



Saugeen Valley Conservation Authority

Minutes – Board of Directors Meeting

Date: Thursday September 18, 2025, 1:00 p.m.

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

Chair: Tom Hutchinson

Members present: Barbara Dobreen, Sue Paterson, Moiken Penner, Jennifer Prenger (virtual, left meeting at 3:14 pm), Larry Allison, Bill Stewart (virtual, left meeting at 3:48pm), Paul Allen, Steve McCabe (virtual), Dave Myette, Bud Halpin, Greg McLean, Mike Niesen

Members absent: Peter Whitten, Kevin Eccles

Staff present: Erik Downing, Adam Chalmers, Donna Lacey, Matt Armstrong, Katie Thomas, Ashley Richards, Jennifer Mead, April McBay.

The meeting was called to order at 1:00 p.m.

1. Land Acknowledgement – read by Gregory McLean

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 #G25-64

Moved by Mike Niesen

Seconded by Sue Paterson

THAT the agenda for the Saugeen Valley Conservation Authority meeting, September 18, 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. Staff Introductions

The Board of Directors were introduced to a Resources Information Technician contractor and a permanent forestry technician.

5. Adoption of Minutes

5.1 Authority meeting and Special Meeting – July 17, 2025

Motion #G25-65

Moved by Greg McLean

Seconded by Dave Myette

THAT the minutes of the Saugeen Valley Conservation Authority meeting, and Special Meeting: Hearing Training July 17, 2025, be adopted as presented.

Carried

6. Delegation – Sofia Ramirez – McGowan Falls Fence and Access Concerns

The delegation, led by Sofia Ramirez on behalf of residents of the Municipality of West Grey, objected to SVCA's fencing, access restrictions, and perceived new fees at McGowan Falls. She asserted that the changes reduced accessibility, contradicted alleged intent of the land use, and lacked consultation, and evidence to justify safety and vandalism claims. Ms. Ramirez cited a petition, survey results, and proposed alternatives, calling for transparency, and the halting of work.

7. Matters Arising from the Minutes – none

8. New Business

8.1 GM-2025-15: SVCA Operational Plan

The GM/S-T reported that 2024 performance evaluations were completed, and highlighted the ongoing Amish and Mennonite outreach strategy. It was also noted that many target dates for Water Resources projects have shifted following the manager's return from leave.

8.2 GM-2025-16 Program Report

The GM/S-T noted that the 75th Anniversary celebration required significant effort from Corporate Services and Lands staff, with appreciation expressed to all who attended. The event included the official opening of the new Formosa Conservation Area, which was well attended by dignitaries, past staff, and stakeholders.

8.3 GM-2025-17: Fence Installation at Durham Conservation Area Update

The GM/S-T reported that the Durham Conservation Area fence project was completed in summer 2025, fully funded by campground revenues with no municipal levy contribution. SVCA acted squarely within its legislated authority under Ontario Regulation 688/21, which permits fencing, gates, and other measures to manage access and liability. Multiple communication and consultation efforts were undertaken dating back to 2022, including signage, council correspondence, media releases, resident letters, and participation in a public meeting.

Concerns about property ownership and deed stipulations were dismissed, as SVCA is the registered landowner and existing records confirm no restrictions inconsistent with current use. Requests for operational incident statistics were noted as internal business records, not subject to public disclosure. The project was reaffirmed as supporting fairness, risk management, and sound stewardship while ensuring Durham remains accessible and affordable through low-cost passes and free library memberships.

The preceding delegation noted that legal counsel had been consulted, but no legal action has been received by SVCA to date; therefore, any discussion of legal implications was deemed premature. Questions were raised regarding the purchase of passes, which are available online

(mailed to purchasers), for pickup at the Formosa office, or at the Durham CA gatehouse. The delegation also commented on large stones placed at the beach above the dam, with a director inquiring if this was intentional; clarification was provided that the placement formed part of the dam safety plan, recommended by an external professional engineer, to deter unsafe swimming above the dam. It was further noted that SVCA has adjusted the buoy line to improve safety in this area.

8.4 GM-2025-18: 2026 SVCA Preliminary Budget

Motion #G25-50

Moved by Paul Allen

Seconded by Steve McCabe

THAT the SVCA Board of Directors endorse a proposed increase of up to 6% for the 2026 SVCA Budget.

Carried

The Board endorsed the 2026 Preliminary Budget with an increase of up to 6%, confirming this as the lowest proposed in five years and a starting point for staff to build an appropriate and respectful budget. Discussion included a request for plain-language explanation of the Modified Current Value Method to support council communications, and clarification that Forestry is funded partly as a Category 1 service on conservation lands and partly through self-generated revenue from landowner services. The budget will provide stability for mandatory programs, staff capacity, and operations while minimizing municipal impacts.

8.5 EPR-2025-09: Two-Zone Floodplain Management Concept in Specific Areas of Southampton

Motion #G25-67

Moved by Dave Myette

Seconded by Moiken Penner

THAT the Saugeen Valley Conservation Authority accepts the Greenland Consulting Engineers Two-Zone floodplain mapping study for the specific areas of Southampton described in this report.

AND FURTHER THAT the Saugeen Valley Conservation Authority adopts the Two-Zone Floodplain Management Concept for the specific areas of Southampton described in this report, which would come into effect when the appropriate amendments are made to the Town of Saugeen Shores Official Plan and Zoning By-law.

Carried

The Board accepted the Greenland Consulting Engineers study and approved adoption of the Two-Zone Floodplain Management Concept for specific areas of Southampton. This change will permit conditional development in designated flood fringe areas once the Town of Saugeen Shores completes the necessary Official Plan and Zoning By-law amendments.

Directors observed that under the previous one-zone approach the entire floodplain would have been prohibited for development, whereas the two-zone floodplain now distinguishes areas where development remains prohibited and where conditional development is permitted. It was also confirmed that the project boundary was defined by the Town of Saugeen Shores, with the future option to expand the study area at the Town's request.

8.6 EPR-2025-10: Permits Issued

Motion #G25-68

Moved by Sue Paterson

Seconded by Larry Allison

THAT SVCA permit applications 25-102 to 25-175 as approved by staff, be endorsed by the SVCA Board of Directors.

Carried

8.7 LAN-2025-07: Campground Fee Schedule

Motion #G25-69

Moved by Bud Halpin

Seconded by Barbara Dobreen

THAT the SVCA Board of Directors endorse the proposed 2026 fee increase for campgrounds and related rates.

Carried

Director Moiken Penner, seconded by Director Gregory McLean, moved that non-serviced daily and weekly campsites remain at the 2025 fee rate. The amendment did not carry. Discussion noted equitable access concerns, the higher costs of winter camping due to snow removal, the comparable maintenance of serviced and non-serviced sites, and that fees are set using conservation authority and campground comparators.

8.8 LAN-2025-08: Hydro Expansion Durham Conservation Area

Motion #G25-69

Moved by Mike Niesen

Seconded by Larry Allison

THAT the SVCA Board of Directors award RKS Electric the contract for the Hydro Expansion Project at Durham Conservation Area.

Carried

It was confirmed that, in connection with the Durham Conservation Area hydro expansion project, fibre and water lines already planned may be installed concurrently while the trench is open for electrical work. The contractor indicated that, notwithstanding the low cost, all components of the project will be completed to SVCA's specifications.

8.9 Other Business – none

8.10 Closed Session

Motion #G25-52

Moved by Dave Myette

Seconded by Sue Paterson

THAT the Authority move to Closed Session to discuss, in camera, to address matters relating to an identifiable individual(s) and THAT the GM/S-T and recording secretary remain in the meeting.

Carried

9. Adjournment

With no further business to discuss, the meeting was adjourned at 4:28 p.m. following a motion by Sue Paterson and seconded by Paul Allen.

Tom Hutchinson
Chair

Ashley Richards
Recording Secretary



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 Dobreen 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