



Minutes

of a Meeting of the Sustainability Advisory Committee of the City of Kenora

March 27, 2024
2:00p.m.

Operations Training Room

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- With:** Craig Debbo, Chair    Stephanie Charles    C. Lisa Moncrief    Ethan Amyotte  
           Rory McMillan        Peter Kirby
- Staff:** Heather Pihulak – City Clerk (joined at 2:30 pm)    Kelly Galbraith, Deputy Clerk (to 2:40 p.m.)  
           Bill Mundy, General Manager W/WW                    Bill Rogerson – GM of Public Works
- Guests:** Brie McCardle, LOWDSA
- Regrets:** Lisa Devlin, Ashley Nordlund

#### 1. Call to Order and Land Acknowledgement

Craig Debbo called the meeting to order at 2:06 p.m. and delivered the land acknowledgment. Round Table introductions.

#### 2. Confirmation of Minutes

**Moved By Rory McMillan, Seconded by Ethan Amyotte and Carried:-**

That the Minutes of the Sustainability Advisory Committee meetings held November 7<sup>th</sup> 2023, be confirmed as amended and filed. Rory and Ethan and carried.

#### 3. Lake of the Woods District Stewardship Association

Brie McCardle, the new Executive Director of the Association joined the committee to discuss shoreline health.

LOWDSA - Vision and Goals are outlined and defined by the Board. They are an environmental not-for profit membership-based association with 2,500 members. They have a volunteer board of directors, 3 permanent staff and 4 seasonal students.

Vision; is to engage and educate for environmental sustainability in the Lake of the Woods region.



LOWDSA provides information and coordinates activities to preserve and enhance the environment of the Lake of the Woods region. Their mandate is to:

- Educate community
- Support community partnerships
- Deliver environmental programming through the Lake Smart program

LOWDSA communicates and engages on issues impacting the region. They communicate and share information through social/Area News and increase collaboration to address priorities.

The bottom line: healthy shorelines are essential for all who share our lakes and rivers. Our part is to understand, protect, restore, and educate people with over 65,000 miles roughly 104,607km of shoreline in the region.

Our shorelines are amazing places, and we can only see a tiny portion of what goes on along the water's edge. unique, fragile, and highly productive ecosystems The land located along shorelines is known as a riparian zone, the "Ribbon of Life," or buffer zone Providing a rich habitat for fish, animals, and plants. It is in these transition zones, the wildlife corridors in the waterway, that many forms of life have their nurseries or feeding spots.

- Fish spawn
- Aquatic insects inhabit and mate
- Turtles climb onto shores to lay eggs
- Ducks and other water birds build nests
- Aquatic plants feed the fish, animals, and birds
- Terrestrial plants provide shelter and locations to reproduce
- Cools and shades the water for life in shallow water

Not only is it essential for wildlife but water quality as well. The shoreline ecosystem also filters out sediment, and traps pollutants, absorbs excess nutrients from human and natural sources, maintains base stream flows, limits flooding, and recharges groundwater by absorbing water. It can stabilize and protect banks from erosion. It allows property owners to express themselves through landscaping and plays a role in property value enhances aesthetics, minimizes potential water quality issues and is necessary for biodiversity to thrive.

#### Causes & Effects of Shoreline Erosion

- Natural process that occurs with high and low water
- Natural effects
- Wind Rain Ice Flooding Runoff burrowing wildlife waves



A little science...what we cannot see

- Eroded materials from your shoreline are basically particles of silt, sand, and clay.
- Erosion is the process of carrying away or displacement of sediment. The silt sand and clay separate and spread causing sedimentation. Sedimentation can then result in increased turbidity.

When water is turbid, less sunlight can infiltrate water, beginning the upset that disturbs the biological balance for aquatic life. Aquatic plants and algae are reduced in growth, in turn diminishing the amount of food available to fish and other forms of aquatic life. Some fish (Northern pike and trout) use their sight to feed and turbid water makes it more difficult for them find food.

Sedimentation will affect bottom dwelling organisms like clams and caddis fly larvae by burying them too deeply to survive. Gravel and pebbles that are friendly to stoneflies and some species of mayflies may be buried in sediment, rendering the bottom unfriendly to these creatures as well.

Benthics and importance. Fish species like walleye, trout and bass that use the same gravel and pebbles as spawning beds will also be affected as their reproductive sites are destroyed. Human impacts expedite erosion process through:

- Removal of trees, rocks, and other vegetation from the shoreline to build a structure or a pathway to the water.
- Cutting grass to the edge for view
- Building obstructions like docks in streams that change water pathways and speeds around them, influencing natural erosion.
- Use of watercraft of any kind for any purpose (skiing, wake boarding) at too high a speed (anything over 10 km/hr.) and too close to shore.

The Human Cost ... what we can see

Loss of shoreline property -damage that costs significantly. Turbidity increases is the treatment of our drinking water. It becomes more difficult and costly, as sophisticated systems will be required to properly treat and clear the water of sedimentation. Murky water also makes waterfront property less attractive for all the water activities we enjoy at the lake like swimming and boating.

The results?

- Disturbed fish habitat and spawning beds
- Swamped loon, duck, and turtle nests
- Reduced clarity of the lake
- Property damage
- Excess nutrients ...

Primary food source for blue-green algae = Nutrients (primarily phosphorus)



Warm water + calm conditions + excess nutrients (phosphorus) = perfect storm of conditions to support the nuisance growth of blue-green algae

Historic phosphorus levels in Granite Lake are just slightly below levels that would support nuisance algal blooms. June 7-8, 2020: Granite Lake experienced an intense rainfall event, 6-7" of rain in a brief period of time. Significant erosion was noted around the lake, even washing out portions of roads. This large runoff event brought a significant amount of soil and associated nutrients into the lake. This nutrient source, along with the human impacts from the cottages, coupled with warmer than normal water temperatures, would create ideal growing conditions for the growth of blue-green algae.

- July 20, 2020 (approx.): Large bloom of algae began appearing along some shorelines in Granite Lake.
- Ontario Ministry of Environment, Conservation and Parks (MECP) and the Northwestern Health Unit (NWHU) were contacted by residents to report the bloom and its unusual nature.
- July 27, 2020: Samples collected for both algal identification and algal toxin (microcystin) concentration.
- Results: The algal samples were dominated by blue green alga types (primarily *Planktothrix*) that can produce toxins that can be harmful to people and pets.
- August 5, 2020: Lake of the Woods District Stewardship Association (LOWDSA) and their Lake Smart Team toured Granite Lake with property owners to observe the bloom and plan future action.

The presence of blue-green algae is due to increased amounts of nutrients (phosphorus) getting into the lake.

Importance of healthy and natural shorelines to water quality is not just the not for profit, focus on LOTW. They want to engage and educate for environmental sustainability. Lake of the Woods is on a trans-border. Info and activities to preserve and enhance environment. Lake smart program in summer is a great way to do that as well as through social media, and the Area News magazine which is distributed 5 times a year. Water level, walleye status and Highway 17. Goal to increase collaboration and it is important to address sustainability in the area with many groups forming one collective voice.

Shorelines are productive, fragile and unique ecosystem. Shoreline, where water meets land and the 15ft riparian zone are rich habitat for fish, forms of life have food and nests. Shallow water creatures and animals, shoreline plants provide shade and cooling. Area has over 14,000 islands and 65,000 miles of shorelines. Shorelines filter sediment.

Shoreline erosion happens everyday. Eroded material sand silt and clay, process of erosion removes sediments. Trout and Pike use sight to source food. Sedimental effects clams by burrowing to deep to survive. Fish like walleye, bass and trout, have loss of reproductive habitats. Removal of trees and rocks increases watercraft wave action and is not natural and increases shoreline erosion. Loss of shoreline and damaged shoreline impacts drinking



water quality, salt and sand cloud water. Loons ducks and turtle nests are destroyed and you see excess nutrients which blue green algae feeds on nutrients.

Granite Lake in 2020 was a hot summer, May and June had intense rainfalls. Historically phosphoric but the runoff event brought soli into lake, older septic systems, warm water cause perfect storm. Large bloom that began in July and samples were collected which came back dominated by blue green alga types. You could not swim, drink or use that water including not being boiled. The Lake Smart Program spoke to shoreline residents to build buffers and what they could do to reduce nutrient load.

**Discussion:** Long grass, aspen trees, something to prevent run off. Members saw the team at the market including a booth and students in a boat. Over 2,000 members now and they are looking for new initiatives look to be funded. Transition year, sticking with what we know and have. Expanding, metal waste day with a location near water with a bin, sell trees.

The committee thanked Brie for her presentation.

#### **4. Previous Action Items**

**St Louis School Donation** – We have not heard anything further with this item.

**Signage for Free Cycle Days** - signage is in place at transfer station.

**Re-use Area at Transfer Station** – Councillor Moncrief was surprised by the vote at Council as there was lots of support. Disappointment in the decision, however, we cannot revisit this for one year. Suggest going back in a year to try again. Used to be done at no cost, things left for a week, loader would haul and dump in bin after timeframe. Done away with as a result of COVID. Maybe a way to set aside budget with cost. The cost is for a pad with a shed roof on top. It was questioned why it can't be volunteers instead of paid staff looking after it. Bill Mundy, GM of W/WW explained that the cost in the past for moving material. Circumventing the process and dumping material without using the scale. Dumping and not paying tipping fees. Dropping items not reusable. There is liability as we can't have uncontrolled scavenging. Costing of materials, everything is high, concrete pad is primary cost. Need to keep staff and public safe. Budget estimate to capture what may be needed there. Are there are alternate things we can do? Come up with more detailed budget what something might cost. Better idea for Councillor's who objected. Policy on what can be considered for used. Bill noted he is happy to help with that. The Committee acknowledged Councillor Moncrief's efforts. We look for innovative ways to move forward.

**Fire Hydrant Drinking stations** – The Kenora Fire Chief noted that this is not possible in the City.



**Harvest Kenora Wish List** – Heather received a wish list from Harvest Kenora and questioned whether the committee is still interested in funding this initiative. One of the initiatives in the Sustainability Action Plan is a community garden. We were looking for growth but they don't have capacity for another site. They are having success where they are, they are concerned about jeopardizing program because of volunteer burnout. In order to advance they need paid staff, they need some way to manage this.

The Committee discussed purchasing a branded event tent, to identify it is supported by us as part of our donation to the group. Committee involvement, presence, would be the priority for the committee members. To buy garden tools, would not know where came from. The event tent, and benches would be supported with the caveat that they are branded then give us a ranking of their other priorities.

The Committee would like to see a communication release identifying the Committee supporting them and include the City in any promotion.

The committee would ask them to come back and report to us in the fall what they did with their funding.

**Moved By Craig Debbo, Seconded by Rory McMillan and Carried:-**

That the Sustainability Advisory Committee donate \$3,500 to Harvest Kenora to purchase a bench and tent, with Sustainability Advisory Committee branding and the balance to their other priorities.

**Committee presence in the community** - having each of us volunteer speak at various service clubs, church groups, schools would make the community more aware of our mandate and work. Actually get out there and speak to high school classes, what are the priorities, what is Kenora doing to meet the goals of the Sustainability plan. We are missing two youth representatives and education sector on our committee that could assist us with that.

Regularly and have been advertising for these positions. You have to get a teacher or people from the Board and encourage people. This is important work and we need to get the word out. Peter is interested in developing a presentation to speak to schools and other groups/ agencies in the community. Peter will make a list of opportunities for places to speak. Useful to develop a one pager on the plan – and a short tool, with key messages that everybody could use.

Heather to share the Action plan and the presentation to Council when it was presented to Council. If we get the presentation and look at doing something that we could take out into the community. Do a workshop during next meeting to identify priorities and what we could take on under the plan. We can set the priorities. Reprioritize the plan – and next meeting to set the priorities.



This would be very beneficial with new members. We are funding Kenora Harvest – that will filter out there. Heather is adding as a standing item on the agenda to 'check in' on the plan.

**Science North Climate Quest Exhibit–March 25<sup>th</sup>–April 8<sup>th</sup>** - Heather shared the information as part of the agenda and encouraged some committee members to attend.

**Earth Day Activities** - The Chair asked that this item be placed on the agenda and discuss any Earth Day Activities in the community. Earth hour – we could pick our own Earth hour – and encourage everyone to turn out their lights on Earth Day. Earth Day is April 22<sup>nd</sup> – the NWHU has pick up kits for needle pick up. Heather shared a few community events we are aware of as part of the agenda.

**2024 Day of Action on Litter** – Heather shared the Provincial information received by the City regarding the 2024 Day of Action on Litter. The Lake Smart program does a shoreline clean up every month and we could look at that. Brie can bring dates when those clean up days are.

**Compostable Garbage bags for Adopt-A-Block program** - The idea is that they are compostable and City staff have been instructed to pick them up. They feel different more like paper, but behave more like garbage bags. Committee members asked what is the Adopt-A-block program is and Heather explained the program:

- You can help to keep our community clean by picking up roadside litter and debris through the City of Kenora clear bag program.
- It is a Volunteer sign-up by contacting the Lake of the Woods Discovery Centre to sign up the area, neighbourhood, or street you will be cleaning. You pick up the free tools the city provides to aid you in the clean up efforts which include: Program branded clear bags, Picker (when in stock), Gloves (when in stock), safe needle pick-up instructions from the Northwestern Health Unit.
- When you are finished volunteers leave the clear bags on the side of the road. Because the bags are "City Branded", our staff will recognize them at a glance and verify the contents. You may also call the Transfer Station to let us know where you have left full bags. No bag tag is required.

### **Current Action Items**

Rory in listening to CBC radio people are adopting the drains and would clean the storm drains and people in Thunder Bay are adopting the drains and cleaning to prevent things from going down them.

### **Next Meeting**

May 1, 2024 – 2-4 p.m.

### **Adjournment**

Adjourned at 3:35 p.m.

Lake of the Woods  
**KENORA**

