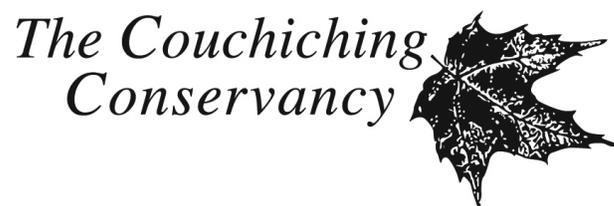


Minutes



Annual General Meeting

April 13, 2025

Hawk Ridge Golf & Country Club, Severn, ON

The 2025 Annual General Meeting (AGM) was called to order by President Kathy Hunt at 2:00 p.m. Those in attendance were 126 members and guests, and quorum was achieved.

1. Call to Order & Welcome	Lead: Kathy Hunt
Discussion/Conclusions: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• President Kathy Hunt welcomed everyone to the 31st AGM.• Acknowledged that CC operates on the territory of the Anishnabeg. CC recognizes the signed Williams Treaties and the Indigenous territories we stand on, and a commitment to strengthening these relationships in the decades to come.• Welcome and appreciation given to the members of the Indigenous Communities and local politicians that joined this AGM.	
2. Review of Agenda Items	Lead: Kathy Hunt
Discussion/Conclusions: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• The agenda was provided on paper and on the screen.	
3. In Memory of Ron Reid	Lead: Mark Bisset
Discussion/Conclusions: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Mark Bisset spoke of his friend, Ron Reid, a founder and former Executive Director of The Couchiching Conservancy (CC) who passed away in 2024. Tribute paid to Ron Reid's character and lifetime of contributions and leadership for conservation in Ontario.	
4. Review of Previous AGM Minutes	Lead: Jane Bonsteel
Discussion/Conclusions: <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Director Jane Bonsteel read highlights from the 2024 AGM minutes for the year ending October 31, 2023.• The minutes for the 2024 AGM were distributed electronically ahead of the meeting, posted on CC's website, and provided on paper at the meeting.	

<ul style="list-style-type: none"> No questions or corrections arose. 		
<p>Motion: To approve the Minutes of the 2024 Annual General Meeting of The Couchiching Conservancy.</p>		
Moved by: Jane Bonsteel	Seconded by: Janet Grand	Vote: Carried
<p>5. Treasurer's Report</p>		Lead: Jack Booth
<p>Discussion/Conclusions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Jack Booth reviewed <i>The Couchiching Conservancy Financial Statements For the Year Ended October 31, 2024</i> as distributed electronically ahead of the meeting, posted on the CC's website, with paper copies available at the meeting. Highlights included: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <i>Statement of Operations (p. 5):</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> CC had a strong financial year. Total revenue exceeded budget by \$300,000, primarily due to strong return on investments held by the Community Foundation of Orillia and Area. Total donations received were also higher than the previous year. Total revenue exceeded \$2 million. Total expenditures of \$1.6 million included \$910,959 for the acquisition of properties. <i>Statement of Financial Position at Oct. 31, 2024 (Balance Sheet p. 4):</i> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> The majority of nearly \$1.3 million is invested for long term (available within a one-year time frame). Endowment assets increased by \$177,700; liabilities totaled \$436,000. Acquisitions increased capital assets by \$675,000. Strong financial results allowed Acquisitions reserve fund increased to \$400,000 and President's reserve fund (primarily to assist operations if revenues fall short in a future year) to \$300,000. Net assets increased by over \$1,119,000 over the past year. CC continues to be in a strong financial position with no long-term debt and \$2,457,000 in the Reserve and Endowment funds. Thousands of volunteer hours contributed not reflected in these financial statements. 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 audit. Jack Booth is stepping down as Treasurer but will continue to volunteer and assist with the accounting and reporting for CC. He asked for any questions and there were none. 		
<p>Motion: To receive the Financial Statements for the year ended October 31, 2024.</p>		
Moved by: Jack Booth	Seconded by: Susan Crowe	Vote: Carried
<p>Motion: To appoint Hehn Trickey Professional Corporation Chartered Accountants as auditor for the year ending October 31, 2025.</p>		
Moved by: Jack Booth	Seconded by: Doug Christie	Vote: Carried

6. President's Remarks	Lead: Kathy Hunt
<p>Discussion/Conclusions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thank-you to staff who put this AGM together, especially Jocelyn Trudell, Tanya Clark and Dorthea Hangaard. • The past year has been about 'getting set': <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ the financial position is very strong; ○ there is a solid staff team in place; ○ youth involvement has increased; and • CC has increased outreach, including to other land trusts to share best practices and create partnerships, to Indigenous partners, to community partners, to education and training programs. • CC is fortunate to have the strong support from all those in attendance and our whole community of members, supporters, volunteers. This support, together with staff and leadership, will ensure the achievement of great things. • Kathy Hunt concluded with, "It has been an honour to serve as your president." 	
7. Past Presidents' Council	Lead: Bob Sullivan
<p>Discussion/Conclusions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Thanks to the members of the Past Presidents' Council. • The Past Presidents' Council established the Heartwood Endowment Fund, a protected endowment whose income is dedicated to supporting the core of the organization. • Joan Vincent and Roland Rehorn spoke of their support for the Heartwood Endowment Fund as lasting tribute to their daughter, Angela Rehorn, in addition to the Community Science Fund named in her honour. 	
8. Recognition of Volunteers & Outgoing Board members	Lead: Dorthea Hangaard
<p>Discussion/Conclusions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Each year, CC recognizes volunteers who have gone 'above and beyond' in their dedication. • Although there are many, this year two were chosen to be honoured at the AGM. • Patrick Jones is part of the Youth Stewardship Program and an active participant in the Angela Rehorn Commemorative Project. He has worked on removing derelict fencing, invasive dog strangling vine and done monitoring for the Wildlife on Roads project. He is a lifelong conservationist in the making. • Pam Paylor volunteers in the office and in the field doing invasive species control on nature reserves. She helped write the grant that secured the office Defibrillator. Pam wrote, "...when I saw the new accessible trail project at Grant's Woods...I instantly knew that this organization truly understood the importance of making the outdoors accessible for everyone, regardless of their mobility. I wanted to be part of that mission." • Neil Gray is leaving the Board after six years including two as President. He brought expertise in many areas and will remain with CC on the Past Presidents' Council. • Jack Booth has been CC's treasurer for 11 years and has donated countless hours of professional time to the organization. CC has benefited greatly from his extensive expertise in managing CC's finances. He will continue to be CC's accountant. 	

9. Election of Board		Lead: Dorthea Hangaard
<p>Discussion/Conclusions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Biographies of the <i>Proposed slate of directors for 2025-26</i> distributed electronically ahead of the meeting and posted on CC's website. • CC's Nominations Committee has recommended the following slate of candidates: Jane Bonsteel as President, and Directors Susan Crowe, Kathy Hunt, Morris Ilyniak, Dale Leadbeater, Janet Machan, Lisa Neville, Bob Sullivan and Tom Wilson. • Dorthea Hangaard asked three times: "Are there any nominations from the floor?" Not receiving any, the motion was read. 		
<p>Motion: To accept the slate of candidates as recommended by the Nominations Committee for 2025-2026: Jane Bonsteel (President) and Directors Susan Crowe, Kathy Hunt (Past President), Morris Ilyniak, Dale Leadbeater, Janet Machan, Lisa Neville, Bob Sullivan and Tom Wilson.</p>		
Moved by: Mark Bisset	Seconded by: Janet Grand	Vote: Carried
10. Incoming President's Remarks		
<p>Discussion/Conclusions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Jane Bonsteel spoke of the importance of science in CC's operations. Each potential property is evaluated for its biodiversity, its place in the <i>Natural Heritage Action Strategy</i>, its connectedness to other protected areas to allow movement of animals and plants. • CC's properties contribute to nature-based solutions for the climate and biodiversity crises, provide improvements to air and water quality, and provide the opportunity for us to enjoy the mental health benefits of spending time in nature. • Thanks to out-going president, Kathy Hunt. • Looking forward to working with CC's skilled staff, volunteers, members and supporters. 		
11. Executive Director Report		Lead: Dorthea Hangaard
<p>Discussion/Conclusions:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • As conflict rages around us and as we survive a once-in-a-generation ice storm, CC is supported by community. In creating this land trust, you have risen to the challenge of this era. • Now ten fulltime staff comprising Conservation and Stewardship, Landowner Stewardship and Acquisition, Fundraising and Engagement, Administration. • CC was chosen and completed the Conservation Excellence Certification, one of only 6 land trusts in Canada to achieve this certification. It signifies to donors, partners and funders that CC operates at the highest level of professional practice. • Agnew-Melnyk Nature Reserve, a Conservation Easement since 2004, was donated to CC in 2024 by Sandy Agnew and Lynne Melnyk. Located in the Hogg Creek watershed, it features grasslands, mixed forests, a lowland meadow, connects to the Huronia Land Conservancy's Hogg Creek Nature Reserve and is surrounded by neighbours who participate in the Managed Forest Tax Incentive Program. Sandy and Lynne have been great partners over the last 20 years and we thank them for their generous donation. 		

- Eldridge Nature Reserve was established in 2024. This 200-acre property is in the Black River Corridor and is Priority One habitat. It is within one kilometre of QEII Provincial Park and features barren rock, sedge marsh, forest and is highly biodiverse with over 26 species-at-risk. It has been in the same family for 5 generations. Thank-you to the Eldridge family for their donation of 20% of the appraised value.
- Property dedications for both Agnew-Melnyk and Eldridge properties will happen later this year.
- Corridors Campaign: This six-year campaign, which focused on two of our five corridors (Carden and Black River) was CC's first multi-year fundraising campaign. \$1.7 million was raised, 2626 acres (1065 hectares) protected. The campaign ensured there was money available whenever an opportunity came along, ensuring that at least some of the purchase funds were on hand, kick-starting fundraising and allowing us to leverage more funding.
- Next Campaign – “Land for Life”:
 - Land for Life will include all five corridors. We plan to extend our reach into Matchedash, Bass Lake and Minesing to Matchedash.
 - What is our dream for the region? CC's 'Area of Interest' is 600,000 acres (242,812 hectares) with 8% (46,345 acres/18,755 hectares) currently protected by CC, Ontario Parks, NCC, Ontario Heritage Trust, Conservation Authorities, other provincial conservation reserves. The high priority habitat in the region adds up to 240,000 acres (97,125 hectares) (40%)
 - How do we work toward this dream? Strengthening relationships with neighbouring land trusts to share resources and knowledge. Follow the successful model from Carden where there is currently 14,900 acres (6,030 hectares) of protected land and where we are on the verge of a continuous corridor from Turnbull Ranch to QEII Provincial Park. We did this by getting to know people in the community, going to their events and inviting them to ours, by creating forums where we listened to people's concerns, by being ourselves (e.g. the Carden Challenge), by helping out with land stewardship projects and respecting Carden's economic, social and cultural values.
 - Courtney Baker will be building relationships and trust in the other corridors. It is the hope that by next year, CC will have an additional staff person to work on cultivating relationships, one for east of Lake Couchiching and one for west of Lake Couchiching.
 - CC consulted with focus groups that helped shape the new campaign. Almost everyone said they had been asked to join CC by someone they know, showing the importance of each of us spreading the word.
 - Other comments from focus groups:
 - Trust in the organization, want to see the CC grow,
 - Donations make a direct impact,
 - Supporters want to be part of the process, know how the campaign is progressing,
 - Protected lands are in their backyard, and
 - There is a disconnect between the 212-strong youth stewardship program and the rest of the membership. To start to rectify that, Ethan Pressey spoke on behalf of the youth program to share their passion for protecting nature.
 - Land for Life video was shown.
- First purchase in “Land for Life”: Blackwell Brady Clark Nature Reserve on the east side of the Severn River across from TC Agnew and Fawcett Nature Reserves. 85 acres (34 hectares) of high quality wetlands that also provide a link between the Matchedash Corridor and the Black River Corridor. Purchase price is \$135,512 with fees, and with financial support will close on October 1, 2025.

12. Wild Routes: Minesing to Matchedash Video

Discussion/Conclusions:

- Toby Rowland, Conservation Biologist, presented a video of his 3-day journey from Minesing to Matchedash, to see firsthand, the opportunities and challenges that animals face in moving through this corridor. Toby kayaked and hiking and found many obstacles that animals would face.
- Question and Answer period with Toby.

Meeting declared closed at 4:10 p.m. by Kathy Hunt

Minutes Recorded by: Jane Bonsteel

FINAL DRAFT