



LOWER TRENT CONSERVATION

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Registered Charitable Organization No. 107646598RR0001

BOARD OF DIRECTORS

Board of Directors refers to the General Membership as set out in the Lower Trent Conservation Administrative By-Law No. 2023-01

REGULAR BOARD MEETING MINUTES

MEETING # 2025-08

DATE: October 9, 2025

TIME: 1:00 PM

LOCATION: Administration Office, 714 Murray Street, Trenton / Virtually

DIRECTORS PRESENT:

ON SITE		REMOTE SITE
Eugene (Gene) Brahaney (Chair)	Rick English	Lynda Reid
Sherry Hamilton (Vice-Chair)	Jeff Wheeldon	
Mike Ainsworth	Bobbi Wright	
Bob Mullin	Eric Sandford	

REGRETS: Jim Alyea

STAFF: Rhonda Bateman, Chitra Gowda, Gage Comeau, Chris McLeod, Corinne Ross

GUESTS: None

1. Meeting called to order by the Chair

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

2. First Nations Acknowledgement

"This land is located on the traditional territories of the Anishnabek, Huron-Wendat, and Haudenosaunee (Iroquois) peoples. We acknowledge our shared responsibilities and obligations to preserve and protect the land, air and water. We are grateful to have the privilege to meet, explore, and connect here on these shared lands. In the spirit of friendship, peace and respect, we extend our thanks to all the generations that came before us and cared for these lands - for time immemorial."

3. Disclosure of pecuniary interests

There were no pecuniary interests declared.

4. Approval of the Agenda

RES: G97/25

Moved by: Eric Sandford

Seconded by: Jeff Wheeldon

THAT the amended agenda be approved as amended for Item 16 – title typo and Item 17 - Recommendation.

Carried

5. Delegations

There were no delegations received for this meeting.

6. Public Input (3 minutes per speaker)

There was no public input at this meeting.

7. Adoption of the Minutes

RES: G98/25

Moved by: Sherry Hamilton

Seconded by: Bobbi Wright

THAT the Regular Board Meeting Minutes of September 11, 2025 be adopted.

Carried

8. Business arising from these minutes

The updated draft budget is presented.

CORRESPONDENCE

9. Correspondence

None received.

STAFF REPORTS

10. Monthly Payments Issued

RES: G99/25

Moved by: Bobbi Wright

Seconded by: Lynda Reid

THAT the list of payments issued in the total amount of \$339,448.83 for the month of September 2025 be received as information.

Carried

11. Watershed Management, Planning and Regulations Reports

Director Sandford asked if LTC will be moving to a Level 3 Low Water Response. Rhonda Bateman, CAO, confirmed that the LTC Low Water Response team had met and a Level 3 Low Water Response notification would be issued. Director Sandford asked if the cheese factory had been notified. Gage Comeau, Manager, Watershed Management, Planning and Regulations, responded that the municipality needs to notify the cheese factory.

Rick English asked for the reason of permit numbers being down. Gage Comeau explained that building and development overall is down this year so far, with a jump occurring since last week. Some developers and property owners are in the preparation stage and have not yet submitted their applications for permits. Director Wheeldon added that there is a larger trend of affordability issues. Developers are slowing down and buyers are waiting to buy.

a. Summary of Permits for Period August 28 – September 26, 2025

- b. Planning and Regulations
- c. Flood Forecasting and Warning (FFW) and Ontario Low Water Response (OLWR)

RES: G100/25

Moved by: Rick English Seconded by: Bob Mullin

THAT the Watershed Management, Planning and Regulations Reports be received as information.

Carried

12. Bay of Quinte Remedial Action Plan Program

September 2025 Newsletter

RES: G101/25

Moved by: Jeff Wheeldon Seconded by: Sherry Hamilton

THAT the Bay of Quinte Remedial Action Plan Newsletter for September 2025 be received as information.

Carried

13. 2026 Fee Policy and Schedule

Director Mullin asked if the province's fee freeze of Conservation Authority planning, permits and certain other types of fees is in its third year. Rhonda Bateman, CAO responded indicating that it has been two years for LTC, due to the timing of fee schedule approvals in 2023. She added that the fee policy and schedule is prepared every year in preparation for a lift in the fee freeze. Director Mullin asked about the financial impacts of the fee freeze to LTC, and Gage Comeau quickly estimated approximately \$40,000 of losses in revenue.

RES: G102/25

Moved by: Bob Mullin Seconded by: Mike Ainsworth

THAT staff proceed with public and municipal consultation on the proposed Lower Trent Conservation 2026 Fee Policy and Schedule be approved.

Carried

14. Conservation Lands Report

Director Sandford asked if all hazard trees are removed from the conservation areas. Chris McLeod, Conservation Lands Supervisor, responded that there are a very large number of hazard trees in the conservation areas; and that staff prioritize the hazard trees on and near the public trails. Director Sandford asked Chris McLeod about staffing resources needed to manage hazard trees. Chris McLeod responded that for each of the past few years, thanks to the Board, a contract staff was hired to help manage hazard trees effectively. In 2025, an Ecology Technician was hired who is now also certified to use chain saws; but one contract staff is still needed each year to help manage the hazard trees. Director Sandford asked if LTC is liable if a tree falls on a trail user. CAO Rhonda Bateman replied that LTC would be liable.

Chris McLeod, Conservation Lands Supervisor provided an additional update on shooting related matters on an MNR-owned property adjacent to the LTC-owned Murray Marsh conservation area. MNR has now managed the matter, resulting in safer use of the Murray Marsh conservation area.

Director Wheeldon also complimented Chris McLeod's participation in a meeting of the Brighton Homelessness Taskforce.

RES: G103/25 Moved by: Lynda Reid Seconded by: Sherry Hamilton
THAT the Conservation Lands report for the period July 1 – September 30, 2025 be received as information.

Carried

15. Summary of Education and Outreach Activities Report

RES: G104/25 Moved by: Rick English Seconded by: Bobbi Wright
THAT the Summary of Education and Outreach Activities for the period of July 1 to September 30, 2025 be received as information.

Carried

16. Risk Management Official Activity Report

RES: G105/25 Moved by: Eric Sandford Seconded by: Lynda Reid
THAT the Risk Management Official Activity Report pursuant to Part IV of the Clean Water Act for the period of July 1 - September 30, 2025 be received as information.

Carried

17. 2026 Draft Budget

Chitra Gowda, Manager, Corporate Services, presented the draft budget 2026 on behalf of the Budget Subcommittee of the Board. She explained the amendment made to the capital assets budget portion. The amendment proposes to use more of the annual capital allocation amount towards a priority engineering assessment of the administrative office, without an increase to the total annual municipal allocation for capital expenses. She noted further operational decreases proposed to program areas, compared to previously presented budget versions. These proposed decreases impact program areas of corporate services and monitoring.

Director English asked how it would be possible to not increase the capital allocation amount. Chitra Gowda responded that an increase in use of capital allocation (towards the engineering assessment project) would be incurred with an equal corresponding decrease in the allocation amount to be moved to the capital reserve. Therefore, the total municipal allocation amount would remain unchanged from 2025. She added that she is leading the update of the LTC capital asset management plan and will present the updated plan to the board in December 2025.

Director English asked what the projected budget surplus from 2025 would be. Rhonda Bateman responded that at this time, a projected surplus for 2025 is unknown. Chitra Gowda added that surplus is recognized after the annual audit is approved, around March of each following year. Director Mullin asked what the province is doing and the impacts of their decisions in the past to decrease provincial funding. Director Reid indicated that the budget presented could not be taken to Quinte West municipality. Director Sandford expressed concern about liabilities that would arise from insufficient staffing and urged the other Directors to work together.

Director Mullin added that further budget cuts would impact planning work timelines. He noted that last year, Stirling-Rawdon stepped up to fill cuts made to Category 2 income; and that they could not do that every year. Director Wheeldon described that the budget exercise is disheartening because it appears to be limited to a set percent increase in mind rather than discussing the actual needs of LTC. He recommended that the Directors review what it takes to have LTC function well, including capital asset management with the realization that underfunding has happened for decades. While municipalities are planning for municipal asset management, CAs are being underfunded to do the same. He urged the Directors to support the budget not only at the LTC Board but also at municipal councils.

Director English said that 8.7% increase is not acceptable, after budget increases of around 12% each in 2024 and 2025. He asked if there were any cost savings as the engineer position has yet to be filled. Rhonda Bateman, CAO, responded that LTC is paying for external engineering services while seeking to fill the staff engineer position. Director English noted that Trent Hills has three conservation authorities and associated allocation and agreement amounts. Rhonda Bateman noted that LTC's watershed portion is the largest across the municipality of Trent Hills. Director English added that council's understanding is that LTC is now caught up on the need for budget increases. He asked if Rhonda Bateman would present to municipal councils, to which she replied in the affirmative.

Director Wright expressed a discomfort at not enabling staff to do their jobs if the draft budget further decreases. She reiterated that costs are increasing while government cuts and freezes are in place and recognized that the expenses are placed on the taxpayer. She noted that it is a necessity to have an engineer on staff as well as a staff person to manage hazard trees. She encouraged the board to keep up with the increased costs, in order to do better going forward. Director Wright added that it is a misnomer to think that an organization would be able to catch up on ever increasing costs influenced by world events.

Director Mullin noted that the LTC budget increase is overall hardly an increase to the municipality. Director Wheeldon agreed and noted that perspective is important. Impoverishing LTC would end up impacting residents. The cost of doing things poorly due to a limited budget is higher than the cost of doing things properly with a reasonable budget.

Director Sandford reiterated that importance of understanding growth and development, which is a factor in the budget increase as well. The growth in communities reduces the overall increase in budget. He pointed out that some individual increases in the proposed budget are less than last year.

Director Ainsworth expressed appreciation to the budget subcommittee for preparing the draft budget. He encouraged the board to work together as a team, and work around what we have. Houses need to be built or taxes need to be raised. He noted that sometimes property owners carry out work without seeking permits from LTC. If the municipality were generating increased revenue, then LTC could increase its budget. He suggested that councils be asked what percent increase would work for them. He added that half of the taxes received by Alnwick/Haldimand go to the county. Director Ainsworth added that elections are coming up next year; the board could put policies in place now to keep up with increasing costs.

Director Hamilton thanked the staff for their work on the draft budget and noted that as much as the board members of the budget subcommittee provided advice, the details were brought forward by staff. She noted an increase of less than 2% of the overall budget. While the LTC budget increase is in the 8% range, this is far less a percent increase when compared to the municipal budgets. She reminded the board that the draft budget presented assumes risks with proposed use of \$80,000 surplus which is not confirmed. She added that the presented budget is cutting muscle.

Board Chair Brahaney thanked the budget subcommittee for its work.

RES: G106/25 Moved by: Jeff Wheeldon Seconded by: Sherry Hamilton
THAT the Lower Trent Conservation amended 2026 draft budget report be accepted; and
THAT the amended 2026 draft budget be circulated to the member municipalities for the
required 30-day consultation period.

Carried

18. CAO's Report

Rhonda Bateman, CAO, provided additional information about the province moving forward on omnibus bill 56, and that affects to the Conservation Authorities Act are unknown at this time. She added that the conservation authority (CA) CAOs met on October 7th and discussed messaging for scenarios such as amalgamations of CAs, change in funding models, and changes to the Clean Water Act. Overall messaging is to stay positive and remind staff and municipalities that we have been through various circumstances time and again, yet are still standing. It is undetermined if the hiring freeze applies to CAs. Director English asked if current positions were affected. Rhonda Bateman replied that there appears to be a cap retroactive to January 2025. The province reconvenes October 20, 2025.

RES: G107/25 Moved by: Jeff Wheeldon Seconded by: Sherry Hamilton
THAT the CAO's Report be received as information.

Carried

19. Members Inquiries/Other Business

Director English said that emails were received by the Village of Warkworth asking if some logs could be left in the pond at the Warkworth Dam to prevent unsightly exposure of mud. Rhonda Bateman noted that ice skating is not allowed and that log placement and removal follows a public safety-based protocol.

Director Ainsworth said that some towns are developing policies for archaeological assessments. He asked if LTC mapping would be an issue for such assessments. Director Ainsworth noted the challenge of the costs of \$5,000 to \$13,000 to undertake such assessments, where they may possibly not be needed. Applications include construction of houses, decks etc. Gage Comeau recommended that the application be circulated to First Nations. The landowner can contact the First Nations at the start to obtain information, which may help alleviate extra costs.

20. **Adjournment**

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.

RES: G108/25

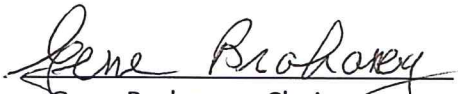
Moved by: Rick English

Seconded by: Jeff Wheeldon

THAT the meeting be adjourned.

Carried

Time: 2:38 p.m.


Gene Brahaney, Chair


Rhonda Bateman, CAO/ST

