



## **MUSKRAT WATERSHED COUNCIL (MWC)**

Meeting of the Board of Directors

### **AGM Meeting Minutes**

**In person meeting only: Cobden Legion Hall, 43A Main Street Cobden ON  
August 17, 2024 - 10:00 a.m.**

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

The meeting of the Muskrat Watershed Council was called to order at 10:00 a.m.

##### **Attendance:**

**Present:** Karen Coulas, Rene Coulas, Yuanbo Gan, David Garner, Gina Garner, Barbara Green, Pat Johnston, Jim Lawrence, Debbie Macdonald, Jeff Reeves, Evelyn St. Amour, David Thomassin, Claus Trost, Brian Whitehead

**Regrets:** Rick Adamson, Anna-Maria Blum, Andy Laird, Mckenzie Mitchell, Laurie Patterson, Gerry Rook, Greg Stasyna, Elliott Stevens, Amanda Walt, Michael Walt

##### **Council Representatives present - Township of Whitewater Region:**

Mayor Neil Nicholson,  
Councillor Connie Tabbert  
Councillor Mike Moore  
Planner/ EDO Alex Benzie

#### **2. Adoption of Agenda**

Connie approved the agenda, Rene seconded.

#### **3. Opening Remarks: Mayor Neil Nicholson**

Mayor Neil Nicholson congratulated MWC on 10 years of achievements. He especially recognized Brian Whitehead, a founder of MWC, and the volunteers who have been with MWC from the beginning: Andy Laird, Debbie Macdonald, Evelyn St. Amour and Barbara Green. Mayor Nicholson thanked MWC for all the

work it does and encouraged us to keep doing it. He said he will support us in any way he can. He encouraged MWC to contact him or other council members if there is anything they can do to help.

#### **4. Welcoming Remarks: Karen Coulas, Chair of the Muskrat Watershed Council**

Karen said MWC is celebrating ten years in 2024, which is amazing. She also thanked the volunteers who have been with us from the beginning. Karen and her husband, Co-Chair Rene Coulas, joined MWC at the AGM in 2014 but Brian Whitehead, Evelyn St. Amour, Andy Laird, Debbie Macdonald and Barbara Green were there at the beginning. MWC has accomplished a lot in 10 years. Karen encouraged people to look at our 2024 Annual Newsletter for details. We have gone from being a not-for-profit to a registered charitable organization, we have planted close to 100,000 trees and shrubs. We have had a lot of help and there has been a lot done. Karen believes we have made a difference in the watershed. It's hard to prove because it took hundreds of years to make the water the way it is now, and it will probably take 100 years to fix it. But we are working hard to solve the problem.

#### **5. Guest Speakers**

##### **Do's and Don'ts on Waterfront Properties - Alex Benzie Planner/EDO, Township of Whitewater Region**

Alex congratulated MWC on its work and said we are one of the reasons she chose her job - we inspired her! Alex mentioned the Township of Whitewater Region is putting together a new Watershed Property Development Guide. She asked for feedback from MWC, as we are an important stakeholder in the watershed. Alex made a PowerPoint presentation about Do's and Don'ts on Waterfront Properties, which is attached to the email containing these minutes. The presentation was followed by a Q & A period.

##### **Water Testing Demonstration - MWC Volunteers Rene Coulas, Yuanbo Gan (with planning support from Michael Walt)**

Using an aquarium filled with water and aeration diffuser equipment, Yuanbo and Rene demonstrated the difference between our old and new aeration systems at Cobden Beach. It was dramatically evident that the new system works much better and provides much more oxygen to the water column.

The new aeration system is also easier to maintain and is cheaper than the old one. It's a Canadian system which costs only about a quarter as much as the first one. Our six-aerator system costs about \$6,000 to purchase. It runs on a 110-volt pump and uses a small air compressor.

This type of system works very well at Cobden Beach, but a smaller, less expensive, one could also be installed relatively easily by individual cottagers. MWC volunteer Michael Walt has one in front of his Muskrat Lake property, and it works very well. He is willing to speak to anyone wishing to install a similar aeration system. To contact Michael please email: [info@muskratwatershedcouncil.com](mailto:info@muskratwatershedcouncil.com) It is important to note that a permit may be required to install an aeration system. If you keep the system running year-round you will need to put up signs to warn the public, as aeration thins the ice. MWC removes the aerators at Cobden Beach before winter.

The PowerPoint presentation on Lake Aeration Systems is attached to the email containing these minutes.

## **6. Directors' Reports:**

### **• Science Committee Update – David Thomassin**

A lot of MWC's projects this year have taken place at Algonquin College, as Dave works there and is able to involve his students. In summer 2024 wMWC did mapping of the watershed. Last fall we did shoreline planting on several properties in the Township of Whitewater Region, on Muskrat Lake, and Olmstead-Jeffrey Lake. With the help of Algonquin students, we planted 600 trees. A project was started last year to detect and map invasive species. The students developed a protocol for this project and this year they will be applying the protocol in Mink Lake. MWC will also be putting in some branch bundles to provide fish habitat in Mink Lake - we will need to borrow a boat for this project. If you have a boat you could lend, please contact Dave Thomassin at [science@muskratwatershedcouncil.com](mailto:science@muskratwatershedcouncil.com)

Future goals:

- Cobden Marsh - We were supposed to do a large project there this year with the environmental assessment group from Algonquin College but

there is culvert replacement work going on so we will have to defer this project for at least two years.

- Stewardship - We are hoping to do some small-group stewardship projects, like the turtle boxes Algonquin students built last year, or bat boxes.
- Tree planting with Algonquin College - we are still looking for property owners. If anyone is interested, please contact Dave.
- Invasive species survey - ongoing
- Science Committee - MWC used to have a science committee that met almost monthly to talk about different goals. This fell aside after a while. But that committee did make a workbook of future plans to focus on. Dave would like to arrange a small committee meeting of the MWC to go through that workbook to see what areas and projects that have been identified for years now we should focus on.

#### • **Agricultural Committee Update - Rene Coulas**

In the past year MWC has:

- Put in another watering system to help keep livestock out of the water
- Installed a fencing system
- Replanted trees and shrubs on several sites (fall 2023 and spring 2024)
- Changed our work method to include follow up to make sure our plants are thriving.

We now use sawdust around the base of the plants instead of coco mats, which were expensive and hard to get. Sawdust is cheaper, simpler, biodegradable and seems to provide a better survival rate for the plants than the coco mats, which should have been fastened down. The fasteners sometimes punctured tires on farmers' tractors, therefore, MWC could not use the fasteners.

Future goals:

- Livestock fencing - MWC has a couple of opportunities for next year for installing more.
- Buffer zones - We want to go back to some properties and check buffer zones. The newest practice is for farmers to plant and harvest their buffer zones. This stimulates the plants in the buffer zone to grow more, so they remove more nutrients from the soil and better protect streams from agricultural runoff. Rene will talk to more farmers about harvesting buffer zones.
- Rechecking previously-planted areas - MWC will continue to follow up to check and do replants as necessary. We have had excellent cooperation from landowners for this. MWC received a Community Improvement Plan (CIP) grant from the Township of Whitewater Region to cover some of the replanting costs. MWC formerly used volunteers such as high school students to help with planting. But now we partner with Watersheds Canada and use some of our better-trained MWC volunteers.

- **Fundraising Committee Update – Karen Coulas**

No report

- **Communications & Media Update - Karen for Amanda Walt**

Karen thanked Amanda for her great job posting about MWC on our website and on Facebook. Her Media and Communications report in our newsletter shows the number of people engaging with us on Facebook has gone up a bit and the number going to the website has gone down slightly but overall, the numbers are holding pretty steady. Amanda has done an excellent job designing and editing our 2024 newsletter and creating a new MWC brochure. Karen congratulated Amanda and said she had been very, very helpful. Our 2024 newsletter is now out. A few copies were printed for distribution at the AGM. An electronic version of the newsletter is available on our website [www.musktratwatershedcouncil.com](http://www.musktratwatershedcouncil.com) under News/Publications.

## **7. Financial Report - Debbie Macdonald**

MWC has two bank accounts:

A BMO income account to deposit money earned by MWC volunteers with OLG Charity Bingo.

- A regular Scotiabank account - used for purchasing materials, paying bills and depositing membership fees.

Please see details about these accounts in our yearly Financial Report and in the August 2024 Treasurer's report.

### **Volunteer of the Year**

Karen thanked Barbara Green, who is MWC Volunteer of the Year for 2024. Barbara is MWC's current secretary and helps with writing and editing, volunteering at the charity Bingo and representing MWC at fairs and community events. Karen thanked Barbara for being MWC's conscience and reminding us to show appreciation to all our volunteers and helpers.

### **8. Approval of minutes from the AGM July 29, 2024**

Claus approved the minutes and Debbie seconded them.

### **9. Election of officers: nominations from the floor**

There were no nominations from the floor so the directors of MWC remain as before:

Karen Coulas	Chair & Director of Agriculture
Rene Coulas	Vice-Chair & Co-Director of Agriculture
Dave Thomassin	Director of Science & Water Quality
Amanda Walt	Director of Media and Communications
Andy Laird	Director of Tourism & Recreation
Jeff Reeves	Director-at-Large
Debbie MacDonald	Treasurer
Barbara Green	Secretary

We are looking for volunteers to fill the positions of Directors for Anglers and Hunters, Property Owners, Business and Development, and Fund Raising.

If you know of someone who would be interested in filling one of these positions, please send an email to [info@muskratwatershedcouncil.com](mailto:info@muskratwatershedcouncil.com)

**10. Closing remarks- Karen**

Karen thanked everyone for coming out. She said there is so much left to do, and we can use any bit of help we can get, even if it's just an idea for a project. She reminded people to collect a copy of our Newsletter which has all our contact information. She encouraged anyone interested to attend one of our regular monthly meetings, which are held every third Thursday of the month at 6:30 p.m. in the basement of the Whitewater Township building, 44 Main Street, Cobden Ontario, and on Google Meet. All are welcome! Please contact [info@muskratwatershedcouncil.com](mailto:info@muskratwatershedcouncil.com) if you would like to receive the link to attend virtually.

Barb made a shout out to Algonquin College student and MWC volunteer, Yuanbo Gan, who made a special trip from Ottawa to help with the aerator diffusion presentation. Yuanbo said he had just heard from Michael Walt about the aeration system in front of his property. His system has two compressors and cost \$2,400.

Karen invited people to support the Cobden Legion by purchasing a burger at their fundraising BBQ.

**11. Adjournment 12:10 p.m.**

Minutes recorded and submitted by:

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Barbara Green, Secretary, Muskrat Watershed Council

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

Karen Coulas, Chair, Muskrat Watershed Council



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# Muskrat Watershed Council

## Compiled Financial Information Report

### Year Ending March 31, 2023

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**MUSKRAT WATERSHED COUNCIL**  
**Statement of Financial Position**  
**March 31, 2024**

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	2024	2023
<b>ASSETS</b>		
<b>CURRENT</b>		
Cash	\$ 61,410	\$ 49,331
Harmonized sales tax recoverable	2,133	1,125
	<b>\$ 63,543</b>	<b>\$ 50,456</b>
<b>LIABILITIES</b>		
<b>CURRENT</b>		
Accounts payable	\$ 1,001	\$ 1,000
<b>NET ASSETS</b>		
General fund	62,542	49,456
	<b>\$ 63,543</b>	<b>\$ 50,456</b>

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**MUSKRAT WATERSHED COUNCIL**  
**Statement of Changes in Net Assets**  
**Year Ended March 31, 2024**

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	2024	2023
<b>NET ASSETS - BEGINNING OF YEAR</b>	<b>\$ 49,456</b>	<b>\$ 46,201</b>
<b>EXCESS OF REVENUE OVER EXPENSES</b>	<b>13,086</b>	<b>3,255</b>
<b>NET ASSETS - END OF YEAR</b>	<b>\$ 62,542</b>	<b>\$ 49,456</b>

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**MUSKRAT WATERSHED COUNCIL**  
**Statement of Operations**  
**Year Ended March 31, 2024**

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	2024	2023
<b>REVENUE</b>		
Contributions and membership fees	\$ 58,579	\$ 12,935
Bingo	10,537	7,466
	<u>69,116</u>	<u>20,401</u>
<b>EXPENSES</b>		
Bank charges and interest	229	153
Donations	100	-
Equipment	5,041	-
Insurance	1,332	1,293
Office and general	1,600	1,914
Professional fees	1,039	1,039
Program expenses	27,071	12,747
Wages and benefits	19,618	-
	<u>56,030</u>	<u>17,146</u>
<b>EXCESS OF REVENUE OVER EXPENSES</b>	<b>\$ 13,086</b>	<b>\$ 3,255</b>

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