

The Couchiching Conservancy



2015 Annual General Meeting January 31, 2015

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 2:00 p.m. at Odas Park, Orillia with the attendance of around 150 members and guests. Executive Director Mark Bisset welcomed the following special guests:

Bruce Stanton – Simcoe North MP

Mike Burkett – Mayor of Severn Township

Judith Cox – Deputy-Mayor of Severn Township

Mason Ainsworth – representing the Mayor of Orillia

Scott Macpherson – councillor, Oro-Medonte Township

Brendon Larson – guest speaker from the University of Waterloo

2. Minutes and highlights of the 2014 Annual General Meeting

Secretary Ingrid VanderMarel briefly highlighted items of note from the 2014 minutes: the 20th anniversary of the Conservancy, the updating of the Articles of Continuance and By-law presented at a Special Meeting of the Membership April 7, 2014, the beginnings of the SARBEX program, and the sharing of remembrances from members in the absence of the guest speaker.

The minutes were emailed to members in advance of the meeting, projected on screen at the meeting and hard copies were also available. There were no comments or questions.

Moved by Janet Grand that the minutes of the 2014 Annual General Meeting be approved.

Seconded by Ken Thomson. Carried.

Moved by Adam Thomson that the minutes of the Special Meeting of the Membership of April 7, 2014 be approved. Seconded by Tom Wilson.

3. President's remarks

Outgoing President David Homer remarked on the success of the Couchiching Conservancy and that it stemmed from three groups of people: full and part-time staff and contractors, volunteers and financial supporters, and the board with the additional committees that have been set up during the last two years (human resources, policy, speakers' bureau, Grants Woods renovation).

Mark thanked David for his commitment and hard work as President.

4. Treasurer's report

Treasurer Kailin Gratrix presented the audited financial statements for the period ending October 31, 2014. Kailin made special reference to the following:

- Statement of financial position, total assets and liabilities compared to last year (pg 4)
- Revenues and expenses (pg 5). Donations are up. We are hurting a bit in terms of grants but have a number of applications in the works.
- Prior period correction with respect to funds held by the Community Foundation of Orillia (pg 16)

- Cash flow (pg 6) – there is a \$15,000 surplus at year end, up from last year

Moved by David Kennedy that the Financial Statements for the year ended October 31, 2014 be approved. Seconded by Judy Mitchell Wilson. Carried.

Motion to appoint Hehn Trickey Professional Corporation Chartered Accountants as auditor for the year ending October 31, 2015. Moved by Ted Duncan, seconded by Ann Ross. Carried.

5. Past Presidents Council report

Janet Grand addressed the membership on behalf of the Past Presidents Council. She has been involved with the Conservancy for 21 years. It has had a huge impact on the landscape for our children and grandchildren. The question is: can the Conservancy be trusted to safeguard these lands forever as is solemnly promised? It must stay strong for the long term. For their contribution Janet and Ron Reid have re-designated some of their life insurance as a pledge for the future. There are 21 pledges so far, worth \$1.6 million. This is for core funding of the Conservancy, its staff and building. Janet encouraged other members that when it comes time to think about their legacy, they should talk to someone at the Conservancy.

Mark asked the Past Presidents in the room to stand and thanked them for their hard work and dedication.

6. Executive Director's report

Mark started by recognizing the staff and board for all of their work. He welcomed Gay Guthrie, the new volunteer coordinator.

Acquisitions

Mark mentioned the Conservancy's goal in creating a critical mass of natural habitat. The 354-acre Ellen Larsen Conservation Easement creates a link between Conservancy land and Queen Elizabeth II Wildlands Park, a transition from Carden Alvar to granite barrens with the Head River between them.

Margot Holt's legacy gift to the Nature Conservancy of Canada provided 100 acres of grassland.

In September the Province upgraded Carden land to create Carden Alvar Provincial Park, which raises the level of protection for the property.

Recently the 400-acre Turnbull Ranch Easement known for its shrike capture and release program was donated to the Conservancy and will be used in the habitat benefit exchange program.

Stewardship

Grasslands for bobolink and eastern meadowlark are being restored on Bluebird Ranch as part of the Species at Risk Benefit Exchange Program (SARBEX) lead by Ron Reid.

The Conservancy's work has expanded into Ramara Township where Dorthea Hangaard is working with private landowners on fencing and water projects.

Dog-strangling vine is being managed in Carden and garlic mustard has been reduced on the Church Woods and Elliott Woods properties.

The Copeland Forest Stewardship Committee is incorporating as the Copeland Forest Friends Association. Twenty-two diverse user groups have been brought together under the lead of David Kennedy and Dorthea Hangaard.

Development and Outreach

Finding money continues to be a challenge but the Conservancy's community profile stays strong. Monthly giving continues to grow and the annual campaign was an improvement over last year.

Our school program, Nature in the Neighbourhood, involved 1,200 kids this past year. Julia Wolst has more education program ideas for 2015.

A donation from Dr. Nancy Ironside supported the greening of Regent Park Public School with native species.

Tanya Clark, Stefanie Moy-Schuster and Dorthea have brought the Conservancy into the information age.

Our second Corn Roast in the Woods brought in \$4000 and our biggest fundraiser, the Carden Challenge brought in over \$22,000. The Carden Nature Festival was small but perfect. It will be a single-day event in 2015.

Many kids come to Grants Woods and there are tours on various other properties.

The common denominator for all events and activities are our volunteers.

2015

Negotiations are presently ongoing on two properties. One is Susan Deadman's 100-acre conservation easement on Wainman Line in Severn Township.

The SARBEX program will bring priority properties under our protection.

We have applied to the Trillium Foundation to renovate the offices at Grants Woods. This will reduce our carbon footprint. Monies for this project will also come from the bequest received from William Grant's estate.

A new program, Passport to Nature, will begin this year and will include a series of hikes and outings spread out over the year.

Question from the floor:

Re: Carden Alvar Provincial Park

The question concerned the possible loss of control of Conservancy lands in Carden with the establishment of the park. Mark noted that the ownership of the land has not changed but the province will control the road allowances. The Conservancy will work closely with the provincial government and will continue to steward the land under a five-year stewardship agreement to be signed. The big change is the level of protection.

7. Presentation of gold and silver pins

David Homer and Margaret Pomeroy presented gold pins to:

Karen Popp of the Pie-making Ladies of Lake Dalrymple fame, for all of her contributions to the Conservancy, especially the organization of the dinner for the Carden Challenge. Her generous donation to NCC allowed for the acquisition of Prairie Smoke Nature Reserve.

Timothy Crooks who spearheaded the protection of Church Woods and continues to care for the property as leader of the property management team.

David Kennedy for his time on the board and lead on the Copeland Forest Stewardship project, acting as chair of both the Stewardship Committee and Advisory Committee.

Silver pins were presented to:

Alan Smale for his various tasks on Conservancy properties, notably the Helen Butler Reserve and recently on Bluebird Ranch assisting with the restoration of grassland habitat.

Leanore Wiancko, property team leader for Jennett Woods and member of the property team for East Coulson Swamp, for her years as a volunteer with the Conservancy.

Stefanie Moy-Shuster for her creativity and hours of volunteer work in setting up of the Conservancy website and putting together the video for the Passport to Nature event, and her contribution to the Development Committee.

Neil Gray for his important part in the Carden Nature Festival including his recent job of organizing volunteer marshals for the event, and his volunteer work on the Carden Plain.

8. Election of new board

Mark Bisset presented the slate of nominees for 2015-2016: Margaret Pomeroy, David Homer, Robert Sullivan, Doug Christie, Gord Michener, Kailin Gratrix, Liz McClelland, Jack Booth and Pam Fulford. He then asked three times for further nominations from the floor. There were none.

Moved by Janet Grant that the slate of candidates for the 2015-2016 Board of Directors of the Couchiching Conservancy as recommended by the Nominations Committee be elected, with Margaret Pomeroy as President. Seconded by Ken Thomson. Carried.

9. Incoming President's remarks and Recognition of departing board members

Margaret Pomeroy thanked the members for coming to the AGM and for all of their support of the Conservancy through volunteer work on various projects and properties, attendance at meetings, and financial contributions.

Margaret recognized and thanked three special people:

Jamie Powell is leaving the board having joined in 2010 and serving as an effective and action-oriented President from 2011 to 2013. He also served on the Copeland Advisory Committee and represented the Conservancy on the Land Between Governance Circle. He will now join the Past Presidents' Council.

Ingrid VanderMarel, who joined the board in 2008 and has served as an excellent Secretary from 2010 to the present, also served on the Copeland Advisory Committee and continues to represent the Conservancy on the Copeland Stewardship Committee as it transitions to the Copeland Forest Friends Association. She volunteers on the Elliott Woods property team and champions the cause of garlic mustard removal.

David Homer joined the board in 2010 and for the last two years has served as an enthusiastic and inspiring President. He has chaired the Carden Nature Festival Committee and the Strategic Planning Committee, and also served as the president of the Carden Field Naturalists for a number of years. David has generously donated beautiful bird carvings for fundraising for the Conservancy for the past decade. He has also always been generous with his praise and thoughtful in thanking both individuals and groups for their work. He will continue his work with the Carden Nature Festival, support the renovations at Grants Woods and will remain on the board as past-president.

Mark Bisset presented Jamie, Ingrid and David with framed photos by Arnie Stinsson.

Margaret talked about the diversity of gender and age on the board, its effectiveness and the participation of board members on a number of committees. The new bylaw provides for a three-year term for board members, renewable once for a further three-year term before a member will rotate out. Board members may be re-elected following the absence of a year. This provision allows for both continuity and renewal.

Margaret saluted the founding members for their ongoing legacy and encouraged members to explore the many diverse opportunities to volunteer for the Conservancy. She praised Mark Bisset as a most capable Executive Director, and introduced and called for a show of appreciation for staff members Mark Bisset, David Hawke, Dorteia Hangaard, Tanya Clark, Gay Guthrie, Kathy Connors and Ron Reid.

10. Guest speaker

Bob Sullivan introduced Brendan Larson, an associate professor in the Department of Environment and Resource Studies at the University of Waterloo and past-president of Ontario Nature. Brendan co-authored *The Woodland Heritage of Southern Ontario* with John Riley and recently published *Metaphors for Environmental Sustainability*. He has published extensively on topics related to invasive species and presented a most informative and thought-provoking talk on this subject entitled “Bad Ugly Good”, in which he discussed the need for strategies and prioritizing.

11. Wrap-up and adjournment

Mark mentioned that long-time supporter Jim Woodford was ill with cancer. Our thoughts go to him and his wife Pat.

Moved by Bob Broom that the meeting be adjourned.

Prepared March 21, 2015 by Ingrid VanderMarel