outreach messaging around legacy giving to be in a position to actively promote this to our donors, friends, and professional contacts.

The Foundation has been successful in receiving a Canada Summer Jobs grant that will allow us to hire a student to assist with a full review and cataloguing of our tribute and memorial benches. This student will be working with us through the fall and winter to complete this project.

BD12, 2794

**MOVED BY: Susan Fielding
SECONDED BY: Jim Cimba**

THAT the Foundation Chairman's Report be received as information.

CARRIED

9. Other Staff Reports/Memoranda

9.1. Development, Interference with Wetlands, Alterations to Shorelines and Watercourses - Permit Timeline Reporting

Scott Peck presented a summary of the memorandum and answered the members' questions. L. Ferguson advised that he has seen an improvement in the number of calls to his office regarding the timing of approvals. Scott thanked Councillor Ferguson for the comment and indicated he would pass it on to staff.

BD12, 2795

**MOVED BY: Brad Clark
SECONDED BY: Cynthia Janzen**

THAT the memorandum entitled Annual Reporting on CA Permit Review Timelines be received as information.

CARRIED

9.2. Current Watershed Conditions as of August 18, 2020

Scott Peck presented a summary of the memorandum, highlighting the sustained Level 1 Low Water conditions in the watershed. Scott added the Christie reservoir levels have been declining at a slightly increased rate, to provide additional flows in Lower Spencer Creek.

BD12, 2796

**MOVED BY: Santina Moccio
SECONDED BY: Cynthia Janzen**

THAT the memorandum entitled Current Watershed Conditions as of August 18, 2020 be received as information.

CARRIED**9.3. Conservation Areas Experiences – Verbal Update**

Gord Costie provided the members with a verbal update, advising of possible Blue Green Algae in the reservoir at Christie Lake Conservation Area. There has not been a positive test, however a media release has been issued for swimmers, other users and pet owners not to use the water until the test results are announced. The Ministry of the Environment, Conservation and Parks, and City of Hamilton Public Health are testing the water. The beach is posted as closed and staff anticipate it will remain closed for the weekend. The water level is also down at this time.

L. Ferguson inquired about the content of the media release as it relates to the seriousness of blue green algae. Gord affirmed that the media release does give the whole scale and scope of the impacts of the algae to people and pets.

Gord then provided an in-depth summary of current conservation area operations. HCA's conservation areas are in stage three of our reopening plan. All areas are open, with the exception of Spencer Gorge. Visitation to the conservation areas remains high for the season. Weekday camping has also seen a significant increase. Camping will continue throughout the fall. HCA member pass sales also increased during the reopening.

Some of the larger, water-based conservation areas had to temporarily close due to capacity issues. Staff redirected visitors to our lesser used areas, including Westfield Heritage Village and Eramosa Karst. Fewer closures have resulted as visitors are better distributed throughout our areas. Most visitors are conveying messages of understanding, with comparatively few complaints. Staff have developed new programming to adapt to the new operating conditions. Gord recognized staff for their efforts to maintain service levels.

Late this afternoon, Confederation Beach Park staff and lifeguards were involved in a rescue and now possible recovery of swimmer in Lake Ontario. City of Hamilton Emergency Management Services are also on site.

Stage 4, the reopening of Spencer Gorge, is the final component of reopening all of HCA's conservation areas. HCA is launching its first day-use hike reservation system. These systems are also being used by national and provincial parks and neighbouring CA's experiencing visitor management issues. A media release in the coming days will formally announce the reopening of the area.

BD12, 2797**MOVED BY: Jim Cimba
SECONDED BY: Susan Fielding**

THAT the verbal update regarding Conservation Area Experiences be received as information.

CARRIED

10. New Business

There was none.

11. In-Camera Items for Matters of Law, Personnel and Property

BD12, 2798

**MOVED BY: Brad Clark
SECONDED BY: Susan Fielding**

THAT the Board of Directors moves *in camera* for matters of law, personnel and property.

CARRIED

During the *in camera* session, one personnel and one property matter and one legal/property matter were discussed.

11.1. Confidential Report – BD/Sep 01-2020

Scott Peck provided a summary of the report regarding a property matter and answered the members' questions.

BD12, 2799

**MOVED BY: Tom Jackson
SECONDED BY: Santina Moccio**

THAT the confidential report entitled BD/Sep 01-2020 be approved and remain in camera.

CARRIED

11.2. Confidential Report – BD/Sep 02-2020

Scott Peck provided a summary of the report regarding a property matter and answered the members' questions.

BD12, 2800

**MOVED BY: Brad Clark
SECONDED BY: Susan Fielding**

THAT the confidential report entitled BD/Sep 02-2020 be approved and remain in camera.

CARRIED

BD12, 2801

**MOVED BY: Santina Moccio
SECONDED BY: Cynthia Janzen**

THAT the Board of Directors moves out of *in camera*.

CARRIED

12. Next Meeting

The next meeting of the Board of Directors will be held on Thursday, October 1, 2020 at 7:00 p.m. at Woodend Auditorium, 838 Mineral Springs Road, Ancaster, Ontario.

13. Adjournment

On motion, the meeting adjourned.



Neil McDougall
Secretary-Treasurer