

Executive
Horseshoe Falls Regional Council
OF THE UNITED CHURCH OF CANADA
Supports, Connects, Empowers Communities of Faith

MINUTES

April 24, 2025 2:00 PM

via Zoom <https://united-church.zoom.us/j/85278881194>

Roster: Lennox Scarlett (President), Sula Anne Kosacky (President Elect), John Hurst (Treasurer), Wanda Backus-Kelly, Richard Bott, Christina Crawford, James Grunden, Gabrielle Heidinger, Wendy Lowden, Debbie McMillan, Adrienne Robertson, Yvonne Wright

Staff Support: Mark Laird, Executive Minister, Max Watkinson, Executive Assistant

Regrets: Lennox Scarlett, James Grunden, Christina Crawford, Richard Bott, Wendy Lowden, Adrienne Robertson

Constitute Meeting: President Elect Sula

I constitute this meeting in the name of Jesus Christ, the one true head of the Church and by the authority vested in me by this meeting of the Horseshoe Falls Regional Council Executive for whatever business may properly come before it. The bounds of the meeting will be the Zoom call.

Land Acknowledgement and Worship: President Elect Sula

The Executive first heard from Rev. Carol Hancock, the Reviewer of [REDACTED]. Conversation ensued regarding the submitted report and Carol's recommendations.

The Executive then heard from [REDACTED], representatives of the congregation of [REDACTED] United Church. The representatives reflected on the review and recommendations made. They asked the Executive for assistance in presenting the review to the rest of the congregation.

Lastly, the Executive heard from [REDACTED], an individual named in the report. Brian shared his perspective on the review process and the ongoing situation at [REDACTED].

EXECUTIVE REVIEW OF THE REPORT RE: [REDACTED]

MOTION: Debbie McMillan / John Hurst

That the Horseshoe Falls Regional Council Executive concurs with the findings of the J4 Review of [REDACTED] United Church conducted by Rev. Carol Handcock that [REDACTED] United Church is not in a satisfactory state.

The Executive recognizes that [REDACTED] United Church is working towards correcting some of the areas in which the congregation has been non-compliant with the United Church of Canada's polity, and is thankful that work has already begun by the Ministry and Personnel committee to clarify staff positions, roles and responsibilities.

CARRIED.

RECOMMENDATION #1:

That Regional Council appoint a skilled representative to chair an Annual Congregational Meeting as soon as possible. The congregation needs clarity on which items are within their power to decide and which are straightforward polity. For example, the change to having elected persons as treasurer and secretary are mandated, not optional. Change of title for their governance body and removal of staff as voting members can be presented as a simple correction but the membership of the new Council requires a vote. Current chair of the governance body, [REDACTED] will be helpful in identifying the agenda items.

MOTION: Yvonne Wright / Gabrielle Heidinger

That the Horseshoe Falls Regional Council Executive directs the Executive Minister and the President Elect to appoint one skilled representative to serve as chair at the annual congregational meeting of [REDACTED] United Church on June 22nd, 2025, as well as a second support person to attend the meeting.

CARRIED.

RECOMMENDATION #2:

That Regional Council appoint someone to serve as ministry personnel for two years with an option for that period to be extended or then transformed into a call. This community of faith requires sturdy and effective ministry with attention to the pastoral needs as well as governance clarity. Ministry personnel would need to be thoroughly briefed on the history of this congregation: this Report would be an important part of that briefing. Strong communication and conflict resolution skills will be important. Coaching the new Council on its ways to keep clarity of roles and responsibilities while also welcoming input from staff or others as needed will be important.

MOTION: John Hurst / Debbie McMillan

That the Horseshoe Falls Regional Council Executive directs the Executive Minister to consult with the Minister of Pastoral Relations, Vocations Minister, Chair of Congregational Support & Minister of Congregational Support to bring a name(s) of people who would be eligible and willing to serve in an appoint of a minimum of 2-years at [REDACTED] United Church for the next regularly scheduled Executive meeting.

CARRIED.

RECOMMENDATION #3:

That this community of faith will also need to work actively on a future plan if it is to remain viable. The financial resources are more viable than the number of people willing to take active participation and/or leadership. Thought should be given by the Regional Council on resources it might provide to assist [REDACTED] United Church; members have identified the need for assistance in dealing with stewardship matters, delayed grief, communication strategies and forward planning.

MOTION: Yvonne Wright / John Hurst

That the Horseshoe Falls Regional Council Executive recommends that Council of [REDACTED] United Church work with their newly appointed minister and the Regional Council on resources that are available to assist [REDACTED] United Church in their ongoing efforts to remain viable.

CARRIED.

RECOMMENDATION #4:

That [REDACTED] be excluded from any Council Meetings for at least two years. It has been helpful that he has reduced the number of conflicts of interest with his resignations to date. A new Council must replace the congregation's dependency on members of the [REDACTED] family with new leadership and clarity of roles and it will take time to establish new patterns.

MOTION: Gabrielle Heidinger / John Hurst

That the Horseshoe Falls Regional Council Executive amend Recommendation #4 and be approved, as follows:

In recognition of the leadership given, the Executive of Horseshoe Falls Regional Council thanks [REDACTED] for the service that he has given to Waterford United Church over the past years and directs [REDACTED] to take a hiatus from attending Council Meetings for at least two years, to allow for new voices to give their leadership.

CARRIED.

RECOMMENDATION #5:

That the Ministry and Personnel committee complete its current work to revise position descriptions for its lay staff with attention given to the number of hours for each position, the work to be accomplished and the compensation rate.

MOTION: Yvonne Wright / Gabrielle Heidinger

That the Horseshoe Falls Regional Council Executive agrees with Recommendation #5.

CARRIED.

RECOMMENDATION #6:

That attention be given by appointed ministry personnel and the council to effectively communicate with the entire community of faith.

MOTION: Wanda Backus-Kelly / John Hurst

That the Horseshoe Falls Regional Council Executive agrees with Recommendation #6.

CARRIED.

RECOMMENDATION #7:

That this Report be made available to all in the community of faith once the decisions of the Regional Council are made and communicated.

MOTION: Debbie McMillan / Yvonne Wright

That the Horseshoe Falls Regional Council Executive directs the Executive Minister to work with the Council of [REDACTED] United Church to come up with a communication plan for how the report of the review will be made available to the community of faith.

CARRIED.

MOTION: Debbie McMillan / Yvonne Wright

That the Horseshoe Falls Regional Council Executive direct the Executive Minister to convey thanks and appreciation to the congregation and Council of [REDACTED] United Church for their participation in the review process.

CARRIED.

Next Meeting: May 28th, 2025

Special Meeting: HF Spring Meeting June 14, 2025, St. Andrew's, Hamilton

Future Meetings: June 25, July 23(?), August 27(?), September 24, October 22, November 26

All meetings are scheduled the 4th Wednesday of the month from 4:00 p.m. until 6:00 p.m. unless otherwise noted.

Meeting adjourned 5:53 p.m.