MINUTES

BOARD OF DIRECTORS MEETING

Thursday, May 21, 2026
Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority Boardroom
Morrison Dam Conservation Area

DIRECTORS PRESENT
Ray Chartrand, Adrian Cornelissen, Joey Groot, Steve Herold, Dave Jewitt, David Marsh, Wayne Shipley, Marissa Vaughan

DIRECTORS ABSENT
Jaden Hodgins

STAFF PRESENT
Andrew Bicknell, Rosalind Chang, Aaron Clarke, Tina Crown, Millie Ghorbankhani, Abbie Gutteridge, Davin Heinbuck, Brian Horner, Tracey McPherson, Jaden Schoelier

OTHERS PRESENT
Sheldon Paul, *Huron Stewardship Council*

CALL TO ORDER
Chair Ray Chartrand called the meeting to order at 10:00 a.m., welcomed everyone in attendance, and read the Land Acknowledgement Statement.

ADOPTION OF AGENDA

MOTION #BD 39/26 **Moved Dave Jewitt**
Seconded by Wayne Shipley

"RESOLVED, THAT the agenda for the May 21, 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 40/26 **Moved by Steve Herold**
Seconded by David Marsh

"RESOLVED, THAT the minutes of the Board of Directors meeting held on April 16, 2026, and the motions therein be approved as circulated."

Carried.

BUSINESS OUT OF THE MINUTES
Regional Consolidation of Conservation Authorities – BILL 97 Update
Davin Heinbuck, General Manager/Secretary-Treasurer, provided an update regarding the regional consolidation of conservation authorities (CAs) in Ontario. He noted that, on March 26, 2026, Bill 97 was introduced, and then received Royal Assent on April 24, 2026. Schedule 3 of this Bill outlines the consolidation of CAs and the proposed changes to the *Conservation Authorities Act*. The Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks provided timelines for the process in their presentation: *Improving Ontario's Conservation Authority System: Technical Briefing for Conservation Authorities*.

Consolidation is planned to take place on February 1, 2027. The process for consolidation will involve two key phases: Transition (leading up to February 1, 2027), and Transformation (the period following consolidation or implementation period). At the time of consolidation, each current/predecessor CA will continue with all staff, partnerships, agreements, etc., under the new Regional Conservation Authority name. Participating Municipalities in the regional board will be single or upper-tier located within the watershed (fully or partly).

Transition Committees are to be set up for each new Regional Conservation Authority and will be comprised of the GM/CAO of each current CA, as well as a municipally elected member. These appointments to the committee will be made by current CAs within 90 days of Bill 97 receiving Royal Assent. Project Executives will chair each Transition Committee by the Ontario Provincial Conservation Agency (OPCA), and will become the first CAO of each region for 24 months, subject to the OPCA. Each Transition Committee will develop a transition plan with guidance from the OPCA, which will support the integration of the predecessor CAs, and will be implemented by the new Regional CA.

Existing Boards of Directors will remain in place until consolidation takes place, when it will transition to a Regional Board of single and upper-tier municipalities. Each new Regional CA will also have at least one watershed council, which may provide opportunity for local matters to be brought to the regional board.

The General Managers for the 6 consolidating CAs in the Lake Huron Regional CA (LHRCA) have had some early discussions, and will begin to meet more formally beginning on May 22. While this is in advance of the formation of the Transition Committee, it is expected to help provide a starting point from which this new partnership can grow.

MOTION #BD 41/26 **Moved by Marissa Vaughan**
Seconded by Joey Groot

"RESOLVED, THAT the Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority Board of Directors receives this update on Bill 97: Plan to Protect Ontario Act (Budget Measures), 2026.

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 16 *Minor Works Applications.*

(b) Violation/Appeals Update

Andrew Bicknell, Water and Planning Manager, did not have an update regarding ongoing violations. However, he noted that Planning and Regulations staff had their annual shoreline flight to take oblique photos of the shoreline, which helps them see changes from year to year.

MOTION #BD 42/26 **Moved by Marissa Vaughan**
Seconded by Wayne Shipley

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

Carried.

2. IT Support/Upgrades Project

Tracey McPherson, GIS/IT Coordinator reminded the Board that a project for IT/Support Upgrades was approved in the 2026 budget for $20,000, with half from the Category 1 levy and the other half from IT reserves. The aim of the project is to find an IT partner/vendor to provide secure managed IT services and assessments. ABCA staff issued an RFP on February 20, 2026 to six service providers

located within southern Ontario, and received proposals from all six, which had a range of ongoing monthly costs for support services, as well as a maximum onboarding cost of $21,000.

Staff selected ContinüIT CORP from Goderich, who also provides services to both the Maitland Valley Conservation Authority and Saugeen River Valley Conservation Authority. They come highly recommended and had the lowest ongoing monthly support rates and were the most flexible to work with our staff and current systems. However, there is a shortfall in project funding, as a new server had to be purchased. The projected deficit is $11,000, and staff propose that this shortfall is funded by additional IT reserves.

MOTION #BD 43/26 **Moved by Marissa Vaughan**
Seconded by Dave Jewitt

"RESOLVED, THAT the Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority Board of Directors approves the use of additional IT reserves, not budgeted for in 2026, and not to exceed $11,000 to fund the balance of the project."

Carried.

3. Claybird Gun Club Lease Renewal

Davin Heinbuck noted that, since 1976, the Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority (ABCA) has maintained an agreement to allow the Claybird Gun Club (CGC) to use one of the Hay Swamp properties for its activities. The CGC is a registered not-for-profit group with its own Board of Directors and is subject to the regulations of the Chief Firearm Office. There has always been a good working relationship between the two organizations and there have been no recent complaints from the public. The current agreement is up for renewal, and it has been suggested that it be renewed until December 31, 2030, with an annual lease increase of 2.5% per year. It has been confirmed that there are no financial implications to ABCA's insurance rate as a result of this agreement.

MOTION #BD 44/26 **Moved by Joey Groot**
Seconded by David Marsh

"RESOLVED, THAT Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority Board of Directors renew the agreement currently in place with the Claybird Gun Club for the period of June 1, 2026, until December 31, 2030.

Carried.

4. ABCA Transition Committee Appointments

Davin Heinbuck reminded the Board that, as per Bill 97, current CAs must appoint 2 representatives to the Regional Transition Committee within 90 days of the bill receiving Royal Assent. Each CA is required to appoint its General Manager (or alternate), and one municipally elected Board member

to the Committee. Staff recommend that Davin Heinbuck and Chair Ray Chartrand be appointed to meet this requirement.

MOTION #BD 45/26 **Moved by Wayne Shipley**
Seconded by Steve Herold

"RESOLVED, THAT the Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority Board of Directors appoint General Manger/Secretary-Treasurer, Davin Heinbuck, and Board Chair, Raymond Chartrand, to the Transition Committee for the Lake Huron Regional Conservation Authority."

Carried.

5. Regional Consolidation of CAs – Minister's Direction

Davin Heinbuck reported that, on May 1, 2026, the Minister's Direction, made under S.1.14 of the Conservation Authorities Act was issued regarding temporary restrictions to facilitate the transition to a regional CA watershed. This Direction places temporary restrictions on some staff and Board decisions during the Transition period from May 1, 2026 until February 1, 2027. A report detailing the various directions, as well as the Minister's letter, are attached. In general, these directions are to prevent CAs from making large financial decisions that may inhibit a smooth transition. There is provision for emergency exceptions when human life, health or property may be impacted, and CAs can seek approval from the Ontario Provincial Conservation Agency (OPCA) should they deem a decision necessary.

MOTION #BD 46/26 **Moved by Dave Jewitt**
Seconded by Joey Groot

"RESOLVED, THAT the Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority Board of Directors receives this update on the Minister's Direction, dated May 1, 2026."

Carried.

PRESENTATION

Rosalind Chang, Health Watersheds Coordinator, and Paul Sheldon from the Huron Stewardship Council, provided a presentation on turtle monitoring and protection work in the ABCA watershed. ABCA's monitoring work has been ongoing since 2010, when community turtle monitoring began. Some of the work over the years has included providing turtle nest protectors, holding workshops, citizen reporting, egg removal and incubation where possible, and installing turtle exclusion fencing along a high mortality road in the Port Franks area. Huron Stewardship Council has been involved in species recovery, as well as education and outreach. Some of the integral turtle work they do is to protect the Wood Turtle, which is at extreme risk due to poaching. This work includes the Headstarting Program at the Toronto Zoo. This program allows nest to be incubated, and then the turtles will be reared for two years before release back to their habitat. This allows them to get through the most critical time when turtles are predated due to their small size. The most recent effort for turtle protection is the 2026 Adopt-a-Turtle Campaign to raise funding to support this

programming. It has been very well received so far, and will run until the Annual Turtle Hatchling Release on September 3.

COMMITTEE REPORTS

MOTION #BD 47/26 **Moved by Marissa Vaughan**
Seconded by Dave Jewitt

"RESOLVED, THAT the minutes of the Source Protection Committee meeting held on March 25, 2026, and the motions therein be approved as circulated."

Carried.

MOTION #BD 48/26 **Moved by Joey Groot**
Seconded by Steve Herold

"RESOLVED, THAT the minutes of the Arkona Lions Museum Management Committee meeting held on May 2, 2026, and the motions therein be approved as circulated."

Carried.

CORRESPONDENCE
None.

NEW BUSINESS

1. Davin Heinbuck reported that ABCA Aquatic Biologist, Kari Jean contributed to an article for the Canadian Journal of Fishieries and Aquatic Sciences. This article tracks the changes in freshwater mussel populations over time in seven southwestern Ontario watersheds.

2. Davin Heinbuck noted that current CAs will be responsible for next year's budget, and that the Province would like to have budgets approved prior to the end of the year. Due to the Municipal Election in 2026, staff feel it would be prudent to move the budget process a little earlier in the hope that it can be approved by the current Board prior to the election. It has been suggested that the Budget Committee meeting be held in August, so that the Budget can go to the regular Board meeting in September. If approved to go to the municipalities for the 30-day review at that time, then it could potentially be approved at the regular Board meeting in October. All Directors agreed with this process. It was also agreed that, as staff will not be able to use the May-July CPI average for budget preparation, staff should just use the most recent three monthly CPIs that are available.

MOTION #BD 49/26 **Moved by Wayne Shipley**
Seconded by Marissa Vaughan

"RESOLVED, THAT the Budget Committee meeting be held on August 20, 2026."

Carried.

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE
None.

ADJOURNMENT
The meeting was adjourned by Marissa Vaughan at 11:37 a.m.

_____	_____
Ray Chartrand	Abigail Gutteridge
Chair	Secretary

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