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Town of Aurora
Memorandum
Councillor's Office

Re: Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority Board Meeting Highlights of December 20, 2024

To: Mayor and Members of Council

From: Councillor Michael Thompson

Date: January 28, 2025

Recommendation

- 1. That the memorandum regarding Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority Board Meeting Highlights of December 20, 2024, be received for information.**

Attachments

- Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority Board Meeting Highlights of December 20, 2024

Board Meeting Highlights

December 20, 2024

Announcements

- a) CAO Rob Baldwin advised that on December 17th, Nottawasaga Valley Conservation Authority announced the retirement of their CAO, Doug Hevenor, effective immediately.
- b) CAO Rob Baldwin advised that on December 12th, notification was received from the Ministry of Natural Resources of an extension of the Minister's 2023 and 2024 directions on planning, development and permitting fees, extending the freeze on fees to December 31, 2025. A copy of this notification was provided on Pages 52 to 55 of the agenda.

Presentations:

a) Park Prescription Program

Manager, Education, Nicole Hamley, provided an overview of the Park Prescription program, noting Park Prescription (PaRx coordinated by the BC Parks Foundation) is an international program that supports licensed medical professionals in prescribing their patients time in nature as treatment for a variety of health outcomes.

In early 2024, the Conservation Authority's Education team was contacted by Dr. Jacob Zamora, a local physician and endocrinologist associated with the Royal Victoria Regional Health Centre in Barrie. As an active PaRx prescriber and user of Scanlon Creek Conservation Area, Dr. Zamora was interested in partnering with the Conservation Authority to help raise awareness of the PaRx program and to reduce barriers so more people can get outside in local greenspace.

In May 2024, the Conservation Authority signed on as an official Park Prescription endorser, the second conservation authority in Ontario to do so after Toronto and Region Conservation Authority. Soon after, staff began planning a Park Prescription event at Scanlon Creek Conservation Area with the goal of providing a free opportunity for people of all ages to get outside, learn more about the critical connection between nature, physical health and well-being and participate in a wide range of activities suited to a variety of interests and abilities.

The Conservation Authority's first Park Prescription Day was held on Saturday, October 5, 2024, at Scanlon Creek Conservation Area. Registration was free for 100 participants, and spaces quickly filled. Vice Chair Greenlaw welcomed guests and Councillor Ferragine brought greetings from the Town Bradford West Gwillimbury. An engaging keynote address by Dr. Zamora followed. Participants then received a passport and were encouraged to visit different stations to learn about ways to spend time outside. Examples of the various stations included: a StoryWalk®; bird watching and feeder making; arts and crafts such as plant smashing, nature

journalling and creating sound maps; guided hikes of various durations and levels of difficulty; and nature-based play at the Discovery Play Garden.

To view this presentation, please click this link: [Park Prescription Program presentation](#)

For more information on this program including resources to support the human health and nature connection, the ability to register as a prescriber, and a portal to log the fulfilment of park prescriptions, please visit their website through this link: [Park Prescription website](#)

b) Scanlon Creek Nature Centre – General Contractor Award

General Manager, Corporate and Financial Services/CFO, Mark Critch, outlined steps taken regarding the award of the General Contractor for the new Nature Centre at Scanlon Creek Conservation Area. The selection process began September 26th through a request for proposal issued on bid&tenders with a bid submission deadline of November 14th. Utilizing the pre-approved Board of Directors subcommittee, staff, consultants and subcommittee members met on November 28th to review and select a General Contractor. CFO Critch explained that bid prices submitted by bidders who advanced to the final stage were significantly greater than amounts estimated in the Class D and Class B assessments previously received. In an extensive discussion, staff outlined the various options available to come up with the required additional funding, including the use of reserves, seeking additional donations and the previously approved option of borrowing from Offsetting funds. The Board subcommittee approved staff's recommendation to award the contract to BDA Inc. and directed staff to explore and exhaust all efforts to reduce costs and continue fundraising.

To view this presentation, please click this link: [Scanlon Creek Nature Centre - General Contractor Award Process](#)

c) 2025 Proposed Capital and Operating Budget

General Manager, Corporate and Financial Services/CFO, Mark Critch, presented the 2025 Proposed Capital and Operating Budget, noting that the draft budget is being presented for approval aligning with the Provincial requirement for a 30-day review period prior to the 2025 Budget being approved in January 2025. He outlined the 2025 budget process, which began with the Board of Directors' approved assumptions (May 2024). Staff then proceeded to work within those assumptions to develop the 2025 budget. The 2025 preliminary budget submissions were provided to participating and specified municipalities on October 31, 2024, and budget presentations were made to municipal senior staff and Councils as requested.

CFO Critch noted the total amount of expenditures for the 2025 proposed Capital and Operating Budget is \$31.3M, up \$4.2M from the restated 2024 Budget. The operating increase of \$0.8M is mainly being driven by the 3% increase in cost-of-living allowance for staff and some consulting work. Capital and project spending has increased by \$3.4M, mostly related to work on the new Nature Centre at Scanlon Creek. He reviewed the 2025 Annual Priorities, as well as Reserve activity.

Following approval of the draft budget, it will be circulated to participating and specified municipalities and made available on the Conservation Authority’s website for a 30-day review period, with the 2025 Capital and Operating Budget set for approval at the January 24, 2025 Annual General Meeting of the Board of Directors. The 2025 Proposed Capital and Operating Budget can be viewed through this link: [2025 Proposed Budget](#)

To view this presentation, please click this link: [2025 Proposed Capital and Operating Budget Presentation](#)

Staff Reports:

Park Prescription Program

The Board received Staff Report No. 56-24-BOD regarding the Park Prescription program overview and update.

Scanlon Creek Nature Centre – General Contractor Award

The Board received Staff Report No. 57-24-BOD regarding the award of the General Contractor for the new Nature Centre at Scanlon Creek Conservation Area.

2025 Proposed Capital and Operating Budget

The Board received Staff Report No. 58-24-BOD regarding the 2025 Proposed Capital and Operating Budget and voted to approve the 2025 Proposed Capital and Operating Budget for use in consultation with the participating and specified municipalities. The Board directed staff to make the 2025 Proposed Capital and Operating Budget available on the Conservation Authority’s Governance webpage for the general public and participating and specified municipalities to view in advance of the 2025 Budget approval planned for January 2025.

Correspondence

The Board received the Minister of Natural Resources’ notification of an extension of the Minister’s 2023 and 2024 directions on planning, development and permitting fees, extending the freeze on fees to December 31, 2025.

2024 Annual Priorities Status Update

The Board received Staff Report No. 59-24-BOD regarding the year-end status of the Conservation Authority’s 2024 Annual Priorities.

Network and Security Support Update

The Board received Staff Report No. 60-24-BOD regarding the Conservation Authority’s network and security support program updates.

For more information or to see the full agenda package, visit [LSRCA’s Board of Directors’ webpage](#).