

MISSISSIPPI VALLEY CONSERVATION AUTHORITY
POLICY & PRIORITIES ADVISORY COMMITTEE

Mississippi Valley Conservation Centre
Carleton Place

MINUTES

October 2, 2020

MEMBERS PRESENT:

J. Atkinson, Chair;
F. Campbell;
G. Gower;
B. Holmes;
J. Mason
J. Karau

MEMBERS ABSENT:

K. Thompson, Vice-Chair;
J. Inglis;
R. Darling

STAFF PRESENT:

S. McIntyre, General Manager;
A. Millar, Treasurer
C. Truman, Recording Secretary.

PPAC10/02/20-1

MOVED BY: J. Karau

SECONDED BY: F. Campbell

Resolved, That the agenda for the Policy & Priorities Advisory Committee meeting be adopted, as presented.

“CARRIED”

J. Atkinson called the meeting to order at 1:05 p.m.

BUSINESS:

1. Watershed Plan Goals and Objectives, Report 3079/20

S. McIntyre briefly reviewed the Goals and Objectives as a previous version had been presented to the Committee and discussed in detail in April 2020. Direction was sought to elevate the revised Goals and Objectives to the Board for approval. J. Karau added that the Public Advisory Committee has been critical with the selection and is confident with the Goals and Objectives outlined.

Discussion

J. Mason noted objectives should be measurable with a set target to be successful and was concerned over the number of Goals and Objectives. J. Karau agreed and used Nottawasaga Watershed Report as a working example of what is measurable, what are the right types of targets, and what is the right number of action items, to avoid becoming overwhelmed. Suggests sharing report with Policy Committee as a reference point.

F. Campbell described a new group in Lanark County formed to tackle climate change. J. Atkinson explained the county established a new Environmental Advisory Committee. S. McIntyre will confirm with A. Symon that she has made connection with this group.

B. Homes asked to discuss Goal 7, Objective D and requested an explanation regarding divesting assets (Ex. Mill of Kintail). S. McIntyre clarified it relates strictly to the management of the Museum and how MVCA will manage the asset moving forward.

J. Mason explained, historically the MVCA has not acquired land for conservation purposes but refers landowners to the Land Trust, Ducks Unlimited Canada, and the Nature Conservancy of Canada. We do not currently advertise the donation of land to the conservation authority although this might be something, strategically, we desire to change in the future.

F. Campbell then asked if the RVCA acquires land through donation. J. Mason responded the Foundation is used to ensure land is acquired as a charitable donation. G. Gower asked if any of the Goals and Objectives fit far outside of what the MVCA is currently doing. S. McIntyre responded that there were none. .

J. Mason responded depending on the new regulations and the re-scoping of MVCA's mandate, the Goals and Objectives listed today may not be part of the new mandate.

PPAC10/02/2020-2

MOVED BY: J. Mason

SECONDED BY: B. Homes

Resolved, That the Policy & Priorities Committee recommend that the Board approve the Goals and Objectives set out herein for the Mississippi River Watershed Plan.

“CARRIED”

2. Priority Setting Methodology, Report 3080/20

S. McIntyre explained the report in detail and requested feedback from the committee regarding methodology.

Discussion

J. Karau voiced concern that climate change is an important factor and does not see any mention of it as a project driver. He noted that there is the risk of losing sight of risks to green assets (e.g. wetlands). He suggested that wetlands would be a useful example to include in risk index because the best investment to be made in climate change adaptation and mitigation is to conserve existing wetlands and restore critical ones.

F. Campbell circled back to timeframes of providing recommendation to the municipalities. S. McIntyre explained MVCA staff have on average 8-10 days to process applications and return recommendations to municipalities.

J. Karau requested Sally address his proposal and she acknowledged it will be addressed. *(It was clarified in subsequent meetings and correspondence that J. Karau intended that Climate Change be added as an additional Driver. S. McIntyre has agreed to that direction.)*

3. Draft Stimulus Projects, Report 3081/20

Before the item was considered, J. Mason questioned why this item was on the Policies and Priorities Committee Agenda when it has financial implications. F. Campbell shared J. Mason's view.

S. McIntyre explained that due to the nature of the item that the matter could be dealt with at either committee, and that both options had been considered.

J. Karau acknowledged this presentation does not fit into simply finance or policy and explained the opportunity window was the reason he thought this was being presented and if there is an issue with it being discussed that it should be presented to the Board to make an early determination. He asked whether this was an opportunity or constraint with being able to access these types of funds only in the immediate future.

S. McIntyre responded there will like be only be a two to three-week for making applications under the National Disaster Mitigation Program Fund.

J. Mason was unclear about how the board will make decisions without being given the updated Interim Financial Plan and the 10-Year Capital Plan. S. McIntyre acknowledged J. Mason's point and referenced the City of Ottawa is in a similar position and because time is of the essence, this is an opportunity for projects to be brought forward that might not have been otherwise.

G. Gower confirmed that the City is going through a similar process, acknowledged J. Mason concerns and concluded that a clear understanding any differences in what is presented to the Board and why.

F. Campbell asked whether there is a defined timeline for the LIDAR application to be submitted. S. McIntyre responded historically the timeline has been limited and speculated a two to three-week window.

Discussion was concluded without hearing the presentation prepared by staff.

PPAC10/02/2020-3

MOVED BY: G. Gower

SECONDED BY: F. Campbell

Resolved, That the Policy & Priorities Committee recommend that the Board endorse submission of grant applications for one or more of the projects identified herein; and approve the use of capital reserves as needed to meet MVCA's financial commitment.

“NOT CARRIED”

Discussion

J. Mason could not support the motion as was written, and recommended an amendment by listing only the Shabomeka Lake dam project. S. McIntyre requested that the LiDAR project be recommended as well.

J. Mason asked what would happen if approval for funding is won but the board does not agree with the contract. S. McIntyre said it would not be the first time a grant had been won and due to various circumstances, the funding was unable to be used.

J. Atkinson explained this is part of the process of the WECI program when funds are not always able to be utilized.

G. Gower asked Staff whether the selection of projects listed was based on the absolute priority, sequentially, for the MVCA or on the “most likely to be approved” by the grant process, or both? S. McIntyre confirmed the reasoning was both.

G. Gower explained the majority of these projects are identified in a relevant planning document.

J. Mason responded that the current 10 Year Capital Plan only includes the Shabomeka Lake Dam reconstruction. Her concern is that the rest of the projects have not been assessed relative to other priorities and Capital spending.

J. Atkinson asked S. McIntyre for clarification regarding the opportunity surrounding the LIDAR project. S. McIntyre explained its importance as a decision-making tool.

J. Mason referred to the amendment's wording of using capital reserves *as needed* and used the example if MVCA were to get a WIECY Grant, capital reserves would have been used.

B. Homes asked if the issue should be brought to the next Board meeting and would the deadline for the application allow for this discussion? S. McIntyre explained that the grant application

window could open any day. B. Homes suggested holding an emergency board meeting if needed.

J. Karau, was in favour of deferring this to a special meeting with the Board as was J. Mason.

J. Atkinson asked about withdrawing the amended motion. J. Mason agreed to withdraw and stated her support for a fulsome discussion.

J. Atkinson suggested rewording the original motion to include “consider” rather than “endorse.” J. Mason did not support the committee endorsing board approval but rather to endorse going to a special meeting with the board for consideration.

PPAC 02/10/2020-4

MOVED BY: J. Karau

SECONDED BY: B. Homes

Resolved, That the Policy & Priorities Committee recommend that the Board consider submission of grant applications for one or more of the projects identified herein; and approve the use of capital reserves as needed to meet MVCA’s financial commitment.

“CARRIED”

4. Provincial Groundwater Monitoring Program, Report 3082/20

S. McIntyre described the report and MVCA’s obligation to provide ground water monitoring services, while seeking committee input as to whether or not MVCA should give notice to the Province to withdraw.

Discussion

J. Mason asked whether the program provides useful information. provides useful information? S. McIntyre confirmed it has been determined it does not. J. Karau commented it is important to convey the MVCA would be willing to engage in mutually beneficial sampling in the future should an opportunity arise.

5. Employee Manual: Vacation and Gratuities Policies, Report 3083/20

S. McIntyre gave a brief overview of the report and touched on two items: the justification regarding the need to change current gratuities policy and the proposed re-wording of the vacation policy.

PPAC 02/10/2020-5

MOVED BY: F. Campbell

SECONDED BY: J. Mason

Resolved That the Policy & Priorities Committee recommend that the Board amend the *Employee Manual* to read as follows:

Section 3.1.2 Gifts and Gratuities

- a) No employee will accept cash gifts.
- b) No employee will accept gifts of food and drink greater than \$10.
- c) Staff that receive gifts, gift-cards, or e-vouchers valued at greater than \$10
- d) shall inform the GM.
- e) The GM will determine whether the gift can be accepted and an appropriate
- f) response to the giver.
- g) Where gifts are accepted, they will be:
 - a. placed into the MVCA Social Fund and used for the benefit of all staff, the beautification of the main office, or other initiatives in keeping with the mandate of the MVCA; or
 - b. auctioned off as a fundraising item.

Section 7.1 Vacation

Employees cannot carry a balance of more than 4 weeks at the end of any year of employment (i.e. employment anniversary date.)

“CARRIED”

Discussion

F. Campbell asked for clarification relating to the year end date for vacation balances.

S. McIntyre responded it is the employee’s anniversary date.

J. Karau asked how the \$10 limit was established? S. McIntyre responded the limit was established in house based on the City of Ottawa.

6. Rules Governing Electronic Meeting Participation, Report 3084/20

S. McIntyre requested member input with respect to electronic meeting participation moving forward.

Technical capacity, flexibility for members to attend as well as public participation were common themes in the discussion. A hub in the upper watershed was also suggested for those with poor internet connectivity.

J. Karau was a proponent and explained importance of being able to read facial expression.

B. Homes expressed the new normal will be very different from the world before COVID. A By-Law passed in Mississippi Mills for software to be installed for public to view meetings

J. Atkinson noted the largest factor for the MVCA moving forward is geography and distance that might implicate new board members who could live at the other end of the watershed.

G. Gower agreed the organization should consider remote participation especially linked to geography as scheduling conflicts often arise should meetings not allow for virtual presence. Attendance to future meetings would increase if the option for remote participation was available. Beyond COVID there will be a heightened sense of Public Health J. Mason

commented the Conservation Ontario meeting approved a new set of By-Law amendments related to the use of electronic meetings. They will need to come to the Policy and Priorities Committee, tailored as necessary.

S. McIntyre was concerned about the impediments to the public regarding participation in Board meetings in areas of the Upper Watershed where internet and cell services are poor.

J. Atkinson explained in Carleton Place councilors provide a subsidy to ensure connectivity to the meetings and suggests a hub in a local library could allow members in those isolated areas where services are poor. S. McIntyre suggested one of the municipalities in the Upper Watershed could act as this hub.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 2:45pm

“C. Truman, Recording Secretary

J. Atkinson, Chair”