

**PUBLIC ADVISORY COMMITTEE
MEETING MINUTES
Tuesday, March 10, 2026
5:00 PM**

MEMBERS PRESENT: David Cribbs, Chair
Julia Baird
Philip Beale
Lageera Chatheechan
Mary Jane Combe
Steven Rivers (arrived at 5:13p.m.)
David Wylie
Lennie Aarts
Stephanie Flagg (arrived at 5:12p.m.)
Robert Foster, ex-officio
George McKibbon
Cindilee Ecker-Flagg

MEMBERS ABSENT: Andrew Panko
Naheed Qureshi

STAFF PRESENT: Leilani Lee-Yates, CAO/Secretary-Treasurer
Melanie Davis, Manager, Office of the CAO & Board
Natalie Green, Director, Watershed Strategies & Climate
Change
Jessi Nelson, Niagara River RAP Coordinator

The meeting was called to order at 5:01 p.m.

1. OPENING WELCOME

2. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Recommendation No. PAC-01-26

Moved by: Philip Beale

Seconded by: George McKibbon

THAT the agenda for the Public Advisory Committee meeting held on March 10, 2026 **BE AMENDED** to receive an update from the CAO/Secretary-Treasurer regarding the provincial announcement related to next steps for the consolidation of conservation authorities, immediately following approval of the agenda.

CARRIED

3. UPDATE FROM THE CAO/SECRETARY-TREASURER

CAO/Secretary-Treasurer, Leilani Lee-Yates, informed the Public Advisory Committee of details outlined by Hon. Todd McCarthy, Minister, Environment, Conservation and Parks, and Chief Conservation Executive, Hassaan Basit, on the next steps to transition to a regional conservation authority framework.

This overview included the establishment of Transition Committees and their proposed membership, plans to introduce amendments to the *Conservation Authorities Act* to enable consolidation through statutory amalgamation, changes to governance provisions, and establishment of local watershed councils.

NPCA Chair, Robert Foster, noted that the Board is following along with significant interest and appreciates the valuable contributions from the Public Advisory Committee as further details are released.

Recommendation No. PAC-02-2026

Moved by: Philip Beale

Seconded by: William Rapley

THAT the update from the CAO/Secretary-Treasurer on the provincial announcement regarding next steps for the consolidation of conservation authorities **BE RECEIVED**.

CARRIED

4. DECLARATIONS OF CONFLICT OF INTEREST

None.

5. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

5.1. Public Advisory Committee meeting dated November 25, 2025.

Recommendation No. PAC-03-26

Moved by: Julia Baird

Seconded by: Cindilee Ecker-Flagg

THAT the Minutes of the Public Advisory Committee meeting dated November 25, 2025 **BE APPROVED**.

CARRIED

6. CORRESPONDENCE

None.

7. PRESENTATIONS

7.1. Niagara River Remedial Action Plan Ecosystem Impairment Removed

Niagara River RAP Coordinator, Jessi Nelson, provided a presentation regarding the initiative noted above. Discussion ensued regarding progress on ecosystem impairment indicators and determining factors.

Recommendation No. PAC-04-26

Moved by: Philip Beale

Seconded by: William Rapley

THAT the presentation regarding the Niagara River Remedial Action Plan Ecosystem Impairment Removed **BE RECEIVED.**

CARRIED

8. DELEGATIONS

None.

9. CONSENT ITEMS

None.

10. DISCUSSION ITEMS

None.

11. COMMITTEE REPORTS

None.

12. NEW BUSINESS

12.1. NPCA Corporate Priorities – Committee Areas of Interest

- Manager, Office of the CAO & Board, Melanie Davis, shared corporate priorities for 2026 with the Committee to gauge interest on topics for engagement at future meetings.
- Member McKibbin noted importance of focusing on issues and initiatives unique to the Niagara Peninsula watershed that would remain problem areas after amalgamation.
- Chair Cribbs reiterated that significant time and attention will be required for forthcoming changes and suggested the Committee would be agreeable to additional meetings if they were of value to staff.
- Member Baird expressed interest in hearing about projects from the lens of potential amalgamation.

12.2. Members' Updates

- Member Rapley noted muddy water conditions along the Niagara River, discussion regarding low water levels, high winds, and ice cover resulting in spill over land took place. He further noted that river otters have been sited in the Lyons Creek area.

- Vice Chair Beale attended a community event with Niagara GeoPark and is focused on preparing for opening the Pioneer Village, welcoming the Committee to the Village for a tour if it is of interest.
- Member Aarts shared that the steering committee for Big Forks Drain in the Township of Wainfleet is near establishment.
- Member Combe noted that bud survival for grape growers is at approximately 50% due to multiple days of significantly cold temperatures, reaching lows of -25°.
- Member Baird noted that funding for a project to develop a standard survey to explore behavioural and attitudinal changes from getting out into nature has been received, and that Brock University is hosting a World Water Day event from 11-3pm on March 23, 2026.

13. ADJOURNMENT

Recommendation No. PAC-05-26

Moved by: Mary Jane Combe

Seconded by: Julia Baird

THAT the Public Advisory Committee meeting **ADJOURN** at 6:43 p.m.

CARRIED