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**MUSKRAT WATERSHED COUNCIL (MWC)**

Meeting of the Board of Directors

**Meeting Minutes**

**Thursday, January 19, 2023, 6:30 p.m.**

**In person: Basement of the Whitewater Township Building, 44 Main Street, Cobden ON**

**Online through Google Meet**

meet.google.com/ezd-qitc-btk

**+1 587-978-1050 (PIN 460326449)**

1. **Call to Order and Record of Attendance**

The meeting of the Muskrat Watershed Council was called to order at 6:33 p.m.

**Attendance:**

**Present:**  Karen Coulas, Rene Coulas, Debbie MacDonald, Barbara Green, Dave Thomassin, Amanda Walt, Michael Walt, Anna-Maria Blum, Evelyn St. Amour, Gerry Rook, Ashley Conrad, Emily Woodcox

**Regrets:**  Andy Laird, Andrea Bishop, Greg Stasyna, Jeff Reeves

**Council Representative Present:**

 Claus Trost, Laurentian Valley Township

**Council Representative Regrets:**

Chris Olmstead, Township of Whitewater Region

MWC members introduced themselves to Emily Woodcox and Ashley Conrad, students in Algonquin College’s environmental technician program.

1. **Adoption of Agenda**

Dave approved the agenda, Debbie seconded it.

**Approval of minutes from November 17, 2022 meeting:**

Claus approved the minutes, Amanda seconded.

1. **Treasurer’s Report- Debbie**

See attached treasurer’s report.

SBCNA Bingo

Our next volunteer date is January 29, 2023, from 3:30 to 5:30. Dave and Rene volunteered to attend. They will pick up our permit to participate in the Bingo fundraiser from January to June.

1. **Directors’ Reports**

**Agricultural Committee – Karen & Dave**

Community Services Recovery Fund: federal grant

The Community Services Recovery Fund is a one-time $400 million investment from the Government of Canada to support community service organizations, including charities, non-profits and Indigenous governing bodies as they focus on how to adapt their organizations for recovery from the COVID-19 pandemic. We would qualify to apply for a $10,000 - $100,000 Tier 1 grant available to non-profit organizations in the environment sector. We could use the money to hire someone to look for other grants we might apply for. We all agreed we should apply for this grant. Karen will do a draft of the application and Jim Lawrence will look it over. The deadline to apply is February 21, 2023.

Canada Summer Jobs

We have applied for two summer students through Canada Summer Jobs. The application deadline was January 14, 2023. If we get the grant it would cover 16 weeks from May 1 to August 30, 2023, 30 hours a week at $18 per hour.

**Science Committee – Dave**

Native and Invasive Species.

The Invasive Species Centre (ISC) offers micro grants for invasive species education which we might apply for. Dave, Karen and Michael will meet with Algonquin College’s Jody Nicholas, Ashley Conrad and Emily Woodcox to discuss this. Dave will send out an email in a few weeks to set up the meeting.

Cobden Marsh

The lagoon used to be the water filtration system for the town of Cobden. In the 1970s a new water filtration plant was built. Three holes were put in the berm and an outflow pipe allowed the sewage in the lagoon to drain into Muskrat Lake. MWC has worked on clearing the trail around the berm. Algonquin College has committed their students to do projects in the marsh. This year they did soil sampling. When MWC partnered with the township on our last grant, we suggested that stormwater go into the lagoon, if we could fix the lagoon. Storm water has never been treated. It goes right into the lake. MWC wants to rebuild the berm and restore the lagoon. As well as helping with stormwater, it will help get rid of invasive species. U of Ottawa scientist, Rebecca Dalton, made recommendations about restoring the lagoon in her report, and Jp2g Consultants Inc. was interested in doing the work. Anna-Maria suggested the Rideau Valley Conservation Authority (RVCA) could be invited to speak to MWC on wetland restoration. Dave will send Anna-Maria the information about the lagoon and she will approach RVCA. No design has been chosen by township yet. Township wants to repair the berm and fill in the holes. The area has been classified as a Provincially Significant Wetland. Now they have found a pike habitat, which will require a 20-metre buffer around any development.

Cobden Beach

Buoys

Last year there were fish hooks stuck in the weed mats at the beach. This is a hazard to swimmers. We think if we put up buoys around the swimming area it would discourage fishermen from coming near the beach. Anna-Maria will get prices for buoys. The buoys will be blue and white, the rope colour will be blue or white, or possibly yellow as a warning. We could put up a small waterproof sign saying, “No casting or fishing." A marker buoy is possible, but expensive. Perhaps we could use BINGO money for this project?

Beach mats

The old mats are deteriorating and we need new ones. They have to be removed in the winter due to the Ministry’s rules about fish habitat. Until now the mats have been put in in June and taken out in September.

Health Unit and Beach Closure

In the past, Cobden beach has been unnecessarily closed by the Health Unit for most of the summer after blue-green algae was found. Claus said we can ask Mayor Neil Nicholson to approach the County and the Health Unit about this problem. The mayor is also the reeve, so his role includes liaising with Renfrew County.

Lake association commitments to the watershed

MWC is concerned that Lake Dore doesn’t have a strong presence and Mink Lake’s association seems to have fallen apart. This may be due to volunteer fatigue, especially during the pandemic. We will work to improve the situation. Debbie met a farmer from Mink Lake who might be interested in joining MWC as a representative for that lake.

Algonquin College

Dave is now teaching part time at Algonquin College. Could this cause a conflict of interest? Dave has tried to contact Brenda Slomka, Program Manager, Office of Applied Research and Innovation, about projects - we don’t know if we will be able to do the water sampling project this summer.

**Communications & Media - Amanda**

Amanda has contacted the owner of Farmer’s Daughter Honey to request an interview. Amanda plans to ask the owner why she chose to donate to MWC and to write a piece to post on our website and social media.

Amanda has reposted the information about the inspirational tree planting project on Dobson Farm.

Amanda is revising our trifold pamphlet about MWC. She is working on the format which needs to be redone. This will take some time.

**Fundraising Committee Update - Karen**

No update

1. **Old Business**

Boat Washing station

Building our own boat washing station would be very expensive ($38,000). Instead it was suggested that we make a deal with Gibson’s garage in Cobden to wash boats. We could put up a sign about this at the boat launch. Who would enforce the boat washing rules? The ministry? The municipality? If we put up a sign, we should use a local sign maker. Anna-Maria could look into signage with a local sign maker in Cobden. Karen would like to first look into all the signs we might need and approach the sign maker with all of these requests at once. Rene mentioned that the Federation of Ontario Cottagers’ Associations (FOCA) has a sign about boat washing that is used at other lakes. He will send Anna-Maria that sign. It’s free for FOCA members like MWC.

Billboard for Muskrat Watershed Council - Dave

Rene measured the sign at Golden Lake. It measures 5 x10 feet and the top is 8 feet above the ground. The Golden Lake Property Owners’ Association charges advertisers an initial fee of $80 plus $160 for the first year. After that, advertisers pay $160 per year. The Golden Lake sign holds 44 ads. Claus said those ads sell themselves. Our total investment to put up a similar sign at the Cobden boat launch would be less than $1500. We need to decide on a location and a timeframe. We will also have to think about what map to put in the middle of the sign and what to put on the back. Perhaps the boat washing sign could go on the back? We would need someone to be in charge of selling ads and collecting the money.

Strategic Plan - Barb

Barb, Karen, Dave and Jeff will meet on Monday, Feb. 6 at 6:30 pm to work on updating MWC’s strategic plan.

1. **Other/New Business**

MWC ten year anniversary committee - Dave

We need to think about how to celebrate our 10th anniversary. We will talk about this at our February meeting. It could be a catered event at our August AGM, perhaps held in the park?

Volunteer Appreciation - Dave

Please send Dave your suggestion for MWC’s Volunteer of the Year.

The province of Ontario also has Ontario Volunteer Service Awards. Here are their criteria:

Volunteers honoured must be residents of Ontario and volunteer in the province. They must be active members of an organization that has existed for at least five years. They must not have been paid for their work or have provided services as part of their regular work or professional responsibilities. You cannot nominate someone who has passed away.

1. **Next Meeting**

February 16, 2023, 6:30 p.m.

**In person: Basement of the Whitewater Township Building, 44 Main Street, Cobden**

**Online: Through Google Meet**

meet.google.com/ezd-qitc-btk

**+1 587-978-1050 (PIN 460326449)**

1. Adjournment: 8:25 p.m.

**Minutes recorded and submitted by:** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

 Barbara Green, Secretary, Muskrat Watershed Council

**Approved by:** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

 Karen Coulas, Chair, Muskrat Watershed Council

DON’T FORGET TO RENEW YOUR MWC MEMBERSHIP FOR 2023!

COST IS $20 PER MEMBERSHIP

IT’S EASY TO RENEW - JUST SEND AN E-TRANSFER TO:

 muskratwatershedcouncil@gmail.com

(Please put your name and email address in the message box so we can email your tax receipt.)

