

The Couchiching Conservancy



**2014 Annual General Meeting
January 25, 2014**

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at shortly after 2:00 p.m. at Hawk Ridge Golf Club, Orillia with the attendance of around 80 members and guests. Attendance was down due to bad weather, which also prevented guest speaker Dr. Ron Brooks from arriving. Executive Director Mark Bisset thanked Simcoe North MPP Garfield Dunlop who presented the Conservancy with a plaque commemorating its 20th anniversary. Orillia Mayor Angelo Orsi presented a Certificate on behalf of the Mayor and Council for all of the efforts of the Conservancy, especially regarding Scout Valley.

Mark commented on a noticeable absence, that of Jamie Powell current past President of the board, who was at Soldiers Memorial Hospital in rehabilitation following a stroke. Sandy Agnew kindly video-taped the proceedings and many in attendance passed on best wishes to Jamie via the video.

2. Minutes and highlights of 2013 Annual General Meeting

President David Homer reviewed the minutes of the 2013AGM which were projected for members to see. Hard copies were also available. There were no comments or questions. Moved by Janet Grand that the minutes of the 2013 Annual General Meeting be adopted. Seconded by Adam Thomson. Carried.

3. President's remarks

David Homer commented on the following:

- the success of 2013 in terms of what was achieved by the Conservancy, its financial results and the engagement of its many dedicated volunteers
- the goals and objectives that were met, and in some cases exceeded, of the 2009-2013 Strategic Plan
- the status of the Conservancy after 20 years as a leading land trust in our country
- the dedication of CC staff, members, supporters, volunteers, partners, the Past Presidents Council, the board and its various committees
- the vision outlined in the new Strategic Plan for 2014-2018 with input coming from a community gathering session and contribution from committee members Margaret Pomeroy, Dale Leadbeater, Dorthea Hangaard, Jamie Powell, Jeff Hathaway, Mark Bisset and David Homer
- continued efforts to increase membership, especially by spreading the word among friends and neighbours

David then introduced Kailin Gratrix, one of two new young members of the 2013 board (the other being Liz Ross/McClelland), to present the Treasurer's report.

4. Treasurer's Report

Treasurer Kailin Gratrix presented the audited financial statements for the period ending October 31, 2013. Kailin made special reference to the following:

- Listing of assets (Page 4) - current bank balance is \$294,805, up from last year
- Long-term investments and capital assets were also up from last year
- Donations and memberships were slightly down while interest is up due to some investments having matured
- Grant applications will be more challenging in the future
- Expenses will be down next year because 5 audits were undertaken in the past year and only one is foreseen for next year
- Page 11 gives a breakdown of current investments within the ladder strategy. Accrued interest went into the Operating Fund
- Page 13 details CC Capital Assets with the Fawcett Nature Reserve, Prospect Marsh and the Russell Easement being the newest additions
- CC is in a good financial position for the new fiscal year

Moved by Robbie Preston that the Financial Statements for the year ended October 31, 2013 be approved. Seconded by Peggy Foley. Carried.

Motion to appoint Hehn Trickey Professional Corporation Chartered Accountants as auditor for the year ending October 31, 2014. Moved by Peggy Foley, seconded by Alec Adams. Carried.

5. Past Presidents Council Report

In the absence of Nathalie Rockhill, Adam Thompson gave an update of the council which is comprised of all of the past Presidents and past Treasurers since 1993. Protection is a permanent need and the Council is striving to obtain legacy funding for the future. The Heartwood Fund is to support the Couchiching Conservancy forever even through difficult times. Commitments to the fund total \$1,223,000 to date. Bequests can be made as a gift in a Will, and through insurance policies or trusts.

Adam named all of the past Presidents and the years they served in that position.

6. Executive Director's Report

Mark recognized the staff and board for their dedication and hard work. He mentioned the departure of Kyra Howes to the Nottawasaga Valley Conservation Authority and of Gayle Carlyle, who has left the office but will continue to work for the Conservancy in the Butternut recovery program. He also acknowledged the amount of work that board members have dealt with this past year.

20 year anniversary

Mark commented on the beginnings of the organization as he reported them 20 years ago in the *Packet & Times* and on how far the Conservancy has come with assets now of \$3.7 million and thousands of acres under protection. Further action "governed by the same thoughtful approach" of its beginning members will take the Conservancy through the next decade.

Acquisitions

This year the following property was added:

- Leadbeater Easement (218 acres on the shores of Raven Lake) – Dale Leadbeater

- in Washago, the Thomas C. Agnew Reserve had its official opening in the fall. The property is beside the Robert and Emily Fawcett Nature Reserve which was transferred to the Conservancy by the Nature Conservancy of Canada around the same time.

Work is underway on:

- an easement on lands owned by Ellie Larsen, a 300-acre property that will link Carden conservation lands with Queen Elizabeth II Provincial Park
- two 100-acre parcels in the Black and Head River corridor
- a 100-acre parcel in north Severn Township

Stewardship

Mark explained the Species at Risk Benefit Exchange Program (SARBEX) that Ron Reid is helping develop in Carden. Developers pay qualified organizations to create or enhance habitat in one place to make up for habitat destroyed in another. Bluebird Ranch is the test site for this project where the Conservancy is in the process of restoring grassland habitat for bobolinks and eastern meadowlarks.

Ron is also continuing work with the aggregate industry as a member of the Cornerstone Standards Council. A public meeting will be held in Orillia on January 27th to gather feedback on voluntary standards and certification.

Invasive species control continues. Dog-strangling vine is the main problem on the Carden Plain and garlic mustard plagues other properties. Compost bins have been set up on site for the latter. Tides Canada support will continue into 2014.

The Great Carden Caper meant the loss of 3 solar well systems and 16 steel gates in Carden. Automated trail cameras were installed in various locations in the fall, resulting in many pictures of cows, but none of thieves. Seven separate stewardship projects were carried out on Carden ranches.

The Copeland Forest Stewardship Project continues with recommendations of the Stewardship Committee having been presented to the MNR and also to the general public at a meeting attended by over 100 people. Dorthea Hangaard has been coordinating the project and David Kennedy and Ingrid VanderMarel represent the Conservancy on the Stewardship Committee, which is now working towards forming a stand-alone organization for the future care of the Copeland.

Further updates:

Development and Outreach – in addition to its great website, the Conservancy is now on Facebook, Twitter, Flickr and YouTube.

Money will be more difficult to access in the future but new initiatives begun in 2013 will be continued and expanded upon. These include monthly giving, an annual appeal (the first this past November raised \$8000) and an annual Cornroast in the Woods. Other activities include the Carden Challenge, revamped Carden Nature Festival, Nature in the Neighbourhood Program, Night out for Nature, Volunteer Appreciation bonfire, guided hikes and workshops.

Following a question from the audience, Mark briefly explained the history of development plans at Victoria Point Wetlands, from the initial OMB ruling in the 1990s which left the door open to

some development on the property to the present proposal by Marvin Green to develop a 10-acre parcel in the upper part of the property for a seniors' complex while putting 150 acres into conservation. Mark said the Conservancy is keeping a close eye on the situation but is not expecting to acquire the property. The lead agency is the Lake Simcoe Regional Conservation Authority and the Conservancy is standing by to offer support. Local residents are presently mounting a campaign against the proposal.

7. By-laws and Articles of Continuance

Margaret Pomeroy gave an update on the Conservancy by-laws. Margaret and Mark together with Doug Christie have been reviewing the present policies and by-laws in light of the new Canada Not-for-Profit Corporations Act which sets out new rules for federally incorporated not-for-profit corporations to be updated by October 2014. Doug Christie was acknowledged as having done the bulk of the revisions due to his familiarity with the new Act. There will be no dramatic changes to the present by-law but the sections on membership, its terms and conditions; meetings, quorum and voting; and directors' duties, number, election, terms of office and meetings, were revised. Changes to the by-law must be approved at a meeting of the membership by a 2/3 vote of attending members. A meeting has been called for this purpose on Monday, April 7 at 7:00 p.m. at Swanmore Hall in Orillia. Copies of the Articles of Continuance and revised By-law have been posted on the Conservancy website. Paper copies are available at the Conservancy office. Questions can be directed to the committee through Mark Bisset.

8. Presentation of gold and silver pins

David Homer and Margaret Pomeroy presented the pins, with Gord Michener accepting for those not in attendance. Silver pins were presented to:

Jamie Powell – board member who served two terms as President and is part of the Advisory Committee on the Copeland Stewardship project

Omer Mick – works with Mary on the Grant's Woods property management team and helps with numerous other activities

Matt Thomson – second generation volunteer who has been involved in the turtle nesting project and has been part of building projects and property teams

Cathy Massig – very effective team leader for the Alexander Hope Smith property

Harry Hall – one of the Conservancy's key volunteers in Carden, team leader of Prairie Smoke and canoe guide during Carden Nature Festival

Tom Wilson – chief organizer of marshals and field trips for the Carden Nature Festival and this year's new Ambassador of Fun to bring new activities to the festival. Tom is also on several property teams in Carden

Gold pins were presented to:

Isabelle Thiess – board member, past President, member of numerous committees, devoted volunteer

Mary Mick – team leader for Grant's Woods property management team, former Volunteer Coordinator for the Conservancy, always willing to help where needed

Bob Sullivan – has inadvertently been missed as gold pin recipient; should be getting two. Bob has been a long time director of the board and past President, and has played a key role in developing the Past Presidents Council and Heartwood Fund

Nathalie Rockhill – facilitator, board member, past President, fundraiser in Carden Challenge, key role in Carden Nature Festival, active leader on Past Presidents Council, one of first pledge donors of Heartwood Fund

9. Election of new board

David Homer presented the slate of nominees for 2014-2015 being the same as last year with no one stepping down: David Homer, Jamie Powell, Margaret Pomeroy, Bob Sullivan, Ingrid VanderMarel, Doug Christie, Gord Michener, Liz McClelland and Kailin Gratrix. David then asked three times for further nominations from the floor. There were none.

Moved by Gord Ball that the slate of candidates for the 2014-2015 Board of Directors of the Couchiching Conservancy as recommended by the Nominations Committee be elected.

Seconded by Ken Thomson. Carried.

10. 20th Anniversary cake cutting

David Homer called on the founding members of the Conservancy (Gord Ball, Adam Thomson, Ron Reid, Janet Grand, Ken Thomson and Shirley Thomson) to gather behind the beautiful and delicious cake donated by Mariposa Market.

11. Memories shared

In place of the speaker who couldn't attend due to the inclement weather, members were invited to share memories and stories of their involvement with the Conservancy during the last 20 years. These included: David Homer's Christmas tree story – caught by “wardens” Nancy Ironside and Margot Holt; Ron Reid's big three: the initial drive to acquire Cameron Ranch (3000 acres), Ken Thomson and John Jenkins as the world's best builders of bridges (17 at Grant's Woods), and a tribute to Margo Holt, lover of alvars; the memorial plaque for Mark Douglas and Sherry Lawson who are very much alive; Robbie Preston's nature photography and Judy's kids program at the Carden Nature Festival; Adam Thomson's story of how Grants Wetlands and Wilson's Point came to be donated to the Conservancy; Ken Thomson and John Jenkins outwitting each other on the positioning of one of the bridges they built; Gary Thiess's story of junior rangers assisting with building projects; the clean-up of the Grant's Woods house, and Janet and Ron's camp-out on the property to deter thieves. It was a warm sharing by the special people who make up the membership of the Conservancy.

12. Wrap-up and adjournment

Photo contest winners: Jennifer Morton, Peter Sandusky, Al Fritz and Dr. Troy McMullin

Thanks to Juliana Hawke for the artwork on CC's new T-shirts (\$19.95)

Members were encouraged to renew their memberships and consider signing up for monthly giving

The new and improved Carden Nature Festival will be on the weekend of June 7-8. Environment Canada's Dave Phillips will be guest speaker

Moved by Bob Sullivan that the meeting be adjourned.

Prepared March 7, 2014 by Ingrid VanderMarel