



Saugeen Valley Conservation Authority

Minutes – Board of Directors Meeting

Date: Thursday September 18, 2025, 1:00 p.m.

Location: 1078 Bruce Rd 12, Formosa, ON, N0G 1W0 and hybrid

Chair: Tom Hutchinson

Members present: Barbara Dobreen, Sue Paterson, Moiken Penner, Jennifer Prenger (virtual, left meeting at 3:14 pm), Larry Allison, Bill Stewart (virtual, left meeting at 3:48pm), Paul Allen, Steve McCabe (virtual), Dave Myette, Bud Halpin, Greg McLean, Mike Niesen

Members absent: Peter Whitten, Kevin Eccles

Staff present: Erik Downing, Adam Chalmers, Donna Lacey, Matt Armstrong, Katie Thomas, Ashley Richards, Jennifer Mead, April McBay.

The meeting was called to order at 1:00 p.m.

1. Land Acknowledgement – read by Gregory McLean

We begin our meeting today by respectfully acknowledging the Anishinaabeg Nation, the Haudenosaunee, the Neutral, and the Petun peoples as the traditional keepers of this land. We are committed to moving forward in the spirit of reconciliation with First Nations, Métis, and Inuit peoples.

2. Adoption of Agenda

Motion #G25-64

Moved by Mike Niesen

Seconded by Sue Paterson

THAT the agenda for the Saugeen Valley Conservation Authority meeting, September 18, 2025, be adopted as amended.

Carried

3. Declaration of Pecuniary Interest

There were no declarations of pecuniary interest relative to any item on the agenda.

4. Staff Introductions

The Board of Directors were introduced to a Resources Information Technician contractor and a permanent forestry technician.

5. Adoption of Minutes

5.1 Authority meeting and Special Meeting – July 17, 2025

Motion #G25-65

Moved by Greg McLean

Seconded by Dave Myette

THAT the minutes of the Saugeen Valley Conservation Authority meeting, and Special Meeting: Hearing Training July 17, 2025, be adopted as presented.

Carried

6. Delegation – Sofia Ramirez – McGowan Falls Fence and Access Concerns

The delegation, led by Sofia Ramirez on behalf of residents of the Municipality of West Grey, objected to SVCA's fencing, access restrictions, and perceived new fees at McGowan Falls. She asserted that the changes reduced accessibility, contradicted alleged intent of the land use, and lacked consultation, and evidence to justify safety and vandalism claims. Ms. Ramirez cited a petition, survey results, and proposed alternatives, calling for transparency, and the halting of work.

7. Matters Arising from the Minutes – none

8. New Business

8.1 GM-2025-15: SVCA Operational Plan

The GM/S-T reported that 2024 performance evaluations were completed, and highlighted the ongoing Amish and Mennonite outreach strategy. It was also noted that many target dates for Water Resources projects have shifted following the manager's return from leave.

8.2 GM-2025-16 Program Report

The GM/S-T noted that the 75th Anniversary celebration required significant effort from Corporate Services and Lands staff, with appreciation expressed to all who attended. The event included the official opening of the new Formosa Conservation Area, which was well attended by dignitaries, past staff, and stakeholders.

8.3 GM-2025-17: Fence Installation at Durham Conservation Area Update

The GM/S-T reported that the Durham Conservation Area fence project was completed in summer 2025, fully funded by campground revenues with no municipal levy contribution. SVCA acted squarely within its legislated authority under Ontario Regulation 688/21, which permits fencing, gates, and other measures to manage access and liability. Multiple communication and consultation efforts were undertaken dating back to 2022, including signage, council correspondence, media releases, resident letters, and participation in a public meeting.

Concerns about property ownership and deed stipulations were dismissed, as SVCA is the registered landowner and existing records confirm no restrictions inconsistent with current use. Requests for operational incident statistics were noted as internal business records, not subject to public disclosure. The project was reaffirmed as supporting fairness, risk management, and sound stewardship while ensuring Durham remains accessible and affordable through low-cost passes and free library memberships.

The preceding delegation noted that legal counsel had been consulted, but no legal action has been received by SVCA to date; therefore, any discussion of legal implications was deemed premature. Questions were raised regarding the purchase of passes, which are available online

(mailed to purchasers), for pickup at the Formosa office, or at the Durham CA gatehouse. The delegation also commented on large stones placed at the beach above the dam, with a director inquiring if this was intentional; clarification was provided that the placement formed part of the dam safety plan, recommended by an external professional engineer, to deter unsafe swimming above the dam. It was further noted that SVCA has adjusted the buoy line to improve safety in this area.

8.4 GM-2025-18: 2026 SVCA Preliminary Budget

Motion #G25-50

Moved by Paul Allen

Seconded by Steve McCabe

THAT the SVCA Board of Directors endorse a proposed increase of up to 6% for the 2026 SVCA Budget.

Carried

The Board endorsed the 2026 Preliminary Budget with an increase of up to 6%, confirming this as the lowest proposed in five years and a starting point for staff to build an appropriate and respectful budget. Discussion included a request for plain-language explanation of the Modified Current Value Method to support council communications, and clarification that Forestry is funded partly as a Category 1 service on conservation lands and partly through self-generated revenue from landowner services. The budget will provide stability for mandatory programs, staff capacity, and operations while minimizing municipal impacts.

8.5 EPR-2025-09: Two-Zone Floodplain Management Concept in Specific Areas of Southampton

Motion #G25-67

Moved by Dave Myette

Seconded by Moiken Penner

THAT the Saugeen Valley Conservation Authority accepts the Greenland Consulting Engineers Two-Zone floodplain mapping study for the specific areas of Southampton described in this report.

AND FURTHER THAT the Saugeen Valley Conservation Authority adopts the Two-Zone Floodplain Management Concept for the specific areas of Southampton described in this report, which would come into effect when the appropriate amendments are made to the Town of Saugeen Shores Official Plan and Zoning By-law.

Carried

The Board accepted the Greenland Consulting Engineers study and approved adoption of the Two-Zone Floodplain Management Concept for specific areas of Southampton. This change will permit conditional development in designated flood fringe areas once the Town of Saugeen Shores completes the necessary Official Plan and Zoning By-law amendments.

Directors observed that under the previous one-zone approach the entire floodplain would have been prohibited for development, whereas the two-zone floodplain now distinguishes areas where development remains prohibited and where conditional development is permitted. It was also confirmed that the project boundary was defined by the Town of Saugeen Shores, with the future option to expand the study area at the Town's request.

8.6 EPR-2025-10: Permits Issued

Motion #G25-68

Moved by Sue Paterson

Seconded by Larry Allison

THAT SVCA permit applications 25-102 to 25-175 as approved by staff, be endorsed by the SVCA Board of Directors.

Carried

8.7 LAN-2025-07: Campground Fee Schedule

Motion #G25-69

Moved by Bud Halpin

Seconded by Barbara Dobreen

THAT the SVCA Board of Directors endorse the proposed 2026 fee increase for campgrounds and related rates.

Carried

Director Moiken Penner, seconded by Director Gregory McLean, moved that non-serviced daily and weekly campsites remain at the 2025 fee rate. The amendment did not carry. Discussion noted equitable access concerns, the higher costs of winter camping due to snow removal, the comparable maintenance of serviced and non-serviced sites, and that fees are set using conservation authority and campground comparators.

8.8 LAN-2025-08: Hydro Expansion Durham Conservation Area

Motion #G25-69

Moved by Mike Niesen

Seconded by Larry Allison

THAT the SVCA Board of Directors award RKS Electric the contract for the Hydro Expansion Project at Durham Conservation Area.

Carried

It was confirmed that, in connection with the Durham Conservation Area hydro expansion project, fibre and water lines already planned may be installed concurrently while the trench is open for electrical work. The contractor indicated that, notwithstanding the low cost, all components of the project will be completed to SVCA's specifications.

8.9 Other Business – none

8.10 Closed Session

Motion #G25-52

Moved by Dave Myette

Seconded by Sue Paterson

THAT the Authority move to Closed Session to discuss, in camera, to address matters relating to an identifiable individual(s) and THAT the GM/S-T and recording secretary remain in the meeting.

Carried

9. Adjournment

With no further business to discuss, the meeting was adjourned at 4:28 p.m. following a motion by Sue Paterson and seconded by Paul Allen.

Tom Hutchinson
Chair

Ashley Richards
Recording Secretary