

Minutes of NSWA Board of Directors Meeting #167
March 27, 2024, at 9:30 am – 2:00 pm

IN-PERSON

EPCOR Tower, 27th Floor, 10423 101 St NW Edmonton

Board Members

Attending:

- Adam Polzen
- Alan Corbett
- Bart Guyon
- Gennifer Mehlhaff
- Ian Kwantes
- Jamie Bruha
- Jatinder Tiwana
- Kristina Kowalski
- Kyle Schole
- Miles Wowk
- Rhonda King
- Rick Wallace
- Stephanie Neufeld
- Dr. Stephen Craik
- Wade Teveniuk

Regrets:

- Bill Fox

Regrets:

- Greg Goss
- Dr. Laurie Danielson
- Shelley Biermanski
- Tony Lemay
- Tracy Scott

Other:

- Daryl Hostyn, Town of Thorsby Mayor
- Geoffrey Wacowich, GOA – EPA
- Wendy Birch, GOA – EPA
- Nicola Lewin, EPCOR
- Susan Ancel, EPCOR
- Karen Wichuk, EMRB Chair

NSWA Staff:

- Scott Millar, Executive Director
- Kaila Belovich, Watershed Planning Technician
- Mary Ellen, Senior Watershed Coordinator
- Rosey Radmanovich, Watershed Coordinator

Action Item Summary:

- **Ongoing:** Finance Committee to explore the idea of a fundraising feasibility study for developing an Integrated Development Fund (27 Sep 2023).
- **Ongoing:** Scott to gather information from other WPACs and Treaty 6 groups to determine the best course of action for developing a policy around Honoraria specific to Indigenous stakeholders (22 Nov 2023).
- **Ongoing:** Scott to contact Krista Quesnel to inform her of the Urban Creeks Collaborative and have her be the project's main point of contact for Parkland County moving forward (22 Nov 2023).
- Mary Ellen to share her presentation from the Municipal Drought Management workshop with the Board.
- Scott to follow up with Geoffrey on the questions asked during his GOA and Branch Update and share with the Board.
- NSWA to connect with Genny & Miles to discuss opportunities related to their potential involvement in the NSR Documentary.
- Scott to update the language of 'appointed' in Section 6.1.3.1 of the proposed Bylaw amendment to reflect the discussion of the Board.

Minutes:

Regular business meeting and orientation of NSW's Board of Directors.

Meeting Objectives:

- 2024-2025 Budget
- Policy Review and Approval

167.0 – Land Acknowledgement

167.0 – Introductions

- Welcome and introductions.
- Meeting called to order at 9:32 a.m. by Stephanie Neufeld.

167.1 – Review & APPROVE – Agenda

- Approval of Agenda for Board Meeting #167 (Mar 27, 2024).

Kristina Kowalski moved that the Agenda for Meeting #167 on 27 Mar 2024 be approved as presented, seconded by Jamie Bruha. No dissenting votes.

CARRIED

Rapid Fire Speaker Session

1. **Whitemud/Blackmud Natural Assets Program** (NSWA – Mary Ellen Shain)

- Mary Ellen provided an overview of the Whitemud/Blackmud Natural Assets Program.
 - The grant received from the Environmental Damages Fund Grant for \$1.18M will support the funding of this project over the next 5 years.
- **ACTION ITEM:** Mary Ellen to share her presentation from the Municipal Drought Management workshop with the Board.
 - **COMPLETED:** Shared along with the other presentations from this Board meeting.

2. **Stormwater Management Rebate Program** (formerly about Drought Management Plan) (EPCOR – Nicola Lewin)

- Nicola provided an overview of EPCOR's Stormwater Management Rebate program.

Questions –

- When would a water diversion license approval be needed (e.g., when installing a rain barrel)?
 - It isn't necessary to get one since the amount of water diverted would be minimal, and it would eventually go back into the stormwater system.
 - Jatinder noted that commercial industries would still require approval to install these solutions.
- What is the timeline for implementation of this program?
 - The program plans to be introduced in the spring/summer of 2025.
- Are the current drought conditions across the province helping drive the discussion around the implementation of these kinds of incentives?
 - Nicola noted yes, and that The City of Calgary has been working towards these programs as well.

3. **NSWA Indigenous Engagement** (NSWA – Rosey Radmanovich)

- Rosey provided an overview of NSW's Indigenous Engagement with Papaschase First Nation (PFN).
- Scott noted that NSW will be presenting to the Treaty 6 Confederacy on drought management and will hopefully receive funding to develop a drought management plan that includes perspectives from indigenous knowledge and science.

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Questions –

- What capacity is there for the two Indigenous summer students to engage with the Board and/or continue this work moving forward?
 - Rosey noted we will have the students present what they did at the end of the summer, and she will develop a ‘What-We-Heard’ Report to identify continued focus areas for the future. She will also connect with Dr. Patrick Hannington to see if there is interest in pursuing a Master's project related to eDNA monitoring of traditional medicines in our watershed in the future.

GOA & Branch Update

- Steph introduced Geoffrey Wacowich (Executive Director of the Corporate Planning & Governance Branch) and Wendy Birch (Manager of Partnerships & Governance).
- Geoffrey provided a GOA & Branch update on drought management, water licensing, funding, etc.
 - Noted Sherri Wilson is the new Deputy Minister of Environment and Protected Areas.
 -

Questions –

- Some Board members asked about inter-basin transfers. What is happening, and how would it affect communities across watersheds?
 - Roger Ramcharita recently noted there have been no decisions around inter-basin transfers; however, nothing has been taken off the table. In the coming days, more information will be shared and the government’s decision on this topic will be announced.
- Is the GOA interested in funding anything related to green infrastructure (i.e., Natural Assets) within the programs they currently provide to further improve drought prevention?
 - Instead of only grey infrastructure, the development of green assets in the south is currently supported by EPA’s Watershed Resiliency and Restoration Program (\$3.5 million total budget). Several WPACs access the funding referred to above, to develop green infrastructure and I would encourage NSWA to consider the same. Again, decisions are still being made about how to work through the current potential drought and into the future around the use of grey and green infrastructure in the solutions.
- Scott asked on behalf of NSWA’s Board of Directors if Geoffry can invite the Minister and Deputy Minister to NSWA’s AGM on June 26th.
 - I would encourage you to email the Minister and invite her to the NSWA AGM in June. Her office would best know her schedule and availability.
- **ACTION ITEM:** Scott to follow up with Geoffrey on the questions asked during his GOA and Branch Update and share with the Board.
 - **COMPLETED:** Follow-up answers from Geoffry are provided below the questions above in red.

Rapid Fire Speaker Session

4. ‘One Water’ Planning (EPCOR – Susan Ancel)

- Susan provided an overview of EPCOR’s ‘One Water’ Planning.
 - Presentation materials will be shared after the program has been approved by the City of Edmonton Council and launched to the public in Fall 2024.
- Strategic Focus areas for Edmonton include:
 - Growth Strategies for the City – Supporting City Planning.
 - Modernizing Design Standards for Water and Sanitary
 - Water Integrated Resource Plan (WatIRP) – Drinking, Growth, Watershed, and Climate Impacts
 - Stormwater Integrated Resource Plan (SIRP) – Storm, Sanitary, Watershed, and Climate Impacts
 - Sanitary Integrated Resource Plan (SanIRP) – Sanitary and Watershed

5. NSR Documentary (NSWA Chair – Steph Neufeld)

- Steph provided an update on the NSR Documentary, which will educate viewers on the watershed and its main features like the NSR, including how it flows throughout the seasons, our relationship to it, etc.
- NSWA is working with [Panoramic Media](#) to develop the script with EPCOR’s internal communications, and subject-matter experts.
- Will be premiered in June 2025 for NSWA’s 25th anniversary at the Garneau Metro theatre.
- NSWA is accepting ideas for interesting locations to film at, as well as support in promoting the documentary once it is ready for release.

Questions –

- How will agriculture be represented within the documentary?
 - The purpose of the film isn’t to place blame on the industry; however, it will identify aspects of human use in some episodes. We intend to reach out to all users across the watershed to gain both urban and rural perspectives.
- **ACTION ITEM:** NSWA to connect with Genny & Miles to discuss opportunities related to their potential involvement in the NSR Documentary.

6. NSR Hydrologic Model and Roadmap (NSWA – Scott Millar)

- Scott provided an update on the NSR Water Management Roadmap Project.
 - The project is broken down into 5 main steps and will be based on a similar model developed by WaterSMART Solutions for the South Saskatchewan River Basin.
- A steering committee will be developed comprised of the project's major founders to provide guidance on the project.
 - This method of shared governance for the project will have positive implications moving forward as we continue the discussion of drought management with our relevant partners.

167.2 – Review & APPROVE – Minutes

- Approval of Minutes from Board Meeting #166 (Jan 24, 2024).

Kyle Schole moved that the Minutes for Meeting #166 on 24 Jan 2024 be approved as presented, seconded by Miles Wowk. No dissenting votes.

CARRIED

- The Action Register from Board Meeting #166 was reviewed. Most of the previous action items were completed aside from those noted as ongoing.
 - The action item for the Finance Committee is ongoing as they explore the idea of conducting a fundraising feasibility study for the possibility of implementing an Integrated Development Fund.

167.3 – NSWA Operational Plan / Executive Director’s Update

Operational Plan –

- Scott reviewed NSWA’s Operational Plan for 2024-2024. He noted NSWA has fewer developing projects as many of these projects are now underway, and we are currently at full capacity and are not looking to develop more projects at this time.

Questions –

- Is this Operational Plan public?
 - Scott noted it will be uploaded to our website soon at the bottom of the ‘[Our Society](#)’ page along with NSWA’s Strategic Plan.

Genny Mehlhaff motioned to accept the 2024-2025 NSWA Operational Plan as information, seconded by Wade Teveniuk. No dissenting votes.

CARRIED

Executive Director's Update –

- Scott provided the Executive Director's update. He highlighted NSWA's projects and initiatives, as well as engagement and outreach for the upcoming summer.
- **UPDATE:** As of April 10th, 2024, NSWA has received funding for [two Summer Outreach Assistant positions](#) from the Canada Summer Jobs Grant. The application deadline is until April 30th, 2024. Please share this information with whoever may be interested.

Questions –

- What is the reasoning behind charging for the 'Day Zero' webinar?
 - Scott noted it's a test to see what the turnout rate is for people who register vs. those who show up. We will share the link with other NGOs as well.
- Do we still have incoming municipal funding?
 - Scott noted we do, and we're in good shape for municipal contributions at this time.

Bart Guyon motioned to accept the Executive Director's update as information, seconded by Jamie Bruha. No dissenting votes.

CARRIED

167.4 – Finance Update

Q4 Financial Budget –

- Adam provided an update on the Q4 Financial Budget.
- The 2023-2024 NSWA Budget was budgeted with a deficit of \$66,000. The current Q4 Forecast shows we will be in a deficit of \$14,283 at the end of the fiscal year. Funds from NSWA's Operational Reserves will be used to supplement this deficit.
- Although our budget couldn't get to a surplus, we anticipate receiving more municipal contributions which will help balance the budget further.
- Scott noted that ~\$14k is around 1.5% of the 2023-2024 NSWA Budget, so we're still in good shape.

Jamie Bruha motioned to accept the Q4 Finance update as information, seconded by Rick Wallace. No dissenting Votes.

CARRIED

167.5 – 2024-2025 Budget

Budget Review –

- NSWA Board Members reviewed the proposed operational budget for the 2024-2025 fiscal year. The budget was updated this year to reflect historical expense trends.
- Scott and Ellen reviewed where our operational funds come from, and noted an increase in municipal contributions and a decline in the number of staff has allowed us to increase the rates for this year.
- The budget for 2024-2025 is perfectly balanced, with total revenues and expenses expected to be \$789,000. Therefore, it is forecasted that no withdrawals or deposits will be made for NSWA's Operational Reserve this upcoming fiscal year.
 - Salaries and Benefits have decreased due to supplemental funding from the Environmental Damages Fund Grant.
 - Scott forecasted a conservative estimate of how much salaries would be offset by certain grants.

Questions –

- How much funding does NSWA receive from grants?

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- The amount of project funding we receive varies each year and depends on the project. An estimate will be provided in our 2023-2024 Annual Report to be released before the AGM in June.
- Has funding from the Edmonton Community Foundation ended?
 - Scott noted it has, as that was a pilot grant program. However, there's potential for us to receive more funding from them this Fall, although we can't budget for this funding at this time.

Stephen Craik motioned to approve the 2024-2025 NSWA Operating Budget as presented, seconded by Alan Corbett. No dissenting Votes.

CARRIED

167.6 – Policy Review & Update

New & Reviewed Policies Update –

- Kyle updated the Board on the new and reviewed policies that were drafted by the Governance Committee and Strategic Planning and Priorities Committee.
- A.1 NSWA Vision:
 - Minor wording updates.
- A.2 NSWA Mission:
 - Minor wording updates.
 - Change striving to striving.

Jamie Bruha motioned to approve the updates to the existing Board Policy changes as put forward Board Committee reviews and to reflect Board discussion, seconded by Adam Polzen. No dissenting Votes.

CARRIED

- A.3 NSWA Values:
 - These changes reflect what was discussed within the values workshop attended by the NSWA Board of Directors and staff.

Kristina Kowalski motioned to approve the updated Policy A.3 NSWA Values as presented, seconded by Ian Kwantes. No dissenting Votes.

CARRIED

- A.4 NSWA Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI):
 - The Governance Committee expressed their reasoning behind the importance of developing this policy and noted they decided to keep the paragraph on Truth and Reconciliation within this policy instead of separating it out as previously discussed.

Wade Teveniuk motioned to approve the new Policy A.4 NSWA Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) as presented, seconded by Kyle Schole. No dissenting Votes.

CARRIED

Bylaw Update –

- Section 4.2.3 (membership) was amended into two sections to allow for the NSWA Society membership to recur annually to reduce administrative costs.
- Section 6.1.3 (composition of the Board) was amended to expand the number of Directors to include an additional municipal sector seat and four Indigenous directors seats. This will increase our Board of Directors from 20 to 25 members.

Questions –

- Miles asked if he would be able to count on the Board as an Indigenous Director since he is Métis.
 - He would be unable to hold two Board positions at once, however, his perspective as a Métis person is welcome in any Board discussion regardless of what seat he holds.

- How specific do we need to be on how we plan to gain representation from Indigenous communities? Do we need to specify if they must be appointed or elected?
 - Since the individual would be representing their community, we would need to request their Nation to 'appoint' them.
 - Scott notes he is willing to update the wording around this depending on what the Board suggests.
 - For example, reword 'appointed' to something along the lines of 'selected by your community as per your governance protocols'.
- **ACTION ITEM:** Scott to update the language of 'appointed' in Section 6.1.3.1 of the proposed Bylaw amendment to reflect the discussion of the Board.

Kyle Schole motioned to approve the two proposed bylaw amendments with the changes mentioned above to be presented for decision at the 2024 Annual General Meeting, seconded by Rick Wallace. No dissenting Votes.

CARRIED

167.7 – Board Roundtable

Adam Polzen – Industry (Pembina Pipeline Corporation)

- Laurie Danielson will be moving on from the Northeast Capital Industry Association (NCIA).
- Adam noted Pembina has a seat on NCIA, so Adam will be *stiving* to provide more Industry-related updates at future Board meetings.

Al Corbett – Government (Alberta Drainage Council)

- The Alberta Drainage Council is re-evaluating the infrastructure of their drainage districts to see what utility/tax rate is available to support them and is working with new proponents to propose new drainage districts.
- The [Alberta Water Council's 2024 Drought Simulation Report](#) was recently released, with the new drought committee formed to help support sectors and provide drought-related information.

Bart Guyon – Municipal (Brazeau County)

- Brazeau County has been training for this year's fire season.
- Focused on ALUS/GOA's [RALP](#) programming to ensure their agricultural lands have healthy soil as this will increase productivity.

Gennifer Mehlhaff – Municipal (Clearwater County)

- Preparing for drought and ensuring agricultural producers have access to the ALUS/GOA [RALP](#) Program.
- Noted Bighorn Dam levels are currently low.

Ian Kwantes – Industry (Weyerhaeuser – Pembina Timberlands)

- Weyerhaeuser is working with Alberta Wildfires to continue salvaging from last year's fires and prepare for this year's fire season ahead of the anticipated drought.
 - Was able to salvage around 1 year's worth of wood (~4,000 ha.) from this operation.
- Question about what is part of their strategy to mitigate future fire risks, and if they researched which plants would be better to replant to reduce these risks.
 - Ian noted it's complicated, that broad leaf deciduous plants aren't always the better option, although Aspen tends to do well after a fire.
 - Weyerhaeuser is developing their 200-year plan, to be completed in 2027. Will be asking for a member from NSWA to be a part of their stakeholder committee.

Jamie Bruha – Government (Alberta Environment & Protected Areas)

- Drought management has been a primary topic lately.
- Putting together a plan to meet the GOA's water mandate for their departments.

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Jatinder Tiwana – Advisory (City of Edmonton)

- The City of Edmonton's [Housing Accelerator Fund](#) from the GOC will allow for affordable housing to be built more quickly by improving the time frame to rezone certain parcels.
- Urged people to check out the City's new [Northeast River Valley Park](#).

Kristina Kowalski – Municipal (Parkland County)

- Parkland County (PC) is continuing to update its Land Use Bylaws and Municipal Development Plan. An initial review of the technical studies will be released soon.
- PC Councilors recently held a workshop to learn about different easements.
- In total 23% of PC is covered by ESAs (60 are named). As a comparison, based on our most recent land cover information ~ 44% (121,000 ha.) of PC is covered in natural assets (i.e., forests, lakes, etc.). Half of the ESAs have been classified, with Wabamun Lake being a big contribution to that.
- PC is also utilizing ALUS' many programs.

Kyle Schole – Member at Large

- Working on Heritage River's material. Thanked everyone who helped him along the journey.
- The Wasketaneau Creek Connectivity study is progressing well and will be completed in 1-2 months.

Miles Wovk – Agriculture (Alberta Beef Producers)

- AB Beef Producers are working with the GOA on groundwater solutions as there's currently minimal surface water. Working on constructing dugouts, to prepare for low levels of surface water runoff.
- Noted cattle herds have dropped by almost half over the last twenty years. Somewhat drought-related, but is also due to an increase of other economic ventures across North America.
- Mentioned Duck Unlimited's plans to restore agricultural land to natural grassland, and to control some of this through agricultural easements.

Stephanie Neufeld – Utility (EPCOR)

- Partnered with Creekwatch to conduct more sampling around urban creeks, in conjunction with the WaterSHED Monitoring Program.
 - o Will be installing three more monitoring stations in urban locations that will hopefully be near river basins. This will help assist technical studies for the Urban Creeks Alliance to identify stormwater impacts within these urban creeks.
- Developed the Threats Platform Tool for the NSR. It brings together land use, water quality, and water quantity data and showcases specific layers to provide answers and information.
 - o Heavy focus on municipalities that don't have access to this kind of data via their own GIS Analyst.
- Has continued wildlife monitoring. No changes in the Water Quality Index at this point.
- WaterSMART recently presented details of their hydro model project to the NSR Science and Knowledge Mobilization Committee. Steph invited any from the board who's interested in joining.

Dr. Stephen Craik – Member at Large

- Currently occupied with drought management work, along with other drinking water specialists.
- Improving protocols for discharging wastewater into streams with low flows (e.g., lagoons).
- Drinking water specialists and water system operators are monitoring well water in areas previously impacted by wildfires. Noted this could impact source water and make it difficult to treat.
- Question asking how much has been reported on the drinking water treatment standard following a forest fire.
 - o Stephen noted they are more operational-focused, and that it's too early to tell. They will have a better picture once more spring run-off occurs.

Rhonda King – Agriculture (ALUS Canada)

- Currently working on WRRP projects focused on flood and drought mitigation.
- Noted that the [Resilient Agricultural Landscape Program](#) (RALP) is funded by the GOA, with ALUS assisting in administering it.

Rick Wallace – Utility (TransAlta)

- TransAlta is working with the GOA on their Drought Management Plan.
- The Highvale Mine application has been accepted by the regulator.
- Working with PC on the Wabamun watershed area and obtaining reclamation certificates for this land.
 - o Most of this area is reclaimed, with one area having active ash retrieval.
- Also working on remaining reclamation certificates for the Whitewood Mines, which includes the Westwood and Whitewood areas.

Wade Teveniuk – Utility (ARROW Utilities)

- Received provincial grant funding for \$50M over the next three years to support the hydrogen industry. Part of the expansion will support water reuse and water treatment facilities.
 - o EPCOR’s regional water diversion license that EPCOR will be amended to support these activities.

Regrets or additional members in attendance who did not provide a roundtable update for this meeting.

- **Bill Fox** – Lifetime Member
- **Elden Kozak** – Agriculture (AB Association of Agricultural Fieldmen)
- **Dr. Gregg Goss** – Academia (University of Alberta)
- **Dr. Laurie Danielson** – Industry (Northeast Capital Industry Association)
- **Shelley Biermanski** – Municipal (City of St. Albert)
- **Tony Lemay** – Government (Alberta Energy Regulator)
- **Tracy Scott** – NGO (Ducks Unlimited)

167.8 - Adjournment

- The next Board of Directors Meeting is scheduled to be held virtually on May 22nd, 2024.

Jamie Bruha motioned to adjourn Board Meeting #167 at 2:01 pm, seconded by Stephen Craik. No dissenting votes.

CARRIED

CURRENT ACTION LOG:

Meeting #167 Actions – March 27, 2024	Status
Finance Committee to explore the idea of a fundraising feasibility study for developing an Integrated Development Fund. (Sep 27, 2023)	On-going
Scott to gather information from other WPACs and Treaty 6 groups to determine the best course of action for developing a policy around Honoraria specific to Indigenous stakeholders. (Nov 22, 2023)	On-going
Scott to contact Krista Quesnel to inform her of the Urban Creeks Collaborative and have her be the project's main point of contact for Parkland County moving forward. (Nov 22, 2023)	On-going

Mary Ellen to share her presentation from the Municipal Drought Management workshop with the Board.	COMPLETED
Scott to follow up with Geoffrey on the questions asked during his GOA and Branch Update and share with the Board.	COMPLETED
NSWA to connect with Genny & Miles to discuss opportunities related to their potential involvement in the NSR Documentary.	In-Progress
Scott to update the language of 'appointed' in Section 6.1.3.1 of the proposed Bylaw amendment to reflect the discussion of the Board.	In-Progress

PAST ACTION LOG:

Meeting #166 Actions – January 24, 2024		Status
Finance Committee to explore the idea of a fundraising feasibility study for developing an Integrated Development Fund. (Sep 27, 2023)		On-going
Scott to gather information from other WPACs and Treaty 6 groups to determine the best course of action for developing a policy around Honoraria specific to Indigenous stakeholders.		On-going
Scott to contact Krista Quesnel to inform her of the Urban Creeks Collaborative and have her be the project's main point of contact for Parkland County moving forward.		On-going
Scott to connect with AI to provide any updates needed for the upcoming Alberta Water Council meeting.		Completed

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