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**MUSKRAT WATERSHED COUNCIL (MWC)**

Meeting of the Board of Directors

**Meeting Minutes**

**Thursday, December 15, 2022, 6:30 p.m.**

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

**Online through Google Meet**

meet.google.com/ezd-qitc-btk

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

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

The meeting of the Muskrat Watershed Council was called to order at 6:35 p.m.

**Attendance:**

**Present:**  Karen Coulas, Rene Coulas, Debbie MacDonald, Barbara Green, Dave Thomassin, Amanda Walt, Michael Walt, Anna-Maria Blum

**Regrets:**  Andy Laird, Andrea Bishop, Greg Stasyna, Evelyn St. Amour, Jeff Reeves, Gerry Rook

**Council Representative Present:**

Claus Trost, Laurentian Valley Township

Chris Olmstead, Township of Whitewater Region

MWC members introduced themselves and welcomed Chris Olmstead, councillor with the Township of Whitewater Region. Chris will represent the township to liaise with MWC. Chris has a special interest in the Cobden marsh. His family owns the property near the marsh where the park and ride is located, at Highway 17 and Foresters Falls Road. He hopes this property will eventually be made available for use by the community.

1. **Adoption of Agenda**

Debbie approved the agenda, Rene seconded it.

**Approval of minutes from November 17, 2022 meeting:**

Dave approved the minutes, Michael seconded.

1. **Treasurer’s Report- Debbie**

See attached treasurer’s report.

Free banking services

Our current banks, Scotiabank and BMO, don’t offer free banking for not-for-profit organizations. Claus mentioned some banks may offer free banking. Michael will look into National Trust whom he has had dealt with before for charity work. They and TD both handle more business accounts. Debbie mentioned it’s important that we be able to access Canada Revenue Agency (CRA) through whichever bank we choose. Royal Bank is the one Debbie used for this before. Karen mentioned you sometimes have to go through an app to access CRA.

SBCNA Bingo

Our next volunteer date is January 29, 2023, from 3:30 to 5:30. Dave volunteered to attend with Debbie. Debbie has received the MWC golf shirt she ordered for Amanda and will get it to her soon.

1. **Directors’ Reports**

**Agricultural Committee – Karen & Rene**

No Update

**Science Committee – Dave**

Canada Summer Jobs

If we get a project in collaboration with Algonquin College, we will apply for two summer students through Canada Summer Jobs. The application deadline is Jan. 18, 2023. Karen will be the lead for the application process.

Native and Invasive Species

At our January meeting, we will discuss forming a committee to monitor native and invasive species in the watershed. This might be a project we could do in collaboration with Algonquin College.

**Communications & Media - Amanda**

Donation to MWC from Farmer’s Daughter Honey

Amanda has updated our social media to show the information about the Farmer’s Daughter Honey donation. She plans to do an interview with the donor to be shared on our social media, asking her why she chose to donate to MWC.

Great Lakes Local Action Fund (GLLAF) grant

Amanda has updated the information about this grant on our projects page, with lots of photos.

Expired MWC subscriptions

Amanda has changed the automatic notification MWC members received when their annual membership expired. Now, instead of saying the membership has been cancelled there is a softer message encouraging members to renew.

Articles for posting on social media

Amanda has enough articles ready to post on our website and social media to allow us to post something every week or every second week for January and February.

MWC Christmas wish list

Amanda asked each of us to send her our Christmas wish list for MWC. The idea is to inspire the community by listing our priorities and suggestions for improvement for MWC. Examples of suggestions could be wishing that all septic systems be upgraded and inspected, that MWC grow our volunteer base, that we engage more corporate sponsors, that everyone contribute to getting rid of blue-green algae or that we install an improved aeration system at Cobden Beach. Please send about five suggestions to Amanda as soon as possible. She will consult with Karen before posting some of them.

**Fundraising Committee Update - Karen**

Student volunteers to look for grants

Karen will meet with Dave, Amanda and Amanda’s daughter on December 27, 2022 to discuss applying for a grant to hire student volunteers to search for other grants that we might apply for.

1. **Old Business**

Strategic Plan - Barb

Barb is compiling the comments she received from members about revising our Strategic Plan. She will send this information to Karen, Dave and Jeff, who have indicated a possible interest in helping to update the plan. Barb will find a time for the group to meet online to discuss these comments.

Billboard for Muskrat Watershed Council - Dave

A committee consisting of Dave, Michael and Rene will meet early in the new year to design the billboard which we hope to install in the spring of 2023. It will be about 6 by 8 feet in size, with a map in the middle and spaces for paid sponsors around the edges. As suggested by Claus, the committee will take a look at the new signs with maps that went up a few weeks ago on the multipurpose trail. Rene will also take a photo of the billboard at Golden Lake and measure its exact dimensions. Students in Algonquin College’s carpentry program may be enlisted to build the sign. Claus said we will need to approach Algonquin College with our plans completed. He suggested we cc him on our correspondence with the college, as he has dealt with them before on similar projects.

Algonquin College student presentations

Dave, Chris, Karen and Debbie met with Kristi Beatty, program coordinator for the environmental technician program at Algonquin College. They watched presentations by Algonquin e-tech students regarding rehabilitation designs for the Cobden Marsh in Whitewater Township.The presentations were all very good. Each was different but all included a visual component. Karen said we will make a compilation based on these presentations to use when we present. Dave will obtain all the presentations and we will look at compiling them. Amanda offered to help with this. Dave will make a longer presentation at our January meeting about the Cobden marsh. Dave will also meet again with Kristi in February.

Meeting with Algonquin College about possible grants

Dave met with Brenda Slomka, program manager of applied research and innovation. She will look for funding for possible projects we could do. To counter volunteer burnout, she will look into grants where we can pay volunteers. Rene and Karen also met with Brenda. She wanted an idea of what projects MWC would be interested in. Karen and Rene asked if a representative from Algonquin College could be designated to attend MWC meetings. Brenda may also attend one of our future meetings.

Cobden Marsh grant

We are still waiting on the grant for the feasibility study for the Cobden marsh. Karen said there may be some money in that grant for doing actual work, not just for the feasibility study. Chris will request the grant application for the feasibility study for the marsh and will get an update on its status. Chris said it’s more like $300,000 that the township is asking for in this grant application.

Mechanical Planting- Karen

Karen received an email from a property owner. He is not selling his property after all so he is still interested in having some mechanical planting done on his property. We will go ahead with this. Karen told the other landowners who had come forward that she will keep their information on file in case we get another grant for planting. All were fine with this. Mechanical planting requires 8-10 acres in one spot because it is hard to move the equipment. But Rene said he might be able to move the equipment himself to another location, if needed. April may be too early to plant due to frost and water.

1. **Other/New Business**

Boat washing station - Dave

MWC would like to make a presentation to township council about this. Chris suggested we put it on township’s agenda in the fall. Dave already has a presentation ready but it is missing the costs. Dave will send this presentation to Karen and Michael. Michael will get quotes on the costs. Wet wash and dry wash are the options. Karen, Dave and Michael will do a Google Meet to discuss this. Anna-Maria looked at grants. There are invasive species grants that we might apply for to cover the costs of this project. This would be a good time to apply as the granting agencies will soon be getting funding for the new year.

Loon Project - Dave

Algonquin College was not interested in this project. Dave will speak with Kristi Beatty about it again, possibly when she attends our January 19, 2023 meeting.

1. **Next Meeting**

January 19, 2023, 6:30 p.m.

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

**Online: Through Google Meet**

meet.google.com/ezd-qitc-btk

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

1. Adjournment: 8:03 p.m.

**Minutes recorded and submitted by:** \_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_\_

 Barbara Green, Secretary, Muskrat Watershed Council

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

 Karen Coulas, Chair, Muskrat Watershed Council

BE THE FIRST TO RENEW YOUR MWC MEMBERSHIP FOR 2023!

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.

