



Saugeen Valley Conservation Authority

Minutes – Board of Directors Meeting

Date: Thursday October 16, 2025, 1:00 p.m.

Location: 1078 Bruce Rd 12, Formosa, ON, N0G 1W0 and hybrid

Chair: Tom Hutchinson

Members present: Barbara Dobreen (virtual until 3:14pm), Paul Allen (virtual), Steve McCabe (virtual until 2:01pm), Moiken Penner, Gregory McLean, Kevin Eccles, Mike Niesen, Peter Whitten, Larry Allison, Dave Myette, Bud Halpin, Bill Stewart

Members absent: Sue Paterson, Jennifer Prenger

Staff present: Erik Downing, Adam Chalmers, Donna Lacey, Matt Armstrong, Katie Thomas, Ashley Richards, Jody Duncan

The meeting was called to order at 1:03 p.m.

1. Land Acknowledgement – read by Kevin Eccles

We begin our meeting today by respectfully acknowledging the Anishinaabeg Nation, the Haudenosaunee, the Neutral, and the Petun peoples as the traditional keepers of this land. We are committed to moving forward in the spirit of reconciliation with First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples.

2. Adoption of Agenda

Motion #G25-73

Moved by Dave Myette

Seconded by Bill Stewart

THAT the agenda for the Saugeen Valley Conservation Authority meeting, October 16, 2025, be adopted as amended.

Carried

3. Declaration of Pecuniary Interest

There were no declarations of pecuniary interest relative to any item on the agenda.

4. Adoption of Minutes

4.1 Authority meeting September 18, 2025

Motion #G25-74

Moved by Greg McLean

Seconded by Peter Whitten

THAT the minutes of the Saugeen Valley Conservation Authority meeting, September 18, 2025, be adopted as presented.

Carried

5. Matters Arising from the Minutes – none

6. New Business

6.1 GM-2025-21: SVCA Operational Plan

Inquiry was made regarding the progress of the agreement with the Kincardine Cross Country Ski Club and its new executive. Staff confirmed that a meeting is imminent and that discussions appear to be progressing positively.

6.2 GM-2025-22 Program Report

Further inquiry was made regarding the Stoney Island Conservation Area and the work undertaken without a permit by the Kincardine Cross Country Ski Club. Staff confirmed that SVCA completed the necessary remediation work and that costs were kept to a minimum.

Inquiry was made regarding the status of the Varney Conservation Area. Staff advised that the review of property parcels and potential disposal remains ongoing.

Inquiry was made regarding the Children’s Safety Village agreement. Staff confirmed that this operational matter is currently in progress.

It was reported that the Corporate Services Department continues to manage workload pressures due to two vacant positions. A retired staff member has returned on a part-time basis to assist with operations, and interviews for the vacant positions are underway.

Interest was expressed by several Directors in receiving information regarding permits within their respective municipalities. Staff advised that legal counsel has cautioned against this practice, as it may create conflicts with statutory obligations and could render Directors ineligible to participate in hearings should matters be appealed. It was noted that Directors have the option to recuse themselves from hearings if they wish to receive such information. Concern was also expressed regarding the limited information provided to the Board when asked to endorse staff-approved permits on a monthly basis.

Director Eccles inquired whether SVCA staff were conducting forestry work in the Municipality of Kincardine at no cost. Staff confirmed that the work is being completed on a fee-for-service basis.

6.3 GM-2025-23: 2026 SVCA Budget Update

Director Dobreen inquired regarding the absence of a budget for approval at the October 16, 2025 meeting, noting that municipalities are experiencing increased pressure due to strong mayoral powers and expedited timelines. Concern was raised that member municipalities may not be aware of the Board’s direction to approve an increase of up to six percent, and clarification was requested as to why SVCA staff were awaiting financial information from member municipalities.

GM/S-T responded that, at the previous Board meeting, Directors had requested that municipal financial context be provided to support their communications at their respective council tables. Several Directors noted that the proposed draft budget had already been shared with their municipalities. The Board was assured that the full draft budget would be presented at the November meeting, and that a communications toolkit to assist Directors in municipal discussions would be circulated.

Director Stewart inquired whether there had been any update regarding the Provincial fee freeze on Environmental Planning and Regulations-related fees being lifted. Staff confirmed that there has been no change. It was noted that the 2026 Fee Schedule, excluding campground fees

previously approved at the last Board meeting and the frozen Environmental Planning and Regulations fees, will be brought forward for consideration at the November meeting.

Chair Hutchinson inquired about the SVCA budget approval process. The GM/S-T explained that Directors act as representatives of their respective municipalities and that while the draft budget is circulated to municipalities for comment, no council vote is required. The SVCA budget is approved by a weighted majority vote of the SVCA Board of Directors.

6.4 EPR-2025-11: Permits Issued

Motion #G25-75

Moved by Larry Allison

Seconded by Bud Halpin

THAT SVCA permit applications 25-176 to 25-214 as approved by staff, be endorsed by the SVCA Board of Directors.

Carried

Concern was expressed by several Directors that they are being asked to endorse permits they have not reviewed, noting that the process may not be an efficient use of staff or Board time and resources. Directors observed that permit approvals are operational in nature rather than governance matters.

An amendment to the motion was introduced by Directors Myette and Penner to change the term “endorsed” to “received.” Following discussion, the amendment was withdrawn, as it was noted that this would be the final batch of permits for which Directors had been copied on related email correspondence. Some Directors indicated they would be unable to endorse permits in the future under the current process.

Manager Armstrong advised that staff time associated with the reporting process is minimal, as the new content management system automates much of the preparation. Staff will further review legislative requirements related to permit reporting and endorsement.

6.5 WR-2025-09: Durham Upper Dam: Winter Configuration

Motion #G25-76

Moved by Bill Stewart

Seconded by Moiken Penner

THAT as the SVCA Water Resources Committee on October 8, 2025 unanimously recommended to the SVCA Board of Directors that in alignment with ongoing engineering assessments and to uphold health and safety obligations, THAT the Board approve the continued cessation of winter operations at the Durham Upper Dam on an indefinite basis; AND THAT staff be directed to continue working with the Municipality of West Grey through the Class Environmental Assessment process to evaluate and advance preferred long-term solutions for the structure.

Carried

Direct Director Stewart thanked staff for their continued hard work and expressed interest in seeing the potential positive impacts and outcomes of the mitigating efforts undertaken by SVCA to date. Director Eccles commented that cameras were not a solution and inquired whether safety concerns were as significant in the spring or fall as they are in winter. Staff explained that the dam was not designed to withstand iceload, and that operation of the dam presents an acute risk, as identified by multiple engineering firms and the Ministry of the Environment.

Director Myette inquired about the risk of structural failure. Staff advised that engineering reports estimate catastrophic damage in the event of failure, with financial impacts ranging from \$3M to \$30M, and potential loss of life exceeding 100 people.

Director Dobrean suggested that the Ministry should bear some financial responsibility in the management of the structure. Director Eccles confirmed that the Municipality of West Grey had reached out and was advised that the cost of recent frazil ice remediation did not meet the threshold required to qualify for financial assistance.

Director Stewart acknowledged the complexity of the issue and noted that further clarity is expected through the third phase of the Environmental Assessment. The General Manager/Secretary-Treasurer advised that several options, including potential weir configurations, will be developed through the upcoming Class EA process.

6.6 WR-2025-10: Low Water Response Program

Motion #G25-77

Moved by Bill Stewart

Seconded by Mike Niesen

THAT as the SVCA Water Resources Committee on October 8, 2025 unanimously selected Option 2 to define the membership of the SVCA Water Response Team, THAT the SVCA Board of Directors directs staff to proceed with Option 2 (Full Membership) to support the formation and membership of SVCA's Water Response Team (WRT), a provincially mandated program, on the basis that quorum is based on Mandatory Membership requirements.

Carried

Director Eccles requested clarification regarding the purpose of the Low Water Response Program and the associated Water Response Team. Staff explained that the program's intent is to coordinate activities between the Province, municipalities, and local stakeholders during periods of low water conditions. Directors were reminded that the program is mandatory under O.Reg 686/21 (Mandatory Programs and Services) of the *Conservation Authorities Act*.

The General Manager/Secretary-Treasurer confirmed that the program was previously funded by the Province but no longer receives provincial funding. In response to a request for an example of when the program would be useful, the SVCA Flood Forecasting and Warning Coordinator volunteered that while SVCA has been able to confirm current level one drought conditions with the MNR, SVCA is unable to escalate warnings beyond that level without an active committee, despite worsening conditions in the watershed.

6.7 Other Business – none

7. Adjournment

With no further business to discuss, the meeting was adjourned at 3:16 p.m. following a motion by Paul Allen and seconded by Gregory McLean.

Tom Hutchinson
Chair

Ashley Richards
Recording Secretary