

BUDGET COMMITTEE

Thursday, October 14, 2021

Ausable Bayfield Conservation Authority Boardroom
Morrison Dam Conservation Area

VIA VIDEO CONFERENCE

DIRECTORS PRESENT

Ray Chartrand, Doug Cook, Adrian Cornelissen, Bob Harvey, George Irvin, Dave Jewitt, Marissa Vaughan, Alex Westman

DIRECTORS ABSENT

Mike Tam

STAFF PRESENT

Geoff Cade, Tina Crown, Abbie Gutteridge, Davin Heinbuck, Brian Horner, Denise Iszczuk, Kari Jean, Mary Lynn MacDonald, Tracey McPherson, Kate Monk, Nathan Schoelier, Angela Van Niekerk, Mari Veliz

CALL TO ORDER

Chair Doug Cook called the meeting to order at 9:31 a.m. and welcomed everyone in attendance.

ADOPTION OF AGENDA

MOTION #BD 104/21

**Moved by Ray Chartrand
Seconded by George Irvin**

“RESOLVED, THAT the agenda for the October 14, 2021 Board of Directors Budget Committee 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 PROCEEDINGS

None

PROPOSED 2022 BUDGET

General Manager Brian Horner provided an overview of the 2022 budget preparation by staff, as well as the format for the information session. Each department will present the budget for their program and a summary of the individual projects that are proposed for 2022. He noted the proposed 2022 budget is less than what was originally presented in the five-year forecast. Staff prepared the budget with a 2% wage increase on the pay grid.

Corporate Services

Brian Horner presented the consolidated Corporate Services budget, and provided an overview of the services provided by this department. The proposed replacement of the Annex roof, which has been deferred in previous two years, is proposed for 2022. Additionally, a portion of the Annex floors are to be replaced. Some deficiencies in the Administration Centre were noted when the Office Needs Assessment report was completed. The amount of \$5,000 continues to be set aside annually in a reserve to meet building accessibility legislation.

Education

Denise Iszczuk, Conservation Educator, presented the Conservation Education budget. Revenue for providing effective and meaningful outdoor education experiences comes from the municipal levy, program fees, donations, foundations, provincial and federal governments. Staff promote environmental awareness through classroom programs, field trips, day camps, the water safety awareness program, community presentations and special events. It was noted that 2021 continued to be an unusual year for the Conservation Education department, due to the ongoing global pandemic. However, some outdoor programs were able to run in 2021, such as day camps, which increased to four weeks, as well as some outdoor school programs, the number of which continues to increase as we enter the last quarter of the year. Virtual programs were also offered. The 2022 education program and budget is based on the premise that school programs can be delivered in schoolyards or virtually in classrooms, and with the expectation that field trips, special events and day camps will take place in some capacity starting in spring 2022. Also of note, the Huron Perth Catholic District School Board has solidified a partnership for 2022 to deliver three programs to more than 20 classes.

Floodplain Management

Geoff Cade, Water & Planning Manager presented the four main components of the floodplain management program. They include the maintenance of 16 erosion control projects, 7 flood control projects, the flood forecasting and warning system and the Port Franks ice management project. Since 1996 the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (MNRF) has provided a 50% grant toward three of the projects; however, for 2022 only a 18.4 - 19.6% funding grant is expected. In 2022, ongoing projects include the annual monitoring of channel configuration in the Ausable River Cut, as well as the Armstrong West Erosion Control project.

Environmental Monitoring

Mari Veliz, Healthy Watersheds Manager, Tracey McPherson, GIS/IT Coordinator, and Davin Heinbuck, Water Resources Coordinator, assisted Geoff Cade in presenting the Planning and Regulations program and Environmental Monitoring project factsheets and budgets. In some cases, funds are deferred to meet the funder's year end. Mari Veliz explained that some projects are fully funded through other partners, but that the project levy contribution often leverages

other sources of funding, some substantial, to undertake environmental and monitoring projects, one example of which is the Ausable River Recovery project. There are no new projects proposed for 2022; however, there are a number of phased or ongoing projects. The Natural Heritage Systems Plan will build on the outcomes of the analysis of the Nairn Creek subwatershed to better integrate permitting site visits with awareness about the importance of small, natural features on the landscape. Additionally, work at the Huronview Demonstration Farm will continue with the Huron Country Soil and Crop Improvement Association and the County of Huron. Tracey McPherson noted that in 2022 updates will be made to the core datasets, which will assist in the migration of the internal internet mapping site (GeoPortal) to ArcGIS Enterprise.

Drinking Water Source Protection

Mary Lynn MacDonald, DWSP Co-Program Supervisor presented the Drinking Water Source Protection budget. There are no levy dollars allocated to the Drinking Water Source Protection budget. The Province funds ongoing mandatory implementation responsibilities for Source Protection Authorities. The implementation body for each source protection policy coordinates implementation costs. In August 2020, the province posted the proposed Phase II Directors Technical Rules on the Environmental Registry. This will require a revision of policies, and may increase the number of properties requiring a Risk Management Plan; however the Technical Rules have not yet been approved. Two Source Protection Committee meetings in 2021 have been cancelled and rescheduled for 2022. The province has stated a commitment to this program.

By agreement, ABCA delivers Risk Management Services for eight municipalities. These agreements are in place until December 2023. While the ongoing pandemic has created challenges for site visits in 2021, staff have found technical avenues to complete the regulated requirements on behalf of municipalities.

Property Management

Nathan Schoelier, Stewardship and Conservation Lands Manager, summarized the goals of managing the ABCA properties and water bodies, which includes conservation areas, wildlife areas, management areas, conservation forests and agricultural land. Property management revenue is generated from timber harvests, farm land rental and the Parkhill CA campground lease and offsets the cost of property taxes, insurance, risk management inspections and property maintenance. Any surplus in property management through woodlot harvesting operations is used to compensate for the shortfall in the recreation services budget for maintaining conservation areas. The ongoing invasive species management project will continue in 2022, with the continued control of phragmites and developing strategies for other species control such as Giant Hogweed, Japanese Knotweed and Gypsy Moth.

Recreation Services

Nathan Schoelier explained that the ABCA provides essential recreation areas for municipal residents and tourists. Interest continues to remain above pre-pandemic levels. The routine maintenance of facilities at conservation areas is carried out by ABCA employees. The ABCA has a contract with the Municipal Enforcement Unit to provide property patrol and enforcement duties on an as needed basis. Revenue is generated by gate fees at Rock Glen Conservation Area, hunting passes and community donations. Proposed new projects for 2022 include repairs to the wooden bridge at Rock Glen Conservation Area, as recommended in the 2020 bridge inspection report, and creating a new nature trail at Rock Glen Conservation Area to provide

additional opportunities for outdoor recreation and nature appreciation of the Ausable River valley. Additionally, the Ausable River Cut Conservation Area privy is in need of replacement.

Private Land Stewardship

Nathan Schoelier reviewed the private land stewardship budget wherein staff provide one-on-one technical advice, site visits, and assistance with paperwork in connecting landowners with cost-share funding to maximize grants for their stewardship projects. The annual goal is to complete at least 100 projects. Expenses in the stewardship program are offset with tree sales, providing tree planting plans, phragmites management spraying and forest management plans for clients. Only 10 percent of the department budget is from the municipal levy. The County of Huron continues to provide grants to landowners for stewardship projects through the very successful Huron Clean Water Project. This project, along with the Middlesex County Clean Water Project, will continue until 2022. There are no municipally funded grants available in Lambton or Perth Counties for landowners to access a similar cost-share program to improve rural water quality. Other projects that will take place in 2022, pending funding, include Canada Nature Fund, Ontario Community Environment Fund, EcoAction, and Forests Ontario Foundation and Environment and Climate Change Canada.

Vehicles and Equipment

Nathan Schoelier presented the vehicle and equipment motor pool budget. There is no project or general levy required for the vehicle and equipment budget as the revenue received when charging mileage and equipment rates to the users' programs offsets expenses. In 2022, the 2010 Ford F-150 pick-up truck, which is typically used for field services work, is scheduled for replacement.

Project Levy

Brian Horner presented the proposed project levy summary for 2022 at \$260,096 as compared to \$226,691 in 2021. This includes ongoing, phased and new projects proposed for 2022. The project levy dollars will be leveraged with other sources of funding to undertake projects totaling \$875,545.

General Levy

The general levy proposed for 2022 total \$1,129,134 in comparison to \$1,109,679 in 2021.

Proposed 2022 Budget

The proposed fee schedule and pay grid were presented for review as these figures were used in preparing the consolidated budget. The combined project and general levies total \$1,389,231 (3.96 per cent increase) as compared to \$1,336,370 in 2021. Brian Horner reminded the directors that not every program area is sustained by levy dollars.

The Board indicated that they would like to see a further breakdown of the reserve funds to gain further understanding of what is available for future project support. This could come as a report at one of the upcoming Board of Directors meetings. The Board also provided some direction that the Fee Schedule could undergo a review in the coming year, as a number of fees have not been adjusted or used in recent years.

Initial comments from the Board were positive on the presentation of a reasonable budget for review. However, they would like staff to come back with some reductions, if possible. Further direction and discussion will be held at the next Board meeting on October 21, 2021.

NEW BUSINESS

None

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 12:33 p.m.

Doug Cook
Chair

Abigail Gutteridge
Corporate Services Coordinator