



Grand River Conservation Authority Minutes – CA Act Regulations Committee

Date: January 14, 2022
Time: 9:30 a.m.
Location: GRCA Zoom Virtual Meeting
Members Present: John Challinor II, Susan Foxtton, Michael Harris, Helen Jowett, Chris White
Staff: Samantha Lawson, Karen Armstrong, Joe Farwell, Sonja Radoja, Eowyn Spencer

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by the Chair at 9:31 a.m.

2. Certification of Quorum

Quorum was confirmed with all Members present.

3. Chair's Remarks

None.

4. Review of Agenda

Moved by: Susan Foxtton

Seconded by: John Challinor

THAT the agenda for the Conservation Authorities Act Regulations Committee Meeting be approved as circulated.

Carried.

5. Declarations of Pecuniary Interest

None.

6. Minutes of the Previous Meeting

Moved by: John Challinor

Seconded by: Helen Jowett

THAT the minutes of the previous Conservation Authorities Act Regulations Committee Meeting held on October 29, 2021 be approved as circulated.

Carried.

7. Discussion Items:

7.1. Board Report for January 28 Meeting – Verbal update

S.Lawson provided a brief overview of the Board report that will accompany the draft Programs and Services Inventory, noting that the report will outline the process followed in determining the categorization of levy-funded and non-levy-funded programs, assumptions made throughout the process, and points of clarification regarding justification of program placement within the three categories as defined by the Province.

7.2. Programs and Services Inventory

S.Radoja provided a detailed overview of the draft Programs and Services Inventory, which has been prepared as charts and listings of all GRCA programs and services. Each chart clearly identifies programs for each of the three categories of levy-funded, non-levy-funded, and Board-approved programs and services.

Each chart and category were reviewed, and S.Radoja provided financial details of where assumptions were made, and the justification for allocating funds and programs as presented in the draft listings. It was clarified that some assumptions were required, as the Province has yet to release the phase two regulatory changes, which may further impact how levy can be apportioned, and where it may be allocated on future budgets.

S.Lawson added information throughout the presentation, identifying areas where funding allocations may fluctuate, programs that may shift between categories based on discussions with watershed municipalities and respective agreements, and highlighting for the Committee that there may be categorizations that differ from what other Conservation Areas have determined to be mandatory and non-mandatory. S.Lawson clarified that any discrepancies are generally due to differing program options and the ability to allocate self-generated funds to programs.

The Committee thoroughly discussed program areas and services, and considered the determination for categorizing each item as presented in the draft listing. Discussion items included services that may comprise separate activities that could be considered in two or more categories, programs that will move into category three and options for financing the transition period while a sustainable source of funding is determined, overall impact of the new funding framework on the municipal levy, programs that appear underfunded, and other required deliverables under the regulation.

S.Radoja and S.Lawson responded to questions, and clarified the following items:

- In phase 2 of the regulatory changes, the Province will include legislation that speaks to levy apportionment and fee policies. Assumptions have been made for this draft listing, and it is expected that the phase 2 regulations will impact this draft. The listing will be finalized and submitted to the Province in February, but changes can still occur as a part of the regular reporting structure required within the regulations.
- Programs that look underfunded in this draft are due to the fluctuation in capital expenditures, and do not regularly depend on reserve funds for long-term funding. A note can be added to the listing to highlight the reasoning.
- Six key deliverables are required, and include operations plans and an asset management plan for natural hazard infrastructure, a conservation area strategy, an ice management plan, a watershed-based resource management plan, and a land inventory. These items will be undertaken and completed within the timelines provided in the legislation.

- The Board had previously directed that staff allocate a Transition Reserve fund that can be used as a short-term assistance to provide gap funding while sustainable methods of funding for programs in category three are determined. Further discussion on allocation of any surpluses within the categories will also be required as discussions and agreements with municipalities progress.

S.Radoja continued with the overview and provided details on the methodology used to determine the allocation of overhead or administrative costs, noting that at this time a consistent method was applied as the phase 2 regulations should identify where these items will be placed.

S.Radoja and S.Lawson highlighted that an exercise to apply the draft funding framework as presented to the draft 2022 budget suggested that the updated regulations may have minimal impact on the overall levy.

The Committee agreed that municipalities will want to hear a clear message of the levy impact, and that it should be highlighted in discussions as well as the Board report.

7.3. Listing of Current MOUs/Agreements

A listing of current municipal agreements was provided as information, and will be referenced in the report to the Board. Format and contents of agreements may differ under the new regulations.

7.4. Status of Meetings with Municipalities and Adjacent Conservation Authorities

S.Lawson shared the status of meetings with senior staff at participating municipalities and adjacent conservation authorities.

It was noted that the initial meetings are intended to open a dialogue regarding the regulations, and to identify key contacts at the municipalities who will be handling discussions related to program agreements, leading up to Board and Council approval.

Meetings are progressing well and the GRCA is seeing a lot of support in terms of next steps and moving forward with identifying programs where agreements will be required.

Meetings with adjacent conservation authorities have also been going well. The CAs are working to identify nuances in programming to determine reasoning for any differences in program allocations.

8. Other Business

The Chair thanked staff for their work in pulling the inventory listing together, recognizing the challenge of completing the requirement within the provided timeline.

J.Farwell highlighted that a beneficial outcome of the updated regulations will be clarification on the roles of conservation authorities and municipal programs and services.

9. Next Meeting – Wednesday, February 16 at 9:00 a.m.

10. Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 10:45 a.m.