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**MUSKRAT WATERSHED COUNCIL (MWC)**

Meeting of the Board of Directors

**Meeting Minutes**

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

**Online through Google Meet**

**Thursday, September 22, 2022, 6:30 p.m.**

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

The meeting of the Muskrat Watershed Council was called to order at 6:37 p.m.

**Attendance:**

**Present:**  Karen Coulas, Rene Coulas, Barbara Green, Debbie MacDonald, Jeff Reeves, Gerry Rook, Evelyn St. Amour, Dave Thomassin, Amanda Walt, Michael Walt

**Regrets:**  Andrea Bishop, Anna Maria Blum, Andy Laird, Erin Dolan, David Luong, Greg Stasyna

**Council Representative Present:**

Neil Nicholson, Township of Whitewater Region

**Council Representatives Regrets:**

Claus Trost, Township of Laurentian Valley Township

Mike Moore, Township of Whitewater Region

1. **Adoption of Agenda**

Debbie approved the agenda, Rene seconded it.

**Approval of minutes from June 16 2022 meeting:**

Jeff approved the minutes, Evelyn seconded.

Conflicts of interest: None

1. **Treasurer’s Report- Debbie**

See attached treasurer’s reports for July 2022 and August 18, 2022 (AGM) .

SBCNA Bingo:

Our next Bingo volunteer date is Sunday, October 9, 2022. We will need to spend some of the money from the Bingo fundraiser soon. It must be spent on something to benefit our charity. It cannot be given to an outside agency. If we don’t spend this money, SBCNA may choose to fund another charity that appears to need the money more than we do. Michael suggested we spent some of the money to order parts for the compressors so we will have them on hand. Michael will meet with Rene to identify the parts we need and their cost. At our October meeting we will put forth a motion to spend the money for these parts.

Beach mats:

Debbie said we have not yet received an invoice from supplier WeedsBGone. Dave said the receipt was taped to the box. Rene will look for it.

Evelyn, who worked in insurance for years, has read over and approved our insurance plan. Debbie will go ahead and pay the premium.

Great Lakes Local Action Fund (GLLAF) account:

Debbie will close out our third bank account which was used to manage funds for the GLLAF project, since it is now finished.

Annual Report:

Debbie will complete and submit our annual financial report. She will add Amanda Walt as our new Director of Media and Communications. Debbie will will order Amanda a golf shirt with the MWC logo.

1. **Directors’ Reports**

**Agricultural Committee Update – Karen & Rene**

Jeffrey Lake/ Pumphouse Lake:

Rene said the watering system for cattle has arrived for our project on Pumphouse Lake. He and the landowner hope to install it soon. This system will allow cattle to be watered without going into the lake.

Tree Planting:

It looks like we have received a grant for a tree-planting project in partnership with Watersheds Canada. Karen and Rene are looking for sites to do the tree planting. They had a property lined up but the owner is now selling it. We are looking for an eight-acre property on level ground, because we will be using a mechanical planter. Michael said he knows a landowner who would like to plant apple trees on 12 acres. Michael will send Karen this landowner’s contact information and Amanda will also let the landowner know that Karen will be in touch. There is also another possible property on Cedar Haven Road. Karen will talk to the owner. A farmer with lake frontage is also interested in planting bushes only.

**Science Committee – Dave**

Blue green algae - Beach closures:

MWC is disappointed that Cobden Beach was closed for most of the summer after blue green algae was found. It is unclear which government or health agency is responsible for the prolonged closure. No e-coli was found at the beach this summer. Closing the beach for a prolonged period when the blue green algae situation is fleeting makes all our work providing weed-inhibiting beach mats and aeration systems seem to be in vain. Next year we will work more closely with Ivan Burton, Chief Administrator for the township, to clarify the issue.

Rene said the beach is now full of weeds everywhere except where the mats are. Weeds are worse than usual all around the lake. Several options were discussed to suppress weeds. We could book WeedsBGone to come with a machine and cut weeds. But you have to book a long time ahead and it may be costly. Amanda and Michael said using burlap is cheaper and is a permanent solution. Amanda will send Dave the information about burlap and weed suppression. Michael mentioned we need to establish what kind of weeds these are. Karen wondered if Algonquin College might be interested in a project identifying the types of weeds in the swimming area? Dave will talk to the college. He will also check to see if there are any legalities involved in putting down burlap. We will discuss the possibility of using burlap at our next meeting, once we have gathered this information.

Water Testing reporting - Dave:

We have received several questions through our Facebook page about water quality in the lake. Dave told people there have been no summer students and we haven’t been doing any testing since COVID began. Maybe next year? He wondered if we should be releasing the values from our own testing using our new Hach water testing kit It would show we are still testing water. Rene said there is no point in testing if you don’t publish the results. Michael suggested we could use some of our Bingo money for outside lab testing, perhaps twice a year or during the swimming session. Amanda said she will look into the cost of water testing in Ottawa. Karen suggested we could have testing for the whole watershed. We will discuss independent laboratory water testing at our next meeting.

Cobden Marsh - Dave

Ivan Burton announced last month that the township is applying for a $175,000 grant from the Natural Infrastructure Fund to improve the Cobden Marsh. Jp2g was involved in the last grant MWC was involved in with the township several years ago, which included our goal of what we want done in the marsh. This new grant will fund four studies: a feasibility study, an environmental impact study, an endangered species impact study, and an impact assessment study. These studies must be completed as as initial steps before any action can happen. Jamie Schultz, Community Development Assistant for the township, is our grant writer. A letter of support from MWC is required. Karen will write and send it by the deadline of September 27, 2022. Dave will check to see if a letter of support is also needed from the Ottawa Valley Transportation Network, If so, Debbie will arrange this as she volunteers with the group. MWC is also required to make a financial contribution to this project. The exact amount can be determined later. The money must come from our own funds, not from Bingo earnings. The province will provide half the financial contribution.

Karen said stormwater redirection won’t affect the berm. The same amount of water will be coming through. Rene said stormwater redirection would divert the stormwater that now flows directly into the lake and direct it to the berm area instead. Repairing the berms will prevent the leaching of oil, road salt etc. from the old builds sewer system into the lake. Instead these nutrients will flow into the lagoon where sewage used to go. Nature trails could be built around the perimeter. The idea is to bring the marsh back to life and let people enjoy it.

Algonquin College - Dave

Kristi Beatty is the new program coordinator for the environmental technician program at Algonquin College Pembroke. She has asked what she can do for MWC. Dave will meet with her and invite her to attend our October meeting. She is looking for six projects throughout Renfrew County. Some possibilities might include Cobden marsh, loons, and soil testing on land surrounding the watershed. Rene suggested we should ask if she could choose a representative from Algonquin College to attend our meetings. Michael mentioned that in Quebec representatives from the ministry of Forests, Wildlife and Parks are sometimes also involved. Dave will talk to Michael about this.

Marsh Trail Clean-Up - Dave

Dave and Tom and Erin Dolan are hoping to get a few people involved on Sunday, October 16 to trim overgrown areas on the trail. This would show MWC is concerned about the trail Dave will ask for volunteers. Debbie will advertise on our website. Amanda will take lots of photos of this event for the website. Dave and Amanda will work on this together.

**Communications & Media - Amanda and Karen**

Pamphlets, projects, site update - Karen

Karen said GLLAF should be added to our list of projects, with lots of photos. Amanda will do this, using information in the drive. Our MWC Pamphlet also needs to be corrected as it has the wrong email address. Amanda has already updated our meeting minutes and has sorted them in reverse order.

Civitan Club Speech and WWT Community Page - Karen

Karen and Rene made a presentation to the Civitan Club on Sept. 6, 2022. Someone said they looked for us on the township website and all our information was out of date. WWT has a community area on their website with information about community groups. We should add our information there. Evelyn mentioned MWC has no phone number. People sometimes call Karen. Dave said we could set up a phone number. It might cost about $76 per year. But Rene said we should leave it as is.

**Fundraising - Karen**

No update.

1. **Old Business**

Jeffrey Lake/Pumphouse Lake Project Update - Rene

Please see Agricultural Committee update (above).

Township Bylaws - Karen

Karen said we need to set up a committee to look at amending the new-build bylaws to make sure replanting is done after new builds. Karen will send us the information. She asked us to read it over and consider if we could be part of a committee to meet and talk to other townships or conservation authorities that have done this. Once we have gathered the information we could set up a presentation in March orApril 2023 for the new township council. We will discuss this again at our October 20, 2022 meeting.

1. **Other/New Business**

One County - One Voice - Karen

MWC spoke at the Renfrew County Forum about the possibility of forming a county-wide group to speak for different environmental groups in Renfrew County. Karen sent us a powerpoint presentation about this proposal. One advantage is that we might share a grant writer with other groups. Karen asked us to send her our list of what advantages we think MWC would get from joining a group like this and what our biggest fear would be about joining. Karen’s deadline for submitting this feedback to One-county-One-Voice is very soon so she needs our comments right away.

Birds at the Beach

The township had initially said they would not put a bird deterrent on the roof of the water treatment plant, however they hired a company that put red reflective bird deterrents on the roof. This will hopefully be a deterrent to the gulls that have been using the roof.

Water testing with Hach kit:

Water testing with our new Hach water testing kit will take place on Friday, September 30, 2022 at 10:00 a.m.

1. **Next Meeting**

Thursday, October 20, 2022

**MEETING WILL BE BOTH IN PERSON AND VIRTUAL:**

**IN PERSON MEETING WILL BE IN THE BASEMENT OF THE WHITEWATER TOWNSHIP MUNICIPAL BUILDING, 44 MAIN STREET, COBDEN, ENTRANCE FROM THE PARKING LOT**

**ONLINE MEETING VIA GOOGLE MEET**

meet.google.com/ezd-qitc-btk

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

1. Adjournment: 8:44 p.m.

**Minutes recorded and submitted by:**

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Barbara Green, Secretary, Muskrat Watershed Council

**Approved by:**

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Karen Coulas, Chair, Muskrat Watershed Council

DON’T FORGET TO RENEW YOUR MWC MEMBERSHIP FOR 2022!

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.)

