

NOTL RA - ECRI Committee Meeting Minutes

Date: Tuesday May 19, 2026

Time: 2:00 PM

Location: NOTL Community Centre - Board Room

1. Call to Order

The Chair, Ron Simkus called the meeting to order and welcomed new members Christine Earl and Kate Sullivan. The Chair noted that the first portion of the meeting would be dedicated to orienting new members to the organization's structure, mandate, and ongoing work.

Quorum: Confirmed

2. Attendance

Present (in person):

Chair - Ron Simkus – Retired mining engineer; extensive international experience; resident of Old Town dock area; long-standing involvement in flood mitigation.

Richard Connelly – Civil engineer; land development specialist; extensive experience in subdivision planning and infrastructure.

Kate Sullivan – Retired ESL program director; background in linguistics; 37-year Chautauqua resident; strong organizational skills.

Rod Tennyson – Aerospace engineer; former Director, U of T Aerospace Institute; expertise in structures, materials, and management.

Steve Hardaker – Former meteorologist with Environment Canada and National Defence; NATO committee experience; Board liaison.

Phil Bergen – Retired Transportation Planner; active transportation advocate; Board secretary.

Kip Voegel – Mechanical engineering technologist; HVAC industry veteran; long-time agricultural community member.

Christine Earl – Retired Cartographic Designer and taught Cartography and GIS at Carleton University (Department of Geography and Environmental Studies).

Present (via speakerphone):

None

Regrets:

Frances Stocker - Absent due to illness.

3. Approval of Agenda

Motion: Agenda approved as circulated and by consensus

Result: Carried

4. Declarations of Conflict of Interest

No conflicts of interest were declared.

5. Approval of Previous Minutes

Motion: To approve the minutes of the previous Board meeting - agreement by consensus

Result: Carried

Note: The Chair confirmed that last month's minutes had been circulated and that minor edits had been made prior to approval.

6. Chair's Report

The Chair provided a detailed orientation for new members, highlighting:

6.1 Organizational Structure

The association originally identified 40+ community-wide issues. To manage this scope, responsibilities were divided into four committees:

- **Governance** – Municipal governance, budgeting, council oversight.
- **Planning** – Development, architecture, heritage, urban design.
- **Community Services** – Seniors, youth, schools, medical services.
- **Environment & Resilience** – Climate resilience, environmental protection, infrastructure gaps.

Each committee has a Board liaison to ensure alignment with the association's mandate.

6.2 Community Expertise

The Chair emphasized the depth of professional expertise within the community, particularly among retirees, and the importance of leveraging this to address gaps in municipal staff and council understanding.

6.3 Recruitment Needs

- Need for more women on committees.
- Need for younger members, including outreach to Niagara College and Willowbank.

6.4 Flooding & Shoreline Issues

Old Town has experienced severe flooding in the past 5–7 years. Emphasis is on resilience, not prevention: the community must prepare for recurring events. The Chair shared personal experience monitoring town responses and documenting issues.

6.5 Harmony Group Transition

Harmony Group is dissolving and has asked the association to continue its work. A legal merger is not possible; Harmony will fold and transfer archives. Members familiar with Harmony's environmental and DND-related work are needed.

7. Committee and Working Group Updates

7.1 Governance Committee

Led by Liaison Stuart McCormick. Currently focused on municipal election preparation. Membership includes lawyers, accountants, and governance specialists.

7.2 Planning Committee

Led by Liaison Peter Neame. Strong representation from architects and former Urban Design/Heritage Committee members. Major focus: overdevelopment concerns in St. Davids, including infrastructure not keeping pace with subdivision growth.

7.3 Community Services Committee

Led by Liaison Andrea Leja. Focus areas include seniors' needs, youth engagement, schools, and medical services.

7.4 Environment & Climate Resilience and Infrastructure Committee

Currently has a vacant Chair, Liaison, Steven Hardaker. Addressing stormwater issues, shoreline erosion, climate adaptation, and habitat protection. Integrating biodiversity and ecosystem health into committee priorities.

8. Priority Advocacy Files

8.1 NPCA Pilot Project – Niagara Shores & DND Lands

NPCA has launched a regional shoreline pilot project from Oakville to Niagara-on-the-Lake, including Niagara Shores and DND lands; stops at Fort Mississauga. The Chair attended the NPCA open house and provided feedback. The committee was added to the NPCA interactive map to ensure ongoing communication. Key consultant findings:

- Extensive shoreline armoring is disrupting natural sediment flow.
- Western Lake Ontario is becoming steeper and deeper, increasing storm impact severity.

8.2 DND Lands – Environmental Sensitivity

Past proposals (e.g., Project Niagara) raised concerns about large-scale development. DND remediation thresholds and restrictions remain important. Cliff swallow habitat along eroding cliffs is highly protected; shoreline armoring risks destroying nests.

8.3 Flooding & Stormwater Issues

Kip Voege described long-term flooding issues in St. Davids and along Line 7. Committee members have investigated stormwater capacity, sanitary sewer failures, and infrastructure deficiencies.

8.4 Biodiversity & Ecosystem Health

Chris emphasized biodiversity loss as a greater crisis than climate change, and advocated for focusing on ecosystem health rather than climate metrics alone.

9.0 Transportation Masterplan (TMP) Update

According to Town website Transportation Masterplan is being updated. The final draft was previously received with comments and voted down by Council. There will be an open house regards to the TMP Update later this summer.

10.0 Niagara District Airport

Airport expansion can only go in the general NE bound direction. Rod Tenyson advised pushing back on expansion due to environmental reasons. Exhaust fumes from A220 and jets and all aircrafts produce high levels of toxic pollutants. These unhealthy and dangerous chemicals will be spread as particulate matter on sensitive fruit and vegetable lands as well as residential urbanized areas in Virgil and throughout the municipality.

Any expansion of the airport will increase the spread of these toxic residues increasing health risks to residents, tourists and contaminate crops.

11.0 Old Hospital Site Update

Town spent \$200,000 on a parking lot study. This study supports a facility masterplan (2018) which also includes a parking lot replacement. Burton Foundation plan was to renovate/remodel and create 250 parking spaces. NOTL RA consensus was to focus more on developing and encouraging shuttle and transit services to reduce vehicular traffic and need for parking in the downtown core. NOTL_RA's position is to reduce vehicular traffic and will be firming up in the next few weeks.

12.0 Parliament Oak School – Site Plan Approval

The excavation for the parking garage breached the water table and is still being pumped into the sanitary sewer system, which is not designed to process such large amounts of additional water. This is not a sustainable situation and will result in sewage water treatment failure and One mile Creek contamination. Town Engineer Jordan Frost is aware of the situation but no permanent solution has been offered by developer. This situation originated from a poorly designed development application/proposal which grossly underestimated the vehicular traffic which the hotel will generate.

13.0 St David's Heritage Trail at Conc 2 and York Rd

Heritage Trail – St David's rate payers association would like more focus on the developing the trail north bound from St David's. However, this portion has topological challenges requiring a design which addresses trail stability and cost effective trail building methods (i.e. corduroy road construction) Queenston Quarry development owners have offered excess material available to use as fill in low trail areas.

14.0 Niagara Peninsula Conservation Authority - Update

Steven Hardaker who has informed members of his potential appointment to the new conservation area, provided a briefing on Doug Ford's PC Government's recent decision to amalgamate the 36 provincial Conservation Authorities into 9 regional entities under Bill 97 and that the NPCA will now be merged with Hamilton CA, Halton CA and Credit Valley CA to form the new Western Lake Ontario Conservation Authority.

15. Correspondence

No external correspondence was discussed.

16. New Business

16.1 Member Introductions

Members provided detailed background summaries highlighting skills and potential contributions to the association's work.

16.2 AI-Assisted Minutes

Phil Bergen described his process of recording meetings and using AI to generate draft minutes. Members briefly discussed the increasing role of AI in administrative tasks.

16.3 Community Engagement

Discussion on recruiting younger members and increasing diversity on committees. Potential outreach to Willowbank and Niagara College students was identified.

17. In-Camera Session

No in-camera session was held.

18. Next Meeting

Date: June 16, 2026

Time: 2:00 PM

Location: TBD

19. Adjournment

Motion: Consensus

Result: Carried

The meeting was adjourned at 3:42 PM

Decisions & Motions

Item	Motion	Moved By	Seconded By	Result
3.0	To approve the agenda as circulated	Consensus		Carried
5.0	To approve the minutes of the previous Board meeting	Consensus		Carried
19.0	To adjourn the meeting	Consensus		Carried

Action Items

#	Action Item	Responsible	Deadline
6.3	Continue recruitment efforts for younger members and women	All committee leads	Ongoing
6.5	Identify potential members familiar with Harmony Group's work	Chair & Board	Ongoing
8.1, 8.2	Monitor NPCA & DND land shoreline project updates and provide feedback	ECRI Committee	Ongoing

#	Action Item	Responsible	Deadline
6.4, 8.3	Track flooding, stormwater, and shoreline issues for future advocacy	ECRI Committee	Ongoing
8.4	Biodiversity & Ecosystem Health	ECRI Committee	Ongoing
9.0	Transportation Masterplan (TMP) Update	ECRI Committee	Update Summer 2026
10.0	Niagara District Airport expansion - Fuel Contamination	Dr Rod Tenyson to provide a summary info on residue and potential health risks	Ongoing
11.0	Old Hospital Site Update	NOTL RA in favour of reducing vehicular traffic in Town core	Next few weeks
12.0	Parliament Oak School – Site Plan Approval	Ron Simkus and Rich Connelly to meet with Town Engineer to discuss	Next few weeks
13.0	St David's Heritage Trail at Conc 2 and York Rd	St David's Rd Rate Payers interested in development of NB southern portion of trail	Ongoing

#	Action Item	Responsible	Deadline
14.0	Provide NPCA pilot project link to committee members	Chair	Before next meeting

Approval

Recorded by: Phil Bergen, Board Secretary

Approved by: _____, Chair

Date of Approval: _____