



MUSKRAT WATERSHED COUNCIL (MWC)

Meeting of the Board of Directors

Meeting Minutes

Online through Google Meet

May 20, 2021 6:30 P.M.

1. Call to Order and Record of Attendance

The meeting of the Muskrat Watershed Council was called to order at 6:40 p.m.

Attendance:

Present: Karen Coulas, Rene Coulas, Debbie MacDonald, David Thomassin, Jeff Reeves, Barbara Green, Michael Gulliver, Anna-Maria Blum, Lorne Nimmons, Gwen Bennett, Alexa Mantifell

Regrets: Erin Dolan, Andy Laird, Gerry Rook, Thomas Watt, Evelyn St. Amour, Vince Gervais, Karl Lauten, Marie Janick Robitaille, Andrea Bishop

Council Representative Present: Mike Moore, Township of Whitewater Region

Council Representative Regrets: Claus Trost, Township of Laurentian Valley Township

2. Adoption of Agenda

The agenda was amended to include a presentation about Whitewater Raw Sewage by Lorne Nimmons and Gwen Bennett, to take place before starting the formal agenda. Dave approved the amended agenda, Jeff seconded it.

Approval of minutes from April 15, 2021 meeting:

Rene approved the minutes, Jeff seconded.

- **Whitewater Raw Sewage** A Whitewater Region couple, Lorne Nimmons and Gwen Bennett, spoke about their support for a group of Beachburg area residents called Whitewater Raw Sewage who are raising awareness about the dumping of raw sewage along the Zion Line near Pappin Road.

- The situation is described in an article by Marie Zettler, which was published this week in The Eganville Leader. The article was republished by the Toronto Star.
<https://www.thestar.com/news/canada/2021/05/19/spreading-raw-sewage-a-concern-with-whitewater-residents.html>
- The group has distributed flyers in rural mailboxes and also has a Facebook page. They are concerned that raw sewage collected by operators of septic tank pumping services is being spread on fields in the area. One septic tank operator is local, another is a company from Quebec. Representatives of Whitewater Raw Sewage contacted the Township of Whitewater Region and were informed the sewage disposal operations are in compliance with regulations from the Ontario Ministry of the Environment, Conservation, and Parks (MECP) and the operators have the required licences. But the group is asking that the sewage dumping practices in Beachburg be brought up to the standard practised elsewhere in Ontario. They approached the Muskrat Watershed Council because they are concerned the raw sewage may affect Muskrat Lake and its watershed. Lorne and Gwen said they have heard several unconfirmed stories: that septic disposal trucks have been washed out in Little Lakes, that a family on the Zion Line became ill after their well was contaminated by e-coli. They are also concerned about the health of animals like turtles. They stressed they are not opposed to the use of treated sewage on fields, just untreated sewage.
- Rene suggested the group contact MPP John Yakabuskie. He also suggested that before taking further action they should meet with the sewage disposal operators to discuss the problem. He advised them to be careful when choosing a spokesperson for their group. Ideally it should be someone with no previous grievances who can act as a fair mediator during the meeting.

3. **Treasurer's Report - Debbie**

- See attached document.
- The gaming association which supports us through BINGO revenues has a new website and logo. We will need to put their logo on our website to show they are one of our sponsors. Dave will do this. Debbie will send him an email with the logo.
- Debbie will be getting a bill for about \$900 from WeedsBGone for a part (a plastic fan repair kit) to repair one of the aerators at Cobden Beach.

4. **Director's Reports:**

Agricultural Committee Update – Karen and Rene Coulas

- Possible Planting site for the Great Lakes Local Action Fund project (GLLAF).
- We need three planting sites for GLLAF - we have two so far. Since most of our projects have been in the Township of Whitewater Region and Admaston/Bromley Township it would be good to do a project in North Algona Wilberforce Township. Mike Gulliver (representative of the Lake

Dore Property Owners' Association) will talk to the association's president, Bernadette Scheuneman, this weekend and ask if she is interested in taking part. If so, she can call Karen to discuss details. The project would take place in the fall.

- Due to covid shortages, we had trouble finding rebar for fencing. But we were finally able to find some in Ottawa for a higher price, though still within our budget.

Science Committee Update – David Thomassin

- Lake Dore
- Alexa Mantifell, our intern from Algonquin College, spoke to us about the survey of lake Dore residents she will do this summer. Alexa worked with the MWC two years ago on the Love Your Lake program. She is originally from Pembroke, took her undergraduate degree at Queen's University, and is now doing a Master's degree in Environmental Assessment at Concordia University. Algonquin College approached Dave last winter to see how they could help us. Patrick Nicholson of Algonquin College met with Dave, Karen, Alexa and Mike Gulliver to narrow down the scope of the Lake Dore project. Alexa presented a list of survey questions Lake Dore residents will be asked. Questions will focus on how long participants have lived on the lake, what concerns they have about the lake and what changes they have observed over the years they have been there. Mike Gulliver said about 100 Lake Dore residents receive his association's newsletter by email, so they can send the questionnaire out that way. The association can also give out questionnaires at its August AGM. Dave suggested the MWC should write a covering letter describing who we are and what we do to accompany the survey. Barb or Karen will help with this. Alexa suggested we send any questions or comments for her to Dave who will see that she gets them.
- Cobden Beach Update
- One aerator is broken. Rene will fix it. We will need volunteers at the end of June to put down the weed mats. We will put them in a different section of the beach than last year.
- Loon Project
- Dave suggested we go out on kayaks to find and photograph loon nesting areas for the placement of loon boxes. By mid-August we may be able to gather again. That would be a good time to build the boxes. Lumber is still very expensive. Karen says Rene has a friend who has his own sawmill. Karen will ask him if he has any leftover wood. Cedar posts are needed. Karen suggested we could talk to some local contractors. Can we salvage any wood from the dump? Right now they are chipping all the waste, but if they knew we were coming they might be able to get some.
- Turtle Fence Project - This was first mentioned two years ago. Dave said when Hwy 17 is fixed turtle fencing will be included. Perhaps we could just wait for that to happen. We could also talk with the Ministry of Transportation to see if we could partner with them. Or we could look at other locations for fencing, possibly along the Snake River, or near Burwell Road. Karen

mentioned some of the culverts there are very steep, though. A project like this would be good positive publicity for the MWC. We will discuss this again at another meeting.

- Boat Launch- There was a discussion about charging boat launch fees at the Cobden boat launch. A percentage of the fee could go to the MWC. Other municipalities charge to launch boats. Pembroke charges \$25 a boat. Horton Township also charges a fee for its boat launch on the Bonnechere River and there is a fine if you don't have a pass. Dave suggested we could charge outsiders but offer free boat launching for township residents. Karen says tournaments are supposed to take boat counts and give money to the township. Dave will talk to the township about boat fees.
- Water testing -The Ontario Ministry of the Environment, Conservation, and Parks (MECP) will not be doing water testing this summer. Karen suggested maybe we could take some water samples ourselves from where the Muskrat River joins Muskrat Lake and compare these results with earlier water samples. Dave suggested we use some of our grant money to buy our own testing kit. \$150 for a kit is expensive but we could get our own data. Karen will find out if there is any money we could use for for water testing and if so we can buy our own testing kit.
- Reports of blue -green algae - Dave has received a report of possible blue-green algae through our MWC email. It might just be pollen. But with warmer, rainier weather expected this summer conditions are ideal for growth of blue-green algae. We should inform people about what blue-green algae - and blue green algae spores - look like. Debbie suggested Dave take a photo of the spores and post it on our website.

Communications & Media – Karen & Dave

- Recruiting a new Director of Media and Communications - Karen
- We have lost Megan Rae as Director of Communications & Media. She just received a promotion in her day job and no longer has time to volunteer. Several ideas were suggested to cover Megan's role. Karen suggested approaching local high schools to partner with us on day-to-day communications tasks. Perhaps a teacher could organize a classroom of students to help? Barb suggested also contacting Jamie Bramburger, Manager of Community and Student Affairs at Algonquin College Pembroke, for suggestions. Dave will contact him.
- Karen suggested we ask local residents and cottagers to send us their stories about the lakes in our watershed. We could feature one story each month. Karen will write a story about her experience on the lake, as an example. Debbie will write about her family's five generations on the lake. Other topics we might feature could be stories about Mussie, fishing trips, animals or century farms in the watershed.
- Your TV has offered to do five news stories about the MWC. We could feature some of our projects. For example, we could visit one of the planting sites we worked on several years ago to show how the plants are growing now.

Fundraising Committee Update - Dave

Grant Updates - Dave sent Karen information about eight different grants we could apply for that would support hiring help or students. Trillium grants, which cover wages and salaries, open in October but they are still accepting applications. Some banks are giving grants as well as the province. Karen mentioned some grants are very specific about the hours the student must work. It's hard to keep a student busy, she said. Perhaps a summer student could help with writing grant proposals.

5. Old Business – Updates

- Beach Signage -Dave asked John Butler of John A Butler photography about beach signage. John will come out and take a photo of the beach for free.

6. Other/New Business

- Simplyk - Karen reminded MWC directors to read over the information she sent about Simplyk, a Montreal-based company that offers free online services to help not-for-profit organizations with fundraising. There are several advantages to this program: they have people to help you set up your account, you can do raffles online, and the program sends donors an instant receipt. Jeff said one drawback of Simplyk is that a link comes up asking you to donate to Simplyk as well as to the charity. We should send any comments to Karen. If we know of a technically proficient person who could help us with this, we should also let Karen know.
- Recruiting: Dave said we need to look at ways to attract new members. Dave was a guest lecturer at Algonquin College but people were not interested in the MWC because they don't live here. Perhaps cottagers can be brought in through their concern about blue-green algae? It was suggested that we reach out to a local realtor who has contacts with newcomers.

7. Next Meeting: Thursday, June 17, 2021

NOTE: WE WILL BE MEETING ONLINE VIA GOOGLE MEET

meet.google.com/ezd-qjtc-btk

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Adjournment: 8:53 p.m.

Minutes recorded and submitted by: _____

Barbara Green, Interim Secretary, Muskrat Watershed Council

Approved by: _____

Karen Coulas, Chair, Muskrat Watershed Council

