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Town of Aurora
Memorandum
Councillor's Office

Re: Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority
Board Meeting Highlights of January 26 and February 23, 2024

To: Mayor and Members of Council

From: Councillor Michael Thompson

Date: April 23, 2024

Recommendation

1. That the memorandum regarding Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority Board Meeting Highlights of January 26 and February 23, 2024, be received for information.

Attachments

1. Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority Board Meeting Highlights of January 26, 2024
2. Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority Board Meeting Highlights of February 23, 2024

Board Meeting Highlights

73rd Annual General Meeting

January 26, 2024

Welcome and Greetings:

Chair Emmerson welcomed everyone to the 73rd Annual General meeting of the Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority and acknowledged the Lake Simcoe watershed as traditional Indigenous territory.

Presentations:

a) Lake Management

Limnologist, Dr. Brian Ginn, provided an update on how phosphorus loads and phosphorus use within the lake have changed, along with lake management implications, noting that since 2010 the environmental state of Lake Simcoe has not responded to fluctuations in phosphorus loads in the manner expected. Despite increases and decreases in annual nutrient inputs, key in-lake health indicators have not fluctuated in turn and are within the range of the Lake Simcoe Protection Plan (the Plan) targets. He explained that over the past 3 years, the Conservation Authority has investigated why the lake has not responded to changing phosphorus loads and is apparently “decoupled” from well-established ecological relationships that are the foundation of lake management strategies.

Dr. Ginn noted that climate change has altered precipitation patterns and tributary flows that are the main drivers of phosphorus loads, and the variation in loads between years is dependent on how and when precipitation falls, as well as delivery of nutrients to the lake by tributaries. Invasive quagga mussels are another factor and are the dominant species in Lake Simcoe, redefining the nutrient pathways to patterns that could not have been predicted when the Plan was written before 2009. He explained these new patterns of phosphorus delivery and use in Lake Simcoe are occurring on other lakes across the Great Lakes region. Through collaborations, the team is now understanding where changes may be required in lake management plans, and how to develop new models to better predict ecological changes in the lake and across the Great Lakes system. One example is as long as quagga mussel populations grow, in-lake phosphorus concentrations are expected to further decline. If quagga mussel populations decline, in-lake phosphorus concentrations and amounts of algae would be expected to increase. As a result, phosphorus load targets would need to be flexible to protect the sustainability of the lake ecosystem.

Dr. Ginn advised that the phosphorus decoupling scenario being investigated on Lake Simcoe should serve as a cautionary tale for lake management. A single metric, such as phosphorus loads, does not always accurately reflect lake health, ecological trends, or the effectiveness of a management strategy. For example, climate change is extending the length of water column stratification, which impacts late year deepwater oxygen; a lack of winter ice cover and warmer water temperatures can change amounts of algae and larval fish development; chloride run-off is an emerging concern for freshwater ecosystems including Lake Simcoe. Lakes have many complex relationships that must be monitored, assessed, and tracked over time to provide a more complete picture of lake health. He noted the importance Conservation Authority staff's continuing to evaluate and re-visit metrics to ensure a sustainable future for the lake's ecosystem.

To view this presentation, please click this link: [Lake Management Update Presentation](#)

b) 2023 Year in Review

Chief Administrative Officer, Rob Baldwin, congratulated staff on their many accomplishments of 2023, noting that staff are the reason for our success and what a privilege and honour it is to lead such a talented team. CAO Baldwin shared a video that captures the many highlights and accomplishments from 2023.

To view the video, please click this link: [2023 Year in Review Video](#).

These highlights and accomplishments are also captured in the [2023 Year in Review Infographics](#)

Conclusion of 2023 Business:

Chair Emmerson concluded the Year 2023 business and deemed the Chair vacant.

2024 Business:

The 2024 Business portion of the meeting was called to order by the CAO Rob Baldwin, who served as Chair Pro Temp during the election of the Chair and Vice Chair for 2024.

Election of Officers for 2024:

City of Barrie Councillor Clare Riepma was appointed to the position of Chair for 2024, and Township of Oro-Medonte Mayor Randy Greenlaw was appointed to the position of Vice Chair for 2024.

2024 Board of Directors' Meeting Schedule:

The Board approved the following meeting schedule for the remainder of 2024. Meetings will begin at 9:00 a.m. and will be held in person at the Conservation Authority's Newmarket offices.

Friday, February 23rd

Friday, March 22nd

Friday, April 26th

Friday, May 24th

Friday, June 21st

Friday, July 26th

No meeting in August

Friday, September 27th

Friday, October 25th

Friday, November 22nd

Friday, December 20th

To view the meeting's media release, please click the following link: [2024 Annual General Meeting](#)

Board Meeting Highlights

February 23, 2024

Presentations:

a) Strategic Plan Reporting and 2023 Annual Priorities Updates

CAO, Rob Baldwin, provided a presentation on the progress of Transformation 2022-2024, the Conservation Authority's Strategic Plan, noting this strategic plan was built during a time of change and uncertainty in light of Provincial Bills 109, 229, and 23, as well as the COVID pandemic. For these reasons, focus shifted for this strategic plan to outcomes sought for the watershed through the following five strategic directions:

1. Champion watershed health and climate resilience
2. Drive evidence-based decision-making.
3. Spark a passion and action for nature.
4. Advance organizational effectiveness and excellence.
5. Nurture people and talent.

CAO Baldwin reviewed the planned actions that were set out to achieve each strategic direction, noting that each action is either on track or on track with changes. A full list of outcomes can be found in the presentation linked below.

Also included in CAO Baldwin's presentation was an update on the 2023 Annual Priorities. He advised that at the start of each year the Executive Leadership Team establishes annual priorities for the year. These priorities can be single-year priorities or as was the case for the 2023, multi-year priorities with actions set out for each year. The 2023 Annual Priorities included:

1. Managing Bills 229 and 23
2. Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Belonging
3. Lake Simcoe Conservation Preserve
4. Scanlon Creek Nature Centre
5. Climate Change and Stormwater Management
6. Network Security
7. Records and Asset Management

CAO Baldwin reviewed these priorities, noting that each is moving forward as expected. More information may be found in the presentation linked below.

To view this presentation, please click this link: [Strategic Plan Status and 2023 Annual Priorities Update](#)

b) 2023 Enabling Services Year in Review

General Manager, Corporate and Financial Services/CFO, Mark Critch, provided a presentation on the Conservation Authority's Enabling Services Internal Customer Satisfaction Survey, noting that feedback from staff was sought to gauge the level of satisfaction being provided by the Conservation Authority's enabling services departments (Corporate Communications, Human Resources, Finance, IT/IMS and Facilities) with a goal to make improvements and enhance service delivery where required. He was pleased to report that the survey received a 67.6% response rate with an average internal customer satisfaction score of 4.1 out of 5.

GM Critch advised that next steps include identifying areas in each department where survey feedback can be incorporated into 2024 workplan development, as well as working to address areas of concerns, some of which are subject to budget availability and approval. It is expected that the survey will be administered again at the end of 2024 with some minor question changes to gain more meaningful and constructive feedback.

Please click this link to view the presentation: [2023 Survey Results for Enabling Services](#)

c) Conservation Authorities Act Updates: O. Reg. 41/24: Prohibited Activities, Exemptions and Permits, and O. Reg. 686/21: Mandatory Programs and Services

CAO Rob Baldwin provided a brief overview of the new Ontario Regulation 41/24: Prohibited Activities, Exemptions and Permits, and the amendments to Ontario Regulation 686/21: Mandatory Programs and Services made under the Conservation Authorities Act, which were announced February 16, 2024 and come into effect on April 1, 2024. He noted that the new O. Reg. 41/24 replaces all existing 36 conservation authority regulations, and some key changes include:

- Updating some definitions and areas where development activities are prohibited, while maintaining important provincial standards.
- Requirements for mapping of regulated areas to be made available online and for public notification to be given of any changes.
- Exemptions from the requirement for a conservation authority permit for some low-risk activities, subject to certain conditions, such as sheds, removable docks, garage rebuilds, fencing, and agricultural drainage.
- Limiting the conditions that can be included on a permit to matters related to natural hazards and public safety and general permit administration.
- Service standards for permit issuance including pre-consultation and confirmation of complete applications within 21-days and requiring annual reporting on permitting statistics including reporting on the level of conservation authority compliance with new regulatory requirements.

- Enabling applicants to appeal to the Ontario Land Tribunal if a permit decision is not made within 90-days, as well as enabling appeals of permitting fees charged by conservation authorities.
- Enabling Minister of Natural Resources and Forestry's tools regarding the review of permit decisions and the issuance of permits.
- Updated enforcement powers and offence provisions under the act, including stop work orders and increased penalties.

CAO Baldwin noted that there is much work to be done for staff to implement all these changes by April 1st, and more information will be brought forward to the Board in the coming months.

Please click this link to view the presentation: [Conservation Authorities Act Updates - O. Reg 41/24 and O. Reg 686.21](#)

Correspondence and Staff Reports:

Correspondence

The Board received a copy of the December 13, 2023 Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry letter to all Conservation Authorities regarding extension to Minister's Direction on Fee Changes associated with Planning, Development and Permitting.

Monitoring Report - Planning and Development Applications for the period January 1 to December 31, 2023

The Board received Staff Report No. 06-24-BOD regarding the total number of planning and development applications for the period January 1 through December 31, 2023.

Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act: Annual Statistical Report

The Board received Staff Report No. 07-24-BOD regarding the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act 2023 Annual Statistical Report.

Conservation Authority Board Member Appointment to Lake Simcoe Conservation Foundation for 2024

The Board received Staff Report No. 08-24-BOD regarding the appointment of two members to represent the Conservation Authority on the Lake Simcoe Conservation Foundation Board of Directors and approved the appointment of the Conservation Authority's Chair, Councillor Clare Riepma, and Vice Chair, Mayor Randy Greenlaw, to the Lake Simcoe Conservation Foundation Board of Directors for 2024.

2024 Annual Priorities

The Board received Staff Report No. 09-24-BOD regarding the Conservation Authority's 2024 Annual Priorities.

Bill 23 More Homes Built Faster Act, 2022 – Impacts on Development Services Department

The Board received Staff Report No. 10-24-BOD regarding an end-of-year overview and update on the impacts of Bill 23 to the Development Services Department.

Georgina Island Fixed Link Project Update

The Board received Staff Report No. 11-24-BOD regarding an update on staff's review and involvement with the Georgina Island Fixed Link project.

Confidential Legal Matter

The Board approved Confidential Staff Report No. 12-24-BOD regarding a confidential legal matter.

Confidential Legal Matter

The Board received Confidential Staff Report No. 13-24-BOD regarding a confidential legal matter.

Confidential Human Resources Matter

The Board approved the recommendations in Confidential Staff Report No. 14-23-BOD regarding a confidential human resources matter.

Confidential Human Resources Matter

The Board provided direction to the Sr. Director, Human Resources regarding a confidential human resources matter.

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