MINUTES

BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

Thursday, March 26, 2026
Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority Boardroom
Morrison Dam Conservation Area

DIRECTORS PRESENT
Ray Chartrand, Adrian Cornelissen, Joey Groot, Jaden Hodgins, Dave Jewitt, Dave Marsh, Wayne Shipley, Marissa Vaughan

DIRECTORS ABSENT
Steve Herold

STAFF PRESENT
Andrew Bicknell, Christie Brown, Tina Crown, Millie Ghorbankhani, Abbie Gutteridge, Davin Heinbuck, Brian Horner, Daniel King, Jaden Schoelier.

OTHERS PRESENT
Paul Seebach, *Seebach and Company*

CALL TO ORDER
Chair Ray Chartrand called the meeting to order at 2:30 p.m., welcomed everyone in attendance, and read the Land Acknowledgement Statement.

ADOPTION OF AGENDA

MOTION #BD 23/26 **Moved Wayne Shipley**
Seconded by Marissa Vaughan

"RESOLVED, THAT the agenda for the March 26, 2026, Board of Directors Meeting be approved."

Carried.

DISCLOSURE OF PECUNIARY INTEREST
There were no disclosures of pecuniary interest at this meeting or from the previous meeting.

DISCLOSURE OF INTENTION TO RECORD
None.

ADOPTION OF MINUTES

MOTION #BD 24/26 **Moved by Jaden Hodgins**
Seconded by Joey Groot

"RESOLVED, THAT the minutes of the Board of Directors meeting held on February 19, 2026, and the motions therein be approved as circulated."

Carried.

BUSINESS OUT OF THE MINUTES
None.

PRESENTATION
Paul Seebach, of Seebach and Company, presented the 2025 audited financial statement for the Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority. There were no audit issues found or unusual transactions. He noted that while the bank appears to be down at the end of the year, there were a number of receivables that came in at the end of the year, which will be included in 2026's financial statement. The Drinking Water Source Protection Program audited statement was also presented at this time.

MOTION #BD 25/26 **Moved by Dave Jewitt**
Seconded by Adrian Cornelissen

"RESOLVED, THAT the Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority Board of Directors approve the 2025 audited financial statement as presented."

Carried.

PROGRAM REPORTS

1. (a) Development Review
Jaden Schoelier, Water & Planning Technician, presented the Development Review report pursuant to Ontario Regulation 41/24 *Prohibited Activities, Exemptions and Permits*. Through the application process, proposed developments within regulated areas are protected from flooding and erosion hazards. Staff granted permission for 5 *Applications for Permission* and 5 *Minor Works Applications.*

MOTION #BD 26/26 **Moved by Dave Jewitt**
Seconded by Wayne Shipley

"RESOLVED, THAT the Board of Directors affirm the approval of applications as presented in Program Report # 1 – a) Development Review."

Carried.

(b) Violation/Appeals Update

Andrew Bicknell, Water and Planning Manager, provided an update regarding the Ontario Land Tribunal Hearing, which wrapped up prior to the end of 2025. He noted that the decision was reported as of February 19, 2026, which was in favour of both the ABCA position and Municipality of Lambton Shore's position. The 30 day appeal period concluded two days ago, and as of yet, Andy has not heard of any appeal.

MOTION #BD 27/26 **Moved by Joey Groot**
Seconded by Jaden Hodgins

"RESOLVED, THAT the Board of Directors receive the verbal Violations and Appeals update as presented."

Carried.

2. Communications Strategy Update

Tim Cumming, Communication Coordinator, presented an updated Communications Strategy, which is intended to replace the previous Communications Plan, presented to the Board of Directors in 2015. He noted that the strategy was prepared by a team of ABCA staff, and had previously been reviewed by the Management Team. This communications committee looked for ways to build upon previous communications successes, as well as enhance public outreach and engagement. They felt that a strategy, as opposed to a plan, with a longer-term approach would serve as a framework for other communications planning documents. This strategy lays out a number of guiding principles, each with a goal, priorities and performance measures, along with some recommendations within a timeline over the next five years. Tim noted that staff have already begun to implement communications using this strategy and is noting some success.

MOTION #BD 28/26 **Moved by Wayne Shipley**
Seconded by Marissa Vaughan

"RESOLVED, THAT the Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority Board of Directors approves the proposed *Communications Strategy (2026 – 2031)*."

Carried.

3. Flood Emergency Planning Meeting

Daniel King, Water Resources Engineer, presented an update regarding the 2026 annual Flood Emergency Planning meeting. This yearly event is held for staff from member municipalities, as well as other stakeholders who are involved in emergency response. At the meeting on February 26,

2026, there were 24 attendees from seven municipalities, along with staff from Huron, Lambton and Middlesex Counties, as well as the Upper Thames River Conservation Authority. Overall, ABCA staff continue to receive positive feedback about this annual meeting to discuss the various roles in flooding emergency response.

MOTION #BD 29/26 **Moved by Dave Marsh**
Seconded by Marissa Vaughan

"RESOLVED, THAT Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority Board of Directors receives the report regarding the Flood Emergency Planning Meeting as presented."

Carried.

PRESENTATION

Daniel King presented on ABCA staff's daily planning cycle regarding how they make decisions for flood forecasting. He noted that every day staff record and look at the forecast of precipitation for the watershed area. If significant rain is forecast, then an event based model is run. All of these decisions and modelled events are documented in an standardized format. Staff are working on calibrating the new HEC-HMS model, while still having access to the old model. There are also new technologies to help document flooding events, such as drone photography and videography. Drones are also helpful during an event to take a broad survey of flood-prone areas that are not easily accessible by vehicle. Directors inquired if flood forecasting is a way to examine climate change. Daniel noted, that while it might not be the best lens for climate change, staff have noticed some broader changes to precipitation, such as more precipitation through the winter, and flooding events throughout the year rather than just during typical times, such as the spring freshet.

GENERAL MANAGER'S REPORT

Davin Heinbuck, General Manager/Secretary-Treasurer, provided a brief report outlining the progress of various projects, staff training, upcoming meetings and events, as well as general activities of ABCA staff.

MOTION #BD 30/26 **Moved by Joey Groot**
Seconded by Jaden Hodgins

"RESOLVED, THAT the Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority Board of Directors receives the General Manager's Report for information as presented."

Carried.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

MOTION #BD 31/26 **Moved by Wayne Shipley**
Seconded by David Marsh

"RESOLVED, THAT the minutes of the Friends of the South Huron Trail meeting held on January 26, 2026 and the motions therein be approved as circulated."

Carried.

CORRESPONDENCE

a) Reference: Flood Emergency Planning Meeting
File: A.5.5
Brief: An email from David Kester (Municipality of Bluewater) to Daniel King, thanking ABCA staff for an informative meeting.

b) Reference: Commendation
File: A.5.1
Brief: An email from Sarah Kielek-Caster (OMAFA), commending and congratulating Mari Veliz and her team for the quality of their work in relation to the Farmland Trust.

c) Reference: Fee Freeze
File: A.5.8
Brief: A letter to all conservation authorities, reinstating a freeze on Planning and Regulations related fees, from March 10, 2026 until February 28, 2027.

NEW BUSINESS

1. Davin Heinbuck provided an update on the consolidation of conservation authorities in Ontario. He noted that in a press release on March 10, 2026, the Honourable Todd McCarthy, Minister of Environment, Conservation and Parks announced their decision regarding ERO Posting 025-1257, that after receiving more than 14,000 responses to the initial consolidation announcement (both through the ERO posting or via correspondence), the province has made the decision to consolidate conservation authorities into nine regions, with implementation targeted for early 2027. With this plan, the ABCA would become part of the Lake Huron Conservation Authority Region, along with Maitland Valley CA, Saugeen Valley CA, Grey Sauble CA, Nottawasaga CA and Lake Simcoe Region CA. Davin noted that upper and single tier municipalities will comprise the Regional Boards, and that there will be at least one Watershed Council per region. These watershed councils could be a way to allow for local input. There are still questions about the budgeting process, but Davin expects that we will hear more about this in the coming weeks. He noted that there will also be a transition committee formed for each new region. For now, ABCA staff will continue to operate as usual.

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE
None.

ADJOURNMENT
The meeting was adjourned by Jaden Hodgins at 4:28 p.m.

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Ray Chartrand	Abigail Gutteridge
Chair	Secretary

Copies of program reports are available upon request.
Contact Abigail Gutteridge, Corporate Services Coordinator