

Minutes

Public Meeting

May 6, 2025

Call to Order

Grey County Council met at the call of the Warden on the above date at 7:00 PM at the County Administration Building. The Warden called Council to order and assumed the Chair.

The following members were in attendance: Councillors Nielsen, Dobreen, Dickert, Carleton, Keaveney, Kentner, Greig, McKay, Eccles, Mackey, Paterson, Hutchinson, McQueen and Warden Matrosovs.

The following staff were also in attendance: Randy Scherzer, CAO; Scott Taylor, Director of Planning; Sarah Johnson, Trails and Forestry Coordinator; Rob Hatten, Manager of Communications and Tara Warder, Clerk.

Land Acknowledgement

We acknowledge with respect, the history, spirituality, and culture of the Anishinaabek, Six Nations of the Grand River, Haudenosaunee, and Wendat-Wyandot-Wyandotte peoples on whose traditional territories we gather and whose ancestors signed Treaties with our ancestors. We recognize also, the Metis and Inuit whose ancestors shared this land and these waters. May we all, as Treaty People, live with respect on this land, and live in peace and friendship with all its diverse peoples.

Declaration of Interest

There were no declarations of interest.

Forest Management By-law - Staff Presentation

Sarah Johnson addressed Council on the proposed updates to the forest management by-law.

She noted that the current by-law has been in place for over 20 years and regulates tree harvesting and removal in woodlands and promotes woodland preservation. It differs from a municipal tree by-law in that it deals with woodlots and not individual trees.

She spoke to the existing By-law, 4341-06, covering all woodlands in Grey County. There are two kinds of permits for harvesting in a woodland, being a circumference limit and good forestry. She spoke to minor exemptions, noting they differ because the applications are considered and approved by Council.

Stop work orders can be issued for violations, as well as fines.

A draft by-law has been created. Proposals include the removal of circumference limit permits, as well as a proposal to change minor exemptions to special permits. It was noted that stop work orders may include rehabilitation, replanting and penalties.

Sarah Johnson spoke to comments heard from the public to date, including that circumference limits need to remain in the by-law, questions regarding whether there will still be exemptions for personal use and how it will affect woodlots managed under the Managed Forest Tax Incentive Program. Further comments were shared regarding forests as an essential part of combatting climate change.

The commenting deadline will be May 30, 2025. Comment sheets can be filled out and submitted to staff. Following consultation, research and review of comments will take place and a final draft will be prepared later in 2025 with a report and a by-law to come forward to be in place at the end of the year or early 2026.

Public Comments

Mark Shannon addressed County Council. He noted the circumference limit cutting should not be considered in the by-law. To practice good forest management is the best thing a woodlot owner can do. He noted the benefits of good forest management. The Grey Bruce Woodlot Association and Ontario Woodlot Association can refer people who can assist with practicing good forest management. Private woodlot owners can join the associations as well.

Vin Sharpe of the Bruce Grey Woodlot Association, and resident in the Ceylon and Flesherton area, noted that the feedback received from members about the personal use component. People are keen to see that acknowledged in writing alongside firewood.

Bob Weirmeir addressed Council. He noted he is President of the Saugeen Regional Landowners Association and VP of the Ontario Landowners Association. Looking at exemptions in section 4.1 (p), is very crucial as a lot of tree cutting is a normal farm practice. There isn't anything in the draft that exempts that. It is a crop to be taken off but it differs in timeframe. He doesn't feel a permit system works in this scenario. Further, it speaks to people taking off wood for their personal use. He spoke to income potentials for farmers. These items have been overlooked in the current draft. Further comments were provided on the portion of the by-law that speaks to Grey County entering the property at any time. He further expressed concern about those who have been charged by trying to bring agricultural land back into production when it is overgrown as they are clearing the land.

Deidter Stadnyk, Vice President of the Saugeen Regional Ontario Landowners Association, inquired as to why the section on non decision was removed and

suggested that be included. Section 11.1 appears to note the by-law is fluid and asked for clarification if that was correct.

Kevin Doyle from Tara spoke to the financial aspects. He noted that fines have been increasing dramatically over the years. He suggested that the first conviction of \$10,000 or \$1000 per tree is high, especially considering the average income of residents in Grey County. Usually, no one does this on purpose and it would likely be a misunderstanding. The proposed fines would be crippling.

Charles Hill addressed Council and requested definitions on noxious weeds.

Sarah Johnson provided comments on behalf of Greg Kaster. It was noted that circumference diameter works well and should stay in the by-law. It helps ensure the forests are sustainable for future harvests. He provided information and suggestions to be incorporated into the by-law.

Councillor McQueen noted that the recent ice storm damaged a lot of forests around Grey County. There may be trees that will need to be harvested in a different way. Are there unique situations that may have to be looked at in the by-law that might not fit any criteria. It is difficult to know the health of forests until a future time.

Councillor Greig left the meeting at 7:42 p.m.

Staff then addressed questions and comments from the public and council and noted that further answers can be provided on those questions.

Adjournment

On motion by Councillors Hutchinson and Eccles, Council adjourned at 7:54 p.m. to the call of the Warden.

Andrea Matrosovs, Warden

Tara Warder, Clerk