

Minutes



Annual General Meeting

March 6, 2021

Video Conference via Zoom

The 2021 Annual General Meeting (AGM) was called to order by Executive Director Mark Bisset at 7:00 p.m. Those in virtual attendance were over 270 members and guests.

1. Call to Order & Welcome Guests	Lead: Mark Bisset	
Discussion/Conclusions: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Welcome given.• Acknowledged the area from which the meeting is being broadcasted as the traditional territory of the Anishnaabeg, Haudenosaunee, Wendat and Metis Peoples. This territory is covered by the Upper Canada Treaties.• Welcome and appreciation given to the members of the Indigenous Community and several local politicians that joined this virtual meeting.		
2. Review of Agenda Items	Lead: Mark Bisset	
Discussion/Conclusions: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• A brief explanation as to how the meeting would run was provided, including describing the use of the Zoom polling tool to record votes for the motions, and the Zoom Q&A function for asking questions.		
3. Review of Previous AGM Minutes	Lead: Lisa Neville	
Discussion/Conclusions: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Lisa Neville read highlights from the 2020 AGM minutes.• No corrections arose and the minutes for the 2020 AGM were accepted as distributed electronically ahead of the meeting and posted on The Couchiching Conservancy's (CC) website.		
Motion: To approve the Minutes of the 2020 Annual General Meeting of The Couchiching Conservancy.		
Moved by: Lisa Neville	Seconded by: Jamie Ross	Vote: Carried

4. Treasurer's Report		Lead: Jack Booth
Discussion/Conclusions:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jack Booth reviewed <i>The Couchiching Conservancy Financial Statements For the Year Ended October 31, 2020</i> as distributed electronically ahead of the meeting and posted on the CC's website. Highlights included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Total revenue – significantly more than 2019, while expenditures were slightly lower: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Over 87% was from grants and donations, with the vast majority coming from environmentally-minded individuals and organizations. ▪ A grant received in 2020, increasing revenue, funded a 2019 property purchase and covers an acquisition fund deficit reported in 2019. ▪ Investment income grew to 7% of total revenue due to fundraising efforts and increased endowment and reserve funds. ○ <i>Statement of Operations and Changes in Net Assets</i> (p. 5): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ Expenses were under budget primarily due to property acquisitions being lower than forecasted. ▪ The pandemic slowed both the acquisition process and the performance of field-work during the past year e.g., a property recently closed in January 2021 was expected in 2020. ▪ Reported surplus allowed for increases in the endowment and reserve funds. ○ <i>Statement of Financial Position</i> (Balance Sheet p. 4): <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ▪ The cash and bank balance, and the deferred contributions unusually high due to the fundraising campaigns for acquisitions, including the Black River Corridor and Cedarhurst Alvar. ▪ Investments in the Heartwood Endowment Fund increase by \$75,000 to \$381,000. ▪ Net assets increased, of which just over \$5.3 million consists of properties and easements. ▪ CC continues to be in a strong financial position. • Thousands of volunteer hours contributed not reflected in these financial statements. • Jack Booth thanked all supporters, volunteers, staff and board members for their commitment, as well as Jennifer Mann and Debbie Trickey of Hehn Trickey for their timely work. 		
Motion: To receive the Financial Statements for the year ended October 31, 2020.		
Moved by: Jack Booth	Seconded by: Doug Christie	Vote: Carried
Motion: To appoint Hehn Trickey Professional Corporation Chartered Accountants as auditor for the year ending October 31, 2021.		
Moved by: Jack Booth	Seconded by: Lisa Neville	Vote: Carried
5. Election of Board		Lead: Mark Bisset
Discussion/Conclusions:		
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Biographies of the <i>Proposed slate of directors for 2021</i> as distributed electronically ahead of the meeting and posted on CC's website. 		

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • CC’s Nominating Committee has recommended the following slate of candidates: Neil Gray as President, and Directors Jamie Ross, Lisa Neville, Kathy Hunt, Jane Bonsteel, David A. Homer, Dale Leadbeater, Janet Machan and Bob Sullivan. • Mark Bisset asked three times: “Are there any nominations from the floor?” Not receiving any in the Q&A box, the motion was read. 		
<p>Motion: To accept the slate of candidates as recommended by the Nominations Committee for 2021: President Neil Gray, and Directors Jamie Ross, Lisa Neville, Kathy Hunt, Jane Bonsteel, David A. Homer, Dale Leadbeater, Janet Machan and Bob Sullivan.</p>		
Moved by: Doug Christie	Seconded by: Jack Booth	Vote: Carried
6. Incoming President’s Remarks		Lead: Neil Gray
<p>Discussion/Conclusions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Recognition and appreciation given to the outgoing board President, Jamie Ross, as well as to the departing board members Doug Christie, Jack Booth and Wendy Lowry. • Welcome and introduction to newly elected board members Janet Machan, Dale Leadbeater and Bob Sullivan. • Presentation of the staff and their roles in CC after some recent changes. David Hawke, now a consultant for CC, was praised for his dedication and leadership. • Appreciation to the many volunteers and supporters. 		
7. Development Committee Report		Lead: Doug Varty
<p>Discussion/Conclusions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • The Development Committee is a fundraising committee established last year with the launch of the Black River Corridor Campaign. • With the addition of the Cedarhurst property in the Carden Alvar Corridor, the goal is to raise \$1.4 million over a period of 4 to 5 years for the Corridors Campaign initiative. • Doug Varty presented a brief update on the Corridors Campaign: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ To date, \$873,000 has been pledged and donated representing about 62% of the goal. ○ CC’s commitment towards the purchase of the Cedarhurst property by The Nature Conservancy of Canada is fully funded. ○ Appreciation given to all those who have contributed. ○ The committee will continue to fundraise and also hope to attract government funding and additional grants from Foundations. 		
8. Executive Director Report		Lead: Mark Bisset
<p>Discussion/Conclusions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Reflected on the last AGM in March 2020, where members and guests gathered in person just before the lock-down, and operating during the past year of the COVID-19 pandemic. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Donors rallied; the Carden Challenge event was re-jigged and the previous fundraising and participant records were broken. ○ Volunteers returned to conduct field work. 		

- Ambassador teams were deployed to properties to greet the influx of visitors.
- Citizen Scientists:
 - Volunteers monitored 31 reserves and easements, and made 192 team visits, with more than 320 Species at Risk observed.
 - Reptile Monitoring example - with monitoring by trained volunteers comes significantly more data recorded compared to properties without this program.
 - Mark Bisset shared a story to illustrate how this program helps achieve CC's goals:
 - From their reptile training, Noella Storry and Peter Robinson knew that the turtle they helped to cross a road was an endangered Spotted Turtle, and collected the information needed to report the observation. The area it was found in is a priority area and the finding had immediate consequences for CC's acquisition strategy and garnering other support.
- Recognition and thanks to all volunteers, but particularly this year to: Charon and Doug Varty, Neil and Ann Gray, Mel and Al Tuck, Roland Rehorn and Joan Vincent, Alan Smale, Mike Read, John Walinck, Kevin Binsted, Janet Machan, and Jeff Cole.
- Map of nature reserves (NR) and conservation easements, including new ones that will need official dedications once the pandemic is over:
 - Whitney Wetland NR – 30-acre tract adjacent to the Mclsaac Wetland Nature Reserve.
 - Black River Wildlands Corridor – the Dr. Ron Taylor NR (175-acre tract) and the Marley NR – (technically acquired in 2021; 71-acre tract).
 - Bass Lake West Corridor – 2 easements in the works.
- Thanks given to funding partners, donors, volunteers and staff.
- Summary of responses to questions answered during the meeting:
 1. CC's Whitney Wetland property is south-east of Mud Lake, but the area recently cleared is near the airport, adjacent to Mud Lake. Both properties are within the same large wetland complex, but CC's property is not directly affected.
 2. The Black River Wildlands Corridor strategy is to infill with protected areas in and around Queen Elizabeth II (QEII) Provincial Park and Crown Land to create connectivity between these areas and build-out the integrity of QEII park. Would like to see the protection designation of the Crown Land raised in the area.
 3. CC's reserves and easements have not been directly affected by Minister's Zoning Orders (MZOs) to date, but have been requested to comment on the issue and have done so through our partners, e.g., Ontario Nature, Lake Simcoe Rescue Coalition, etc. CC is not an advocacy organization, but at times, if our property is under direct effect from a development will speak-out and provide comments.
 4. Primarily work with our partner the Simcoe County Greenbelt Coalition to provide comments and contribute to their analysis for their submissions to the Ontario Government for expansion of the greenbelt into Simcoe County. Important to expand into Simcoe County and the Carden area because development intensified here when the greenbelt was established.
 5. If the opportunity arises, CC would consider buying an easement property as a step-up to protection. The Turnbull easement property was donated a few years ago.
 6. Yes, would expand property protection, through a conservation easement or donation (market values to purchase in the area very high), into the Oro Moraine. Always open to speak with land owners e.g., the priority area of Bass Lake West, which contains the Oro Moraine.
 7. CC works closely with other Land Trust organizations particularly, The Nature Conservancy of Canada, and recently with CPAWs Wildlands League, which has used our mapping around QEII park. Also, working with Indigenous partners in our priority areas e.g., involved in a small

working group with other Land Trusts and Indigenous community members to look how can work together, and with Indigenous groups in the Matchedash area on land protection.

8. No, CC is not challenging the government on their use of MZOs, but have offered comments on their policy changes, and hope they are considered. CC is a non-partisan organization. The development in Cumberland Beach does not directly affect CC's property.

9. Yes, CC is currently working with Ontario Farmland Trust on a potential conservation easement in Oro-Medonte.

9. Mini Film Festival

Lead: Joelle Burnie

Discussion/Conclusions:

- A mini film festival was presented to attendees by Joelle Burnie.

10. Wrap-up

Lead: Mark Bisset

Discussion/Conclusions:

- Thank you given to all.

Meeting declared closed at 8:23 p.m. by Mark Bisset

Minutes Recorded by: Lisa Neville, Board Secretary