



2023 Annual General Meeting

Member Information Package

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Grand Valley Trail Association Territorial Acknowledgement

The GVTA acknowledges that the Land on which we hike, as settlers, is Traditional Territory of the Haudenosaunee, Anishinaabe and Neutrals.

With this statement we respect the Indigenous Tradition of acknowledging the Territory of another nation. This Territory today is called the Haldimand Tract.

We acknowledge and are grateful to the Indigenous Peoples and their ancestors for their deep Traditional Knowledge, their Culture, and Philosophies. We are grateful for the Indigenous Way of protecting and sharing the Land with all People and Relatives, the four-legged, winged ones, the swimmers and the crawlers, the rooted and non-rooted relations.

We are committed to improve our understanding of Indigenous Neighbours and to take actions toward building relationships among our communities.

The Haldimand Tract was established in 1784 when the Haudenosaunee were displaced from their land after supporting the British in the American Revolution. The Haldimand Tract runs from Port Maitland to the Dundalk Highlands and extends 10 km on each side of the Grand River. On behalf of the Haudenosaunee, the Crown took charge of administering the Haldimand Tract, home of the Six Nations, "in trust".

Today, the Haudenosaunee, Anishinaabe and the Neutrals reside on 46,500 acres, 5% of the original 950,000 acres of the Haldimand Tract. The land of the Haldimand Tract was expropriated by the Crown and is unceded – meaning that the Haudenosaunee never legally signed away their lands to the Crown or Canada. More than 95% of the original Haldimand Tract was removed from the Haudenosaunee.

Caledonia is the last piece of the Haldimand Tract that has not been taken away from the Haudenosaunee.

Now is the Time of the Eighth Fire; the time for settlers to work with Indigenous Communities Respectfully, to take Responsibility, and to be Reciprocal so we can move toward Reconciliation.





GVTA Annual General Meeting
Tuesday, May 16, 2023 - 7:00 PM
AGENDA

7:00 pm

Annual General Meeting

Welcome - Annie Côté-Kennedy, President
Territorial Acknowledgment
Call to order - Annie Côté-Kennedy, President
Approval of Agenda and Previous year's minutes - Annie Côté-Kennedy

In Memoriam

Recognizing long-standing members – Liz Coelho

Financials – Lisa Stewart, Treasurer

2022-23 Financials
2023-24 Budget

Consolidated Directors' Report

New Business

Proposed membership fee increase
Appointment of Honorary Life Members

Election of the Board of Directors

Annie Côté-Kennedy

Volunteer Recognition

Emily Bennett, Director, Volunteering and Membership

Guest Speaker

Mary-Ellen Currie introducing Nicola Ross

Closing Remarks

Annie Côté-Kennedy

Minutes of the Annual General Meeting

Virtual meeting due to pandemic.

Tuesday, May 31st, 2022 at 7:00 p.m.

Directors Present: Annie Côté-Kennedy, Emily Bennett, Lisa Stewart, Mary-Ellen Currie, Heather Rennie, Charles Whitlock, Erin Huston, Petra Suffling, Jason Thompson

Members Present: 37 members attended the meeting, well within quorum required in Bylaw of 5% of membership.

1. Call to Order

A quorum being present, the Chair called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. The chair welcomed attendees and noted the continued circumstances requiring that the Annual General Meeting be held virtually again this year.

2. Approval of Agenda

Moved by Mary-Ellen Currie, seconded by Charles Whitlock to approve the agenda as follows:

1. Call to order
2. Approval of agenda
3. Acceptance of the Minutes of the June 1, 2021 Annual General Meeting
4. Approval of the GVTA Financials for 2021 and Budget, 2023 Fiscal Year
5. Consolidated Directors Report
6. New Business: Revisions of Bylaws
7. Election of the Board of Directors
8. Adjournment of AGM

Carried.

3. Acceptance of Minutes of Last Year Minutes

Moved by Steve MacIntrye, seconded by Theresa Markus that the minutes of the June 1, 2021 AGM be accepted as presented. **Carried.**

4. Approval of the GVTA Financials for 2021-2022 and Budget for 2022-2023 Fiscal Year

- a) Lisa Stewart presented the financials for the past year and GVTA budget for the 2022-2023 fiscal year which had already been reviewed and endorsed by the Board.
- b) Moved by Lisa Stewart, seconded by Petra Suffling that the financials for the 2021-2022 fiscal year and the budget for the 2022-2023 budget be approved. **Carried.**

5. Consolidated Directors' Reports for the 2021-2022 Year

A consolidated directors' report was presented by Annie Côté-Kennedy and highlighted the board's activities for the past year. See Addendum III.

6. New Business: Revision to Bylaws

Motions to update the six bylaws under three categories. See attached Addendum IV.

- a) Category: Relates to Grand Valley Trail Clubs
 - a. MOTION: To remove from the Grand Valley Trail Association bylaws Article D, section 7, Article G, Section 27 and to remove the reference to "a representative of each GVT Club" from the Article H, Section 9.
 - i. Moved by Emily Bennett. Seconded by Charles Whitlock. **Carried.**

- b) Category: Relates to Membership
- a. MOTION: To remove from the Grand Valley Trail's Association bylaws, Article E, Section 9d.
 - i. Moved by Theresa Markus. Seconded by Emily Bennett. Carried
 - b. MOTION: To update Article F Section 20b to now read: "An Honorary Life Member:
 1. Designation be granted only in exceptional circumstances and only to a long-standing member
 2. Must be first elected by the Board of Directors
 3. Must be confirmed by a general meeting of members
 4. Is exempt from payment of dues
 5. Retains full member privileges
 - ii. Moved by Ryan Wicks. Seconded by Judy. **Carried.**
- c) Category: Relates to Financial Reporting
- a. MOTION: That the bylaw be updated to now read: "At every Annual General Meeting, the following business shall be transacted:
 - i. Reports shall be heard and received including:
 1. The report of the Officers
 2. A financial report by the Treasurer including:
 - a. the previous year's financials and explanations for discrepancies in prior year's financials and
 - b. proposed budget for the current year with rationale for proposed budget
 3. Any other reports and statement required by the Corporations Act.
 4. An auditor or financial reviewer shall be appointed for the ensuing year in the event that the treasurer role is vacant
 5. Directors shall be elected to all board positions not occupied by directors with unexpired terms.
 6. Any other business properly brought before the meeting.
 - ii. Moved by Emily Bennett. Seconded by Theresa Markus. **Carried.**

7. Election of the Board of Directors

Moved by Steve MacIntyre and seconded by Tony Kelly that the following be elected as Directors of the GVTA for a term to extend to the next Annual General Meeting:

- Annie Côté-Kennedy, President
- Lisa Stewart, Treasurer
- Emily Bennett, Membership and Volunteering Director
- vacant, Marketing Director
- Secretary: Erin Huston
- Mary-Ellen Currie, Director of Programs
- Petra Suffling, Director of Hikes
- Jason Thompson, Vice President, Trail Maintenance
- Charles Whitlock, Hike Ontario representative

Carried.

8. Adjournment of AGM

In closing, the chair thanked all members for attending and their continued support of the club.

Moved by Emily Bennett and seconded by Mary-Ellen Currie that the meeting adjourn at 8:23 p.m. **Carried.**

Addendum 1 – List of Attendees

Present:

1. Geoff Bell
2. Emily Bennett
3. Susan Collison
4. Pauline Copleston
5. Annie Côté-Kennedy
6. Mary-Ellen Currie
7. Janet Feller
8. Dave Fennell
9. Renate Fischer
10. Judy Gingrich
11. Steve Gombos
12. Bruce Graham
13. Eric Groocock
14. Rich Haiser
15. Val Haiser
16. Jeff Hamilton
17. Kevin Kennedy
18. Jane Kenyon
19. Pablo Machetzki
20. Steve MacIntyre
21. Debbie Maidment
22. Virginia Malcolm
23. Theresa Markus
24. Bill McDonald
25. Georgia Mulholland
26. Linda Schmidt
27. Fred Standeven
28. Petra Suffling
29. Didier Thevenard
30. Judy Watson
31. Jane Wilson
32. Brenda Yallop
33. Lisa Stewart
34. Heather Rennie
35. Charles Whitlock
36. Erin Huston
37. Jason Thompson

Addendum II – 2022 Treasurer’s Report

Treasurer’s Report for the year ending March 31, 2022

Summary

The Grand Valley Trails Association (GVTA) prepares financial statements on a cash basis. For the year ending March 31, 2022, GVTA recognized Receipts totaling \$11,263 and Expenditures of \$13,901 resulting in a net loss of (\$2,638). At year end, investments of \$37,312 were on hand.

Receipts

Membership fees of \$4,980 were deposited as of March 31, 2022, down from the previous year’s \$11,240 total. The decrease of (\$6,260) vs the prior year is driven by:

1. (\$3,000) of one time memberships in 2020-21 for the Waterloo Crossing Event
2. (\$1,300) mixed dates in year-end deposits with less members renewing their memberships prior to the end of the fiscal year vs 2020-21.
3. (\$1,960) less annual and lifetime memberships vs 2020-21.

Donations have become an increasingly important source of income for the GVTA generating \$4,328, this was up from the previous year total of \$2,748. This is expected to be due to the increased use of our trails during the pandemic as several donors included letters with their donations to express this.

Guidebook and merchandise sales as of March 31, 2022 totalled \$1,687 down from \$2,175 in the prior year. This could be attributed to customers awaiting the new guidebooks and merchandise that will be released in 2022.

Expenditures

Trail Maintenance spending this year was up; \$5,219 this year versus \$2,800 in the previous year. This increase was expected as trail maintenance was a strategic area of focus for 2020-21, with some maintenance activities carrying forward to 2022-23.

Office supplies and admin totalled \$1,608 in the year ending March 31, 2022 compared to last year’s total of \$2,009. This category of spending includes our PO Box rental, shipping costs for guidebooks and other merchandise sold, first aid reimbursement for hike leaders, etc.

New merchandise for the online store totaled \$2,636 in the year ending March 31, 2022 vs \$681 in the prior year as new hats were ordered.

Insurance expenses totaled \$1,295 for the year ending March 31, 2022 and were unchanged from the prior year.

In the year ending March 31, 2022 a total of \$1,856 was spent on Publicity (including website and Ondago app maintenance) as compared to \$669 in the previous year. In 2020-21 there were several improvements made to the website and Ondago App while these costs were minimal in the prior year.

A Budget for the period of April 1, 2022 to March 31, 2023 has been drafted and will be voted on at the annual meeting.

**Lisa Stewart
Treasurer, GVTA**

2021/22 Financials

	Budget \$ 12 months 2021-2022	Actual \$ 12 months 2021-2022	Actual \$ 12 months 2020-2021
Receipts			
Membership fees	8,240.00	4,980.00	11,240.00
Sale of guidebooks	870.00	1,069.00	1,120.00
Shipping	250.00	346.00	370.00
Sale of Merchandise	650.00	272.00	684.50
Receipted Donations	2,000.00	3,646.00	2,575.00
Unreceipted donations	150.00	682.30	173.60
Christmas party	1,800.00	-	-
Advertising income	-	-	-
Programs - cost recovery events	-	-	-
Transfer of Funds	-	-	-
HST Rebate	600.00	537.46	1,095.13
Interest	-	-	-
PayPal charges	(300.00)	(269.87)	(332.92)
	14,260.00	11,262.89	16,925.31
Expenditures			
Office	2,000.00	1,608.27	2,008.81
Trail maintenance	8,000.00	5,218.84	2,799.69
Events	4,500.00	100.00	-
Insurance	1,300.00	1,295.00	1,297.00
Newsletter	-	15.46	-
Merchandise	2,636.00	2,635.72	681.39
GB Printing	5,000.00	-	-
Advertising	-	281.40	-
Web Hosting Fees/Maintenance	4,717.62	1,574.61	669.15
App	1,400.00	971.80	-
Hike Leaders	2,000.00	-	-
Programs - cost recovery events	-	-	-
Landowner relations	200.00	-	-
Bank charges	-	-	-
Membership Fees	635.00	200.00	635.00
	32,388.62	13,901.10	8,091.04
Net Gain (Loss) for the period	(18,128.62)	(2,638.21)	8,834.27
Bank Balance - beginning of year	19,028.47	19,028.47	10,194.20
Bank Balance - end of period	899.85	16,390.26	19,028.47

2023-23 Proposed Budget

	Budget \$ 12 months 2023-2024	Budget \$ 12 months 2022-2023	Actual \$ 12 months 2022-2023	Actual \$ 12 months 2021-2022
Receipts				
Membership fees	\$7,875	\$6,280	\$7,500	\$4,980
Sale of guidebooks	\$2,000	\$1,390	\$2,390	\$1,069
Sale of Merchandise	\$1,000	\$803	\$1,294	\$618
Donations	\$5,400	\$4,328	\$5,322	\$4,328
Christmas party	\$3,900	\$1,800	\$2,760	-
HST Rebate	\$5,927	\$450	\$806	\$537
PayPal charges	-\$467	-\$350	-\$446	-\$270
Grant Receipts		\$5,000	\$52,800	
	\$25,635	\$19,701	\$72,426	\$11,263
Expenditures				
Office	\$2,000	\$2,200	\$2,436	\$1,608
Trail maintenance	\$12,200	\$5,200	\$6,425	\$5,219
Events	\$6,300	\$4,500	\$4,846	\$100
Insurance	\$1,700	\$1,425	\$1,592	\$1,295
Merchandise	\$0	\$2,023	\$2,599	\$2,636
Guidebook Printing	\$0	\$4,000	\$0	-
Advertising	\$500	\$350	\$93	\$281
Website/Ondago App	\$2,400	\$4,000	\$2,145	\$2,546
Hike Leaders	\$1,000	\$500		
Membership Fees	\$500	\$635	\$496	\$200
Brantford Grant: Guidebooks			\$8,132	
Brantford Grant: Communication			\$31,574	
Brantford Grant: Maintenance			\$13,094	
Brantford Grant: HST			\$6,715	
	\$26,600	\$24,833	\$80,147	\$13,886
Net Gain (Loss) for the period	-\$965	-\$5,131	-\$7,721	-\$2,623
Bank Balance - beginning of year	\$8,670	\$16,390	\$19,028	\$16,390
Bank Balance - end of period	\$7,705	\$11,259	\$11,308	\$13,767
TD Canada Trust GIC #8065725	\$21,350	\$20,829	\$21,350	\$20,922
Total Balance - End of Period	\$29,054	\$32,088	\$32,658	\$34,689

Addendum III – Consolidated Directors Report

Consolidated GVTA board report 2021-2022

Hike Program

Our hike program was on hold during the initial stages of the COVID pandemic. We resumed offering organized hikes in July 2021 after consultation with the hike leaders. From July to the end of March, 21 hikes were offered. We are very thankful to all the active hike leaders, namely: Didier Thevenard, Michele Martin, Theresa Markus, Janice Bock, Brenda Wiegand, Charles Whitlock, Joanna Mazur and Petra Suffling.

A particular shout-out to Didier Thevenard - Didier's name appeared frequently in the hike calendar! Throughout the year, he has offered countless and very diverse hikes catering to a wide range of interests and hiking abilities. We also recognize Michele Wiegand. Michele initiated a special school hiking program last year and has been providing guided interpretive hikes to students of various ages and backgrounds.

There are two components to making our hiking program a success. Having a good roster of active hike leaders and having member participation in organized hikes. To that end, we will continue to work to increase the number of certified hike leaders. As well, in the upcoming year, we will be looking at better and more promotion of organized hikes.

If you would like to see more hikes, please consider becoming a certified hike leader! If you are a certified hike leader, but have not updated your First Aid certification, please email hikes@gvta.on.ca to see how we can help you get recertified.

Trail Maintenance

As outlined in our financial update, this year, we spent close to 90 percent more than the previous year on trail maintenance. After we completed the trail audit in the fall of 2020, trail maintenance volunteers focused their efforts on addressing the audit findings, doing the day-to-day maintenance and overall improving the trail.

BLACK WALNUT

The Black Walnut section, at 76.9 km, is the longest section of the Grand Valley Trail. The trail director is Ryan Wicks and there are 19 trail captains and a number of volunteers, including many new volunteers. The section is also looking for one additional trail captain.

In the past year, there was one trail maintenance party organized and several small grass cutting sessions organized to provide a concentrated maintenance effort.

Overall, the Black Walnut section is in good shape. There are a few outstanding items from the audit still to be completed and a few items that have surfaced over the winter which the maintenance crew will be addressing as part of their ongoing maintenance.

Reroutes:

The following reroutes were implemented in the past year, resulting in changes to the following maps:

- Map 9 – In the Alps Road/Dumfries Road/401 area changes were made and the trail is now on road between Roseville Road and Alps Road. This change was following a request by the landowner.
- Map 11 – In the Bloomindale-Snyders' Flats area, a segment is temporarily closed due to construction.

Significant accomplishment this year:

One project to highlight from the past year, was the building of a 26-foot bridge spanning along the Middleton portion of this section. Ryan, in consultation with Nick Kuret and working with Woolwich Township, planned, organized and implemented the construction and installation of the impressive bridge. Thank you and congratulations to Ryan and the volunteers who helped with the bridge!

CAROLINIAN CREST

The Carolinian Crest section at 71.5 km is the second longest section of the Grand Valley Trail. The trail director is Fred Standeven and there are seven trail captains and seven regular volunteers. Ongoing maintenance has also been supported by 15 three-person crews.

Having fewer trail captains, the Carolinian Crest organized some 22 work parties in the past year to provide focused maintenance of sections of the trail. Maintenance of the Carolinian Crest has also been supported by the local cycling club on three occasions.

All the issues identified in last year's trail audit have been addressed.

Reroutes:

The following reroutes were implemented in the past year, resulting in changes to the following maps:

- Map 7 – Changes made in consultation with the City of Brantford; a segment of the trail was temporarily closed last May due to safety factors and construction blockages. This is at km 46.5 and relates to a new housing development. The reroute was expected to be temporary and we are awaiting word from the city or builder regarding the return to the trail.
- Map 6 – A segment of the trail has been rerouted at km 28.2, corner of Brant Road 18 and Newport Road. After crossing the Newport Bridge, the trail now continues to the end of the guardrail along a more gradual slope to Newport road.
- Map 6-7 – This change shows the new main trail off Cockshutt Road in Brantford.

Significant accomplishment this year:

A significant accomplishment was the reroute on the east side of Cockshutt Road. Tony Kelly, trail captain, approached the landowner and received permission to move the trail off the road to the landowner's treed lot on the east side of Cockshutt Road. The rerouted trail has been thoroughly signed and blazed thanks to the hard work of the maintenance team.

TOWPATH SECTION

The Towpath section is 64.9 km with a significant amount of road walking. We have been unable to find a Trail Director and volunteers for this section of the trail for some time. Plans to organize a work party were deferred twice because of COVID restrictions so unfortunately, the audit findings are still outstanding.

We remain optimistic that some progress could be made in Towpath. We were contacted in the spring by a landowner in the Caledonia area who has kindly offered to maintain the section of trail on his property. He has also provided contacts to assist us with connecting with Haldiman Township. Plans for the upcoming year are to build these relationships and to continue promoting the need for trail maintenance volunteers in this section.

BELWOOD SECTION (PREVIOUSLY PINNACLE SECTION)

The Belwood section is approximately 30 km and now runs from Weisenberg Road, in the Township of Centre Wellington, to the Village of Belwood. Effective May 2022, we have a Trail Director to replace the vacancy that occurred last year. We welcome Jessica Léger as the Trail Director for the Belwood section.

In addition to the trail director now in place, there are two trail captains and eight trail volunteers to support maintenance of this section. As well, three trail maintenance parties were organized during the year to address

immediate issues. Most of the audit findings have been addressed and we expect the outstanding items will be resolved this year.

Plans are to install a terminus cairn in Belwood in the fall. We are working with a supplier who has generously offered to donate his time to this initiative.

Membership

As of the beginning of May, our membership was at 243, which includes three more members than last year at this time and three more lifetime members. We appreciate everyone's efforts to renew their membership online, saving the organization postage and administrative effort. Fewer membership reminders were sent this year and we thank Rosemary Zehr for help in managing this mailing.

We continue to maintain our membership information in Salesforce, which is a dedicated database that is used extensively during the annual renewal period and updated regularly as members' contact information change and new members join. The same database is also used to capture private landowner information. This coming year, we plan to fine-tune the volunteer list to better track volunteer preferences and help us better align volunteers with planned activities such as trail maintenance parties.

Volunteer Update

Thank you to the 171 people who have put their names forward to volunteer in some capacity with the club. As people's interests and availability change over time, we would like to thank the following volunteers for their support over the past year:

- Heather Rennie, Director, Marketing
- Anita Smith, Trail Markings editor
- Ben Schwartz, trail director for the Belwood Section.
- Charles Whitlock, Hike Ontario representative (resignation in effect October).

This past year, we have been successful at recruiting Lisa Stewart as Board Treasurer.

As well, we welcome the following people in key positions:

- Steve Combos – Newsletter Editor
- Jessica Léger (Trail Director) Belwood
- Allen Henry –(Trail Captain) Carolinian Crest
- Bob Brown –(Volunteer/Landowner) Towpath

We are in need of a Trail Director for the Towpath section. If you are interested or know a suitable candidate please tap them on the shoulder to encourage them to volunteer! The jobs and details on how to apply are posted on gvta.on.ca.

Member events

FOOD DRIVE

Due to poor weather, our Food Drive event held on December 4 to benefit food banks in Centre Wellington and Waterloo Region was not as successful as the previous year. We collected the equivalent of 228 meals. We will be reevaluating how best to support our community this year and welcome ideas for this coming year.

BIRD PHOTO CONTEST

To celebrate National Bird Day in January, we hosted a special photo contest as part of our 50th anniversary year. GVTA members were invited to submit their best photos. We provided tips for taking photos and engaged four experts to judge the event. Congratulations to winners Katherine Waybrant and Mark Duchene and runners-up Erika Malich and Ron Cherry! Thank you to Laura Anders for organizing the contest.

OTHER 50TH ANNIVERSARY EVENTS

A family hike challenge was held in February. In March, we featured a GVTA trivia quiz and in April we highlighted Earth Day and National Volunteer Week.

Marketing activities

GVTA PROMOTION

Our 50th anniversary presented the perfect opportunity to promote the GVTA and raise awareness of the club and the trail. A promotion campaign resulted in a CTV television interview with the president of the club and newspaper articles in the Brantford Expositor and the Waterloo Chronicle in January.

TRAIL MARKINGS

The association has continued to publish its member e-newsletter throughout the year. Each edition of Trail Markings includes news and updates from the Board, a GVTA member or volunteer profile and a feature hike or section of the trail. Thank you to Anita Smith, our volunteer editor of the newsletter. The winter newsletter was Anita's last edition. We are very fortunate to welcome Steve Gombos in this new role starting with the spring edition.

FACEBOOK

The GVTA Facebook page continues to be an effective way to connect and stay in touch with our members and community. As of April, we had approximately 1,680 followers. We encourage you to help us to continue to build our Facebook community by following us, and by liking, sharing and commenting on our posts. A social media strategy was created this year to identify optimal ways to use our Facebook page to attract new members and keep existing followers engaged. We'll continue to use this strategy to help guide our posts going forward. Thank you to Petra Suffling for managing our Facebook page.

Relationship with public and private landowners

Part of our strategic plan is to develop relationships with municipality, townships and other public land owners to work collaboratively on trail maintenance and to promote greater awareness of the Association. As well, our plan is to better document formal and informal relationships with private landowners. To that end, we are encouraging trail directors to send us names and contact information of private landowners so we could document in our central database.

We have made some important progress and continue to face some challenges in the area of landowner relations.

GRAND RIVER CONSERVATION AUTHORITY (GRCA)

We are happy to report that last fall we entered into an access agreement with the GRCA that allows the trail to continue in the Elora Gorge Conservation Area. The agreement follows a number of GVTA presentations to the GRCA board and discussions with the management of the GRCA. The trail can now be accessed via one of the official park entrances during the park's official hours of operation. We are providing free access passes to the park to our members who request them. If you have not requested a pass, you still can do so by email info@gvta.on.ca.

The GRCA has also recently conducted a thorough review of hunting activities on its different properties. As a result of this review, staff have determined that the Wilson's Flats in the Township of Centre Wellington on the north side will be open to walking trails only and will be closed to hunting. We welcome this news.

The GRCA management has been very collaborative, giving us advance notice of upcoming maintenance issues that affect the trail and have indicated an interest in working with us in relation to agreements for the trail on other GRCA properties. We appreciate and value this relationship.

CITY OF BRANTFORD

Late last summer, a group of us met with officials from the City of Brantford to initiate discussions relating to trail maintenance. The meeting was very productive. As a result, Carolinian Crest maintenance team have met with the

city's maintenance staff, shared protocols and contact information. Since that time, the maintenance volunteers and staff have been working collaboratively to maintain the trails within the city limits.

WOOLWICH TOWNSHIP

We have agreements in place for the maintenance of trails within Woolwich Township. Ryan Wicks, trail director for Black Walnut, works directly and frequently with Ann Roberts, Environmental Coordinator, Township of Woolwich.

CENTRE WELLINGTON TOWNSHIP AND COUNTY OF WELLINGTON

Preliminary discussions have taken place last summer with staff from Centre Wellington to discuss the cairn location in Belwood and in the spring to discuss and exchange GPS files of the trail. We look forward to building these relationships in 2022 as earlier discussions have been very collaborative.

RUTHVEN NATIONAL HISTORIC SITE

In 2022, Ruthven Historic Site ended a long-term agreement with the GVTA. The Grand Valley trail had been on the Ruthven National Historic Site for more than 35 years by mutual agreement and prior to Ruthven and the Ontario Heritage Trust reaching an easement. Last year, after several online and telephone discussions with Ruthven management, a draft agreement was prepared and discussed to allow the trail to continue on the historic site and to outline shared maintenance responsibilities. Regrettably, we were advised last month that the site's Stewardship Committee and Board of Directors have made the decision to operate the trails within Ruthven Park independently and not part of the GVTA. As a result, we will be rerouting the trail outside the park and along the road in that section. Hikers can use the trail in the park as visitors to the site.

PRIVATE LANDOWNERS

We have lost access to beautiful sections of the trail in Kitchener and in the Brantford area. As well, two sections are now rerouted due to construction and we hope to have these sections back off the road when the construction is complete. Most of the reroutes have been as a result of landowner requests and, unfortunately, a contributing factor has been increased trail usage by inexperienced hikers. Other clubs have had the same experience and seen an increase in on-road hiking. We very much appreciate the trail directors' and trail captains' efforts to liaise with landowners to manage these situations and to maintain the trails off-road as much as possible.

Governance issues and other updates

RENAMING PINNACLE SECTION

Bill MacDonald kindly agreed to lead a small project to rename the Pinnacle section of the trail. The section needed to be renamed as the name "Pinnacle" was no longer suitable. Bill reached out the membership for input and suggestions. After given consideration to a few other options, it was agreed to rename the section the "Belwood" section. The board approved the motion at its May meeting. The new name will be reflected on our website and all other documents starting immediately.

GRANT SUBMISSIONS

While the GVTA has not sought grant submissions in recent years, this is an area we are pursuing in 2022-23. To date, a grant submission has been prepared and submitted to the Hamilton, Halton, Brant Tourism Relief Fund. Our submission was to request support for trail enhancement in the Carolinian Crest segment and for a campaign to increase public and visitor awareness and usage of the trail.

GVTA GUIDEBOOK

As many may have noticed, the GVTA Guidebook is now out-of-print. Work has started to update the book in preparation for a reprint. Several outstanding issues have prevented us from completing the Guidebook before now. These are now resolved and plans are to have the Guidebook ready for distribution as soon as possible. It is important to recognize that the GVTA Guidebook would simply not exist without the work, diligence, drive and determination of Jan and Jamie Hember. Since its inception, they have drafted the content, prepared the maps, coordinated the production, managed the updates and distribution. We are extremely grateful to Jan and Jamie.

BYLAWS AND STANDING RULES

To have up-to-date and relevant standing rules is important because it offers board members a consistent and established road map to carry out the work of the club.

The complete review is continuing and all the existing standing rules have been updated and are in different stages of reviews. A few related bylaws have been updated and will be presented under separate agenda items for the membership approval.

RELATIONSHIP WITH ONDAGO FOR ONLINE MAPS

This is now our fourth year in our relationship with ONDAGO. The number of users downloading or opening the online maps has decreased over the previous year. There is no scientific way to explain the rationale for the decrease. However, it is reasonable to assume that if you downloaded the map last year, you are not likely to download them again this year. This may be problematic as there are reroutes and it is something we will need to discuss with ONDAGO.

Map	Downloaded		Opened	
	2021-22	2020-21	2021-22	2020-21
End-to-end	328	433	957	1678
Towpath	178	302	504	1066
Carolinian Crest	262	452	1335	2788
Black Walnut	429	827	2897	6384
Belwood	412	801	1977	4421

NEW STORES ITEM

We are pleased to offer a new item in Stores. In commemoration of the 50th anniversary, we have commissioned GVTA-branded buffs. We hope you will consider making a purchase of this typically popular item that will be available just in time for Father's Day!

UPCOMING EVENT TO COMMEMORATE NATIONAL INDIGENOUS PEOPLES' DAY

Finally, we invite you to please join us for a hike and event to recognize National Indigenous People's Day. While the special day to recognize our indigenous people is on June 21, our hike will be held on Saturday, June 25 to allow more people to participate. Plans are being developed and promise to be an enlightening and very fulfilling event. For now, please block your calendar and plan to join us (and to bring a friend) on the morning of June 25 in Brantford. Details will be sent to members directly and published on our Facebook and website as soon as they available.

Respectfully submitted,
Annie Côté-Kennedy, President GVTA

Board members:

Emily Bennett
Director, Volunteer and Membership

Mary-Ellen Currie, Director,
Programs

Erin Huston,
Secretary

Heather Rennie
Director, Marketing

Lisa Stewart
Treasurer

Petra Suffling
Director, Hikes

Jason Thompson
VP, Trail Maintenance

Charles Whitlock
Hike Ontario Rep.

Addendum IV – New Business: Revisions to bylaws

New Business: Revisions to Bylaws

As part of the Standing Rules review, the Board has reviewed the related bylaws and are making recommendations to change these bylaws.

We have motions to update the six bylaws under three categories.

CATEGORY 1 – RELATES TO GRAND VALLEY TRAIL CLUBS

The concept of separate clubs for each section has not been realized in the association's 50-year history, nor is realistically ever going to be realized. We do not believe this is necessarily a material change but it is a recommended change as it just adds confusion to our mandate and objectives. The board unanimously approved these changes at its October meeting.

(1) Article D, Section 7. This bylaw refers to the Grand Valley Trails Clubs and reads:

“The Board may create divisions of the GVTA to be known as Grand Valley Trail Clubs. The GVT Clubs’ main objective shall be the construction and maintenance of trails in portions of the Grand River valley, and they shall be subject to such conditions as may be prescribed by the Board”.

(2) Article G, Section 26. This bylaw describes what each GVT Club Representative needs to do. It read:

“Each GVT Club Representative shall:

- a) Communicate the news and views of his Club to the Board.*
- b) Communicate the discussions and decisions of the Board to his Club.*
- c) Uphold the interests of both his Club and the GVTA in all matters.”*

(3) Article H, section 29. This bylaw states that the Board shall include a representative of each GVT club. It reads:

“The Board shall include the President, the immediate Past President (unless he or she resigns the position), the Vice-President(s), the Secretary, the Treasurer, a representative of each GVT Club, and such other Officers as the Board may determine from time to time, to a maximum of fifteen Directors.”

MOTION: To remove from the Grand Valley Trail’s Association bylaws Article D, section 7, Article G, Section 27 and to remove the reference to “a representative of each GVT Club” from the Article H, Section 9.

CATEGORY 2 – RELATES TO MEMBERSHIP

(4) Article E, Section 9d. This bylaw section refers to a category of members called “Organizational Member” and reads:

“An Organizational Member:

- i Is an organization, such as a corporation or an unincorporated society,*
- ii Has paid the annual dues in effect for the current year,*
- iii Has nominated a person to exercise its membership rights and receive the member’s correspondence and news from the GVTA.”*

The recommendation is to remove the membership category called "organizational member", because logistically we cannot manage this type of membership. Memberships are granted only to individuals.

Further, organizations that wish to sponsor the membership fee for an individual may do so by reimbursing the individual for the cost of the fee. Organizations that wish to support the GVTA may do so by giving a donation to the Association. The board unanimously approved this motion at its October meeting.

MOTION: To remove from the Grand Valley Trail’s Association bylaws, Article E, Section 9d.

- (5) Article F, Section 20b. This bylaw states that an Honorary Life Member has no voting privilege, and reads:
“Each member in good standing (including a household, and excluding an Honorary Life Member) shall be entitled to one vote on each question arising at any General Meeting. To be in good standing, a member must have paid all dues then payable.”

The designation of Honorary Life Member is seldom granted and granted only to exceptional members under strict consideration. The board unanimously agreed at its October Meeting that the honorary member should retain all member privileges, including voting privileges and that the designation only to be granted in exceptional circumstances to a long-standing member. The bylaw now reads:

“An Honorary Life Member

- I. Is a person eighteen years of age or older*
- II. Has been elected as such by the Board of Directors and confirmed by a general meeting of members,*
- III. Is exempt from payment of dues*
- IV. Has no voting privilege.”*

MOTION: To update Article F Section 20b to now read:

“An Honorary Life Member:

- I. Designation be granted only in exceptional circumstances and only to a long-standing member
- II. Must be first elected by the Board of Directors
- III. Must be confirmed by a general meeting of members
- IV. Is exempt from payment of dues
- V. Retains full member privileges.”

CATEGORY 3 – RELATES TO FINANCIAL REPORTING

- (6) Article F, Section 19a and 19b. This bylaw makes reference to the need for an auditor or financial reviewer and is not explicit regarding the financial statements brought to the membership at the Annual General Meeting. The bylaw section being referenced now reads:

“At every Annual General Meeting, the following business shall be transacted:

- a. Reports shall be heard and received including:
 - i The report of the Officers*
 - ii The financial statements and the report of the auditor or financial reviewer*
 - iii Any other reports and statements required by the Corporations Act.**
- b. An auditor or financial reviewer shall be appointed for the ensuing year.”*

The practice of appointing a financial auditor or reviewer has not been followed for several years. The board does not believe it is mandatory to appoint an auditor or financial reviewer, nor does the board wish to incur costs to appoint an auditor to review the association financials. Further, the board believes that the incumbent appointed to the treasurer role be experienced in accounting and financial reporting, follow sound accounting practices and provide monthly financial reporting to the board and annual financial reporting to the membership at the Annual General Meeting.

MOTION: That the bylaw be updated to now read:

"At every Annual General Meeting, the following business shall be transacted:

- a. Reports shall be heard and received including:
 - i. The report of the Officers
 - ii. A financial report by the Treasurer including :
 - the previous year's financials and explanations for discrepancies in prior year's financials and
 - proposed budget for the current year with rationale for proposed budget
 - iii. Any other reports and statement required by the Corporations Act.
- b. An auditor or financial reviewer shall be appointed for the ensuing year in the event that the treasurer role is vacant.
- c. Directors shall be elected to all board positions not occupied by directors with unexpired terms.
- d. Any other business properly brought before the meeting.



Treasurer's Report

for the year ending March 31, 2023

Summary

The Grand Valley Trails Association (GVTA) prepares financial statements on a cash basis.

For the year ending March 31, 2023, GVTA recognized Receipts totaling \$72,426 (\$19,626 excluding the Brantford Grant) and Expenditures of \$80,239 (\$20,632 excluding the Brantford Grant) resulting in a net loss of (\$7,721). At year end, investments of \$30,019 were on hand.

Receipts

Membership fees of \$7,500 were deposited as of March 31, 2023, up from the previous year's \$4,980 total. The increase of \$2,520 vs the prior year is mainly driven by the following:

1. +\$2,600 of mixed dates in year end deposits with more members renewing their memberships prior to the end of the fiscal year vs 2021-22 (i.e. \$1,300 of income would be removed from 2022-23 and added to 2021-22 fiscal year if renewals were done on time)
2. -\$80 due to slightly less renewals in 2022-23 than 2021-22

Donations have become an increasingly important source of income for the GVTA generating \$5,322, this was up from the previous year total of \$4,328. This is due to several large donations and the increased use of our trails following the pandemic.

Guidebook and merchandise sales as of March 31, 2023 totalled \$3,684 up from \$1,687 in the prior year. This was largely attributed to customers awaiting the new guidebooks released in late 2022 and the sale of merchandise at the in person Christmas event and market the GVTA attended.

Expenditures

Trail Maintenance spending this year was up; \$6,425 this year versus \$5,218 in the previous year. This increase was expected as trail maintenance was a strategic area of focus for 2020-21, with some maintenance activities carrying forward to 2023-23.

Office supplies and admin totalled \$2,435 in the year ending March 31, 2023 compared to last year's total of \$1,608 This category of spending includes our PO box rental, shipping costs for guidebooks and other merchandise sold, first aid reimbursement for hike leaders, etc. The increase from the prior year is mainly attributable to a rise in storage and shipping costs.

New merchandise for the online store totaled \$2,599 in the year ending March 31, 2023 vs \$2,636 in the prior year as GVTA branded BUFFs and the Belwood Cairn was ordered.

Insurance expenses totaled \$1,592 for the year ending March 31, 2023 vs \$1,295 from the prior year due to rising Hike Ontario insurance costs.

In the year ending March 31, 2023 a total of \$2,237 was spent on Publicity (including website and Ondago app maintenance) as compared to \$2,827 in the previous year. In both 2021-22 and 2021-23 there were several improvements made to the website and Ondago App.

A Budget for the period of April 1, 2023 to March 31, 2024 has been drafted and will be voted on at the annual meeting.

Hamilton, Halton, Brant Regional Tourism Relief Fund Grant

The GVTA received a \$52,800 grant from the Hamilton Halton Brant Regional Tourism Relief Fund. This grant was fully utilized with \$8,132 spent on Guidebook printing, \$31,574 on Communications and promotion of the Brantford trail system, and \$13,094 on trail maintenance and equipment.

Lisa Stewart, Treasurer
Grand Valley Trails Association



2022-23 Financials

	Budget \$	Actual \$	Actual \$
	12 months	12 months	12 months
	2022-2023	2022-2023	2021-2022
Receipts			
Membership fees	\$6,280	\$7,500	\$4,980
Sale of guidebooks	\$1,390	\$2,390	\$1,069
Sale of Merchandise	\$803	\$1,294	\$618
Donations	\$4,328	\$5,322	\$4,328
Christmas party	\$1,800	\$2,760	-
HST Rebate	\$450	\$806	\$537
PayPal charges	-\$350	-\$446	-\$270
Grant Receipts	\$5,000	\$52,800	
	\$19,701	\$72,426	\$11,263
Expenditures			
Office	\$2,200	\$2,436	\$1,608
Trail maintenance	\$5,200	\$6,425	\$5,219
Events	\$4,500	\$4,846	\$100
Insurance	\$1,425	\$1,592	\$1,295
Merchandise	\$2,023	\$2,599	\$2,636
Guidebook Printing	\$4,000	\$0	-
Advertising	\$350	\$93	\$281
Website/Ondago App	\$4,000	\$2,145	\$2,546
Hike Leaders	\$500		
Membership Fees	\$635	\$496	\$200
Brantford Grant: Guidebooks		\$8,132	
Brantford Grant: Communication		\$31,574	
Brantford Grant: Maintenance		\$13,094	
Brantford Grant: HST		\$6,715	
	\$24,833	\$80,147	\$13,886
Net Gain (Loss) for the period	-\$5,131	-\$7,721	-\$2,623
Bank Balance - beginning of year	\$16,390	\$19,028	\$16,390
Bank Balance - end of period	\$11,259	\$11,308	\$13,767
TD Canada Trust GIC #8065725	\$20,829	\$21,350	\$20,922
Total Balance - End of Period	\$32,088	\$32,658	\$34,689



2023-24 Proposed Budget

	Budget \$ 12 months 2023-2024	Budget \$ 12 months 2022-2023	Actual \$ 12 months 2022-2023	Actual \$ 12 months 2021-2022
Receipts				
Membership fees	\$7,875	\$6,280	\$7,500	\$4,980
Sale of guidebooks	\$2,000	\$1,390	\$2,390	\$1,069
Sale of Merchandise	\$1,000	\$803	\$1,294	\$618
Donations	\$5,400	\$4,328	\$5,322	\$4,328
Christmas party	\$3,900	\$1,800	\$2,760	-
HST Rebate	\$5,927	\$450	\$806	\$537
PayPal charges	-\$467	-\$350	-\$446	-\$270
Grant Receipts		\$5,000	\$52,800	
	\$25,635	\$19,701	\$72,426	\$11,263
Expenditures				
Office	\$2,000	\$2,200	\$2,436	\$1,608
Trail maintenance	\$12,200	\$5,200	\$6,425	\$5,219
Events	\$6,300	\$4,500	\$4,846	\$100
Insurance	\$1,700	\$1,425	\$1,592	\$1,295
Merchandise	\$0	\$2,023	\$2,599	\$2,636
Guidebook Printing	\$0	\$4,000	\$0	-
Advertising	\$500	\$350	\$93	\$281
Website/Ondago App	\$2,400	\$4,000	\$2,145	\$2,546
Hike Leaders	\$1,000	\$500		
Membership Fees	\$500	\$635	\$496	\$200
Brantford Grant: Guidebooks			\$8,132	
Brantford Grant: Communication			\$31,574	
Brantford Grant: Maintenance			\$13,094	
Brantford Grant: HST			\$6,715	
	\$26,600	\$24,833	\$80,147	\$13,886
Net Gain (Loss) for the period	-\$965	-\$5,131	-\$7,721	-\$2,623
Bank Balance - beginning of year	\$8,670	\$16,390	\$19,028	\$16,390
Bank Balance - end of period	\$7,705	\$11,259	\$11,308	\$13,767
TD Canada Trust GIC #8065725	\$21,350	\$20,829	\$21,350	\$20,922
Total Balance - End of Period	\$29,054	\$32,088	\$32,658	\$34,689



Consolidated board report

April 1, 2022 to March 31, 2023

Highlight of 2022-2023: GVTA receives a substantial grant

In the summer of 2022, the Grand Valley Trails Association successfully secured a grant from the Hamilton, Halton Brant Tourism Relief Fund for \$52,800. We were fortunate to be granted the full amount of our request.

Our grant application had three broad objectives:

- (1) To develop a new tourism offering through enhanced and well-maintained trails for visitors' enjoyment of the outdoors in the trail segments in Brant County.
- (2) To generate broader public awareness of the hiking trails, promote knowledge of hiking etiquette and the availability of guided hikes to visitors in the area.
- (3) To increase acquisition and retention of volunteers.

The GVTA received the funds and divided them into two broad categories:

1. Trail Maintenance
2. Public Awareness Campaign

TRAIL MAINTENANCE

The trail maintenance activities funded with the grant focused in three areas: volunteer skills development, community relationship building and tool acquisition.

Skill Development - To deliver on the skill development aspect, a four-day 'Sustainable Trail Building Workshop' was organized and offered to trail maintenance leaders this spring. The workshop, led by Zane Davies of Treadscape Ltd., and facilitated by Jason Thompson, vice president of trail maintenance, offered classroom and hands-on experience in designing, building and maintaining safe, sustainable trails. The training session, which was held on the Carolinian Crest section, had the additional benefit of targeting specific trail maintenance issues that were previously slated for improvement as part of the hands-on session.

GVTA trail maintenance volunteers from the Carolinian Crest, trail directors from Belwood and Black Walnut and trail captains from the Towpath section attended the workshop. The goal was to teach best practices for sustainable trail maintenance and to standardize our maintenance practices and techniques across the trail.

Thanks to the funds received from the grant, we could also cover the cost of chainsaw operator certification courses for three volunteers.

Relationship Building - To foster relationship building with other organizations involved in trails in the Brantford area, volunteers from the Brant Cycling Club and Brant Waterways were invited to participate in the trail building workshop for free. As a result, the Carolinian Crest volunteers now have solid working relationships with these groups, which means extra trained hands to accomplish trail work and access to a younger volunteer base for special projects and work parties.

Tool acquisition

The funds allowed us to purchase much-needed new equipment and to replace damaged equipment used by the Carolinian Crest team. GVTA purchased equipment on the team's wish list including walk-behind string trimmer, ratchet loppers, battery-operated tools that are lighter and easier to use, weed whackers, electric trimmers, battery chainsaw and pole saw, and landscape hoes.

PUBLIC AWARENESS CAMPAIGN

The overall campaign was designed to generate enthusiasm in hiking, increase the awareness of the Grand Valley trails and the hiking opportunities offered through the Association. The intent was to create current marketing collateral that the GVTA could then use in more grassroots events.

- A new display unit was developed and created.
- The gvta.on.ca website was updated.
- The 8th edition Guidebook was updated, completed, and now distributed to libraries, municipal offices, tourist boards and through online requests.
- A brochure on the Grand Valley Trail was produced and distributed to regional partner agencies and tourism offices.
- A social media calendar was implemented and initiated in December with updated messages twice a week.
- The GVTA Google account was refreshed and now anyone can post reviews.
- Advertising was developed and media space purchased in
 - Home + Locale
 - Fifty-Five Plus (Fifty-Five Plus is one of Ontario's largest circulation magazines catering to mature adults.)
 - Toque (TOQUE magazine is a free publication. Magazine is distributed throughout Guelph, Kitchener-Waterloo, Cambridge & Hamilton in public places such as coffee shops, and specialty grocery stores.)
 - Brant Expositor (online ad).
- Facebook ads were designed and ran until the end of March.
- A news release was distributed in early January and resulted in an interview with the local CBC radio.

We have already seen results from our campaign:

- As of April 2023, we have 2,248 Facebook followers, a 33% increase from last year. (In April 2022, we had 1,680 followers.)
- In the past year, we had 63 new members join the GVTA compared to 49 the year prior.
- We have a record number of people attending our organized hikes. Last year, some hikes needed to be cancelled because we did not have registrants. We now have an average of ten participants per hike with some as high as 21, which is the maximum number.
- The number of downloaded maps per trail section in ONDAGO has increased an average of 72 percent over last year.

Hike Program

Elizabeth (Liz) Coelho was named the new director of hikes in November replacing Petra Suffling. We take this opportunity to thank Petra for her time in this role and for the support and assistance she has provided Liz during this transition.

We were pleased that in 2022, our hiking program gradually got back on track with the lifting of the pandemic restrictions. In 2022, we offered a total of 46 hikes. To date this year, we have increased the number of hikes by 50 percent over the same period last year.

Since November 2022, one to two weekly hikes have been offered. As well, the hike offerings have been more varied. A special shout-out to two hike leaders:

- Joanna Mazur. In 2023, she has offered 11 hikes with emphasis on the Carolinian Crest section and curated hikes focusing on the four seasons at the Guelph Arboretum.
- Jeanette Vincent. Jeanette has offered several interesting and engaging independent hikes in different Ontario and Pennsylvania locations. These hikes are great as they help promote hiking, build community, and introduce hikers to new trails.

There are two components to making our hiking program a success. (1) Having a good roster of active hike leaders and (2) having member participation in organized hikes. We are very thankful to all the active hike leaders, namely Didier Thevenard, Michele Martin, Joanna Mazur, Charles Whitlock, Jeanette Vincent and Petra Suffling. And more recently, we have added one additional hike leader. Liz Coelho who completed her certification training in March. We look forward to listing Liz's hikes in our calendar.

This year, we have also seen a growing number of participants in the organized hikes. At the beginning of last year, some hikes were cancelled because of an insufficient number of participants. Having regular organized hikes appears to have contributed to an increase in general participation in the hikes. Also, members now receive a regular bulletin with the upcoming hikes. As a result, on average, there are about ten participants per hike with some hikes having as many as 21 participants. The end-to-end hike that started at the end of April has 20 people registered for the whole series of hikes.

Trail Maintenance

This year, approximately \$19,000 was spent on trail maintenance. The trail maintenance expenses funded under our operational budget primarily covered day-to-day maintenance, supplies and signage replacement while the expenses related to the grant primarily focused on volunteer training and equipment.

Below is a review of each trail section starting from north to south:

BELWOOD (30 KM)

Trail director: Jessica Leger

Trail captains: Andreas Laupacis, Inga Hamilton, Jeff Hamilton

The Grand River Conservation Authority undertook some forestry operations in the fall and winter in some of the conifer plantations around Belwood Lake. The work was done between the end of November and March, so if you were in the area around that time, you would have noticed some temporary closures in this section.

The work was part of the GRCA's long term forest management program which includes the conversion of conifer plantations to more natural woodlands through a series of thinnings. This thinning has the long-term goal of improving forest health and creating more varied habitats that support a greater mixture of plant, animal and bird species. In the short term, the thinning also resulted in the removal of some blazed trees and alterations to the area.

In the spring, the trail captains cleared the trail and blazed the area in preparation for the end-to-end hike that started in Belwood on April 29. In addition, the trail maintenance team's chainsaw operator removed a fallen tree and the team repaired a bridge over Carrol Creek. Ongoing maintenance work is planned over the next few months to improve the trail in sections and repair some of the structures.

The new terminus cairn was built in Maple Park in Belwood in the early winter. Thank you to Strata Masonry owner, Stephan Eszes, for donating his time in the design, building and oversight of this initiative.

BLACK WALNUT (76.9 KM)

Trail director: Ryan Wicks

Trail captains: Nick and Anita Kuret, Jenn Lennon, Scott Mackay, Andrew Weinact, Ann Lowe, Mike, Carol, Maggie & Carey Hulls, Ron Cherry, Rosemary Zehr, Sophie Wilson, Brenda West, Cathy Kitchen, Anne Woolner, Kathy McLachlin, Greg Baurbonnier, Rob Gomboc, Dave Martin.

In addition to some smaller work parties for grass cutting and tree clearing, there were two bigger work parties last year. One was coordinated by Woolwich Township to replace a bridge on the north end of Black Walnut, and another work party was run to fix a boardwalk and bridge in Natchez Woods.

There were two reroutes last year:

- Map 9 – In the Alps Road/Dumfries Road/401 area changes were made and the trail is now on the road between Roseville Road and Alps Road. This change was following a request by the landowner and is a permanent reroute.
- Map 11 – In the Bloomingdale-Snyders' Flats area, a segment is temporarily closed due to construction. Once construction is finished, the re-route will be reviewed.

This year, the trail captains have initiated a spring inspection of the trail and plan on addressing issues uncovered as part of their ongoing maintenance. On their work list is the repair or replacement of a washed-out bridge between km 46.5 and 41 and the repair of a staircase north of Victoria Street. As well, a section of the trail, north of 43.6 km and north of Victoria Street has been closed due to flooding in the area. Appropriate signage has been posted, and notices posted on our website. In the longer term, this section of the trail may need to be moved to higher ground.

CAROLINIAN CREST (71.5 KM)

Trail director: vacant

Trail captains: Tony Kelly (*lead trail captain*), Anderson Guimaraes, Rob Fowlie, Bill Brown, Deborah Vickers, Paul Piet, Brian Geffros, Allen Henry, Duncan Ross.

The Carolinian Crest maintenance team has been forming good relationships with other groups in the area interested in helping to create and maintain a well-maintained trail, including Brant Waterways, Peddlars & Paddlers, and Brant Cycling Club. Seventeen work parties were organized and held in the Carolinian Crest over the course of the year.

Two major projects resulting in reroutes have been undertaken this year. A reroute was done on the Hardy Road section of the trail to address a very steep incline that was considered unsafe and unpleasant for hikers. As well, a section of trail near Highway 403 was rerouted to address another steep incline considered unsafe. (These have now been completed and marked on the trail but not yet posted on our website or the Ondago app as of this date.)

TOWPATH SECTION (64.9 KM)

Trail director: vacant

Trail captains: Bob Brown and Paul Personnic

Although we are still seeking a Trail Director and a few more volunteers for this section, we are happy to welcome two new trail captains in Towpath over 2022. While a large portion of this section is on the road, there are sections of single track that require attention. With the new trail captains in place, we remain optimistic that some progress could be made in Towpath over the course of 2023, especially in anticipation of the arrival of the GVTA end-to-end hikers in September of this year.

Membership

We continue to maintain our membership information in Salesforce, a dedicated database used extensively during the annual renewal period and updated regularly as members' contact information changes and new members join. The same database is also used to capture private landowner information. This past year, we did fine-tune the volunteer list to better track volunteer preferences and align volunteers with planned activities such as trail maintenance parties.

As of May 12, our membership stands at 321, including members whose membership has lapsed this year. We have a lapse period and hope a large percentage will renew. Excluding this number, our membership stands at 243. We will do one more outreach to this group before finalizing our numbers for 2023.

In the 2022-2023 year, we had 63 new members join the club, which compares to 49 new members the prior year. However, we are experiencing a challenge with several members who forget to renew their annual membership. This year, there are 83 members whose membership has lapsed. Of the 83 members, there are more than 30 people who have been members of the club for four or more years. A higher membership count is important to us because it gives us the funds to help maintain the trail and draw from a larger volunteer base to help manage the organization. This is where we are seeking your help. Please ask friends you know are members if they have renewed and encourage friends who are not members to join the club! We're aiming to grow our membership and your endorsement is an effective way to do that.

Volunteer Update

Thank you to 221 people who have put their names forward to volunteer in some capacity with the club.

We recognize that volunteers' interests, situations, and availability change over time. Thank you to the following volunteers for their support over the past year and in some cases, support over many years:

- Lisa Stewart, Treasurer
- Sandy Pell, Director, Marketing
- Mary-Ellen Currie, Events Coordinator
- Fred Standeven, Trail Director, Carolinian Crest
- Arlene Whittle, Trail Captain
- Rick Stamp, Trail Captain
- Marguerite Cardinal
- Steve Gombos, Newsletter editor

This year, we have been successful at recruiting on the board:

- Didier Thevenard, the new Hike Ontario Representative
- Hélène St-Amand, Director-at-Large
- Liz Coelho, Hikes Director

As well, Trail Captains were named in various trail sections:

- Bob Brown, Towpath
- Paul Personnic, Towpath
- Andreas Laupacis, Belwood
- Inga Hamilton, Belwood
- Jeff Hamilton, Belwood
- Rob Gomboc, Black Walnut
- Andrew Weinact, Black Walnut
- Paul Piet, Carolinian Crest
- Duncan Ross, Carolinian Crest
- Brian Geffros, Carolinian Crest
- Bill Brown, Carolinian Crest
- Anderson Guimaraes, Carolinian Crest

We continue to look for volunteers in a number of key positions on the trail, namely a Trail Director for Towpath, and trail captains in various sections of the trail.

We also have important openings in the more administrative functions of the club, including the President role, Marketing Director, Programs Director, Newsletter editor, and Community Liaisons for each of the four trail sections. If you, or a friend, are interested in volunteering for one of these positions, please email volunteering@gvta.on.ca

Awareness Building and Marketing Activities

Throughout the year, we engaged in a number of awareness building, communication and marketing initiatives to raise the profile of the Grand Valley Trails. These include:

Media Relations: We shared a news release with several media and association publications in broadcast radio and written articles/blogs to raise awareness of our successful grant application. This resulted in an interview with Annie Côté-Kennedy on CBC The Morning Edition with Craig Norris. We also secured media coverage with Grand 101, a Belwood Section I radio station. Jason Thompson and Jessica Leger participated in Swap Talk in April and Liz Coelho participated in an interview on April 28 to kick-start the end-to-end hike.

Trail Markings: We published the quarterly editions of the electronic newsletter. The newsletter appears to be well received by our members with an average open rate of 70 percent, which compares very favourably against an industry average of 41.2 percent. With our subscription to Mailchimp, we also set up a new integration with our Salesforce member contact list which makes our distribution more accurate. Thank you to Steve Gombos, our volunteer editor for the last two editions!

Facebook: Our Facebook page continues to be an effective tool to attract new members, engage existing followers and stay in touch with our members and the community at large. We share news about the trail, photos from the trail, guided hikes, and information about our upcoming events and hikes. Expect to see more pictures of hikers, interesting activities, and encounters on the trail, as these generate the most interest in our followers. Thank you to Petra Suffling for managing our Facebook page so effectively.

Gvta.on.ca: As mentioned earlier, we've updated our website as part of our grant project. As well, we strive to update our homepage more frequently with messaging that aligns with current GVTA-related events and news.

Public presentations: In the winter, we approached the Kitchener Public Library with an offer to make a presentation on hiking to interested groups at the KPL. Our first presentation was in the spring at an initiative called "Active Adults", a monthly walking club for older adults. Liz Coelho and Emily Bennett presented on behalf of the GVTA – a presentation that was very well received and will likely be repeated at a different time on a different topic.

Community events: In December, the GVTA attended the Elora Christmas Market with a staffed kiosk. The two-day event showcased our trails, our Guidebook, and our merchandise with volunteers on hand to answer questions and talk about the trail. These are events that we would like to participate in if we know about them and have volunteers available to staff the kiosk. Thank you to Leya Duigu for coordinating this event.

Member Events

National Indigenous Peoples' Day Hike - In recognition of National Indigenous People's Day, we held a special hike in Brantford on June 21. The 8 km hike along the Grand River ended with a lunch and short presentation on the GVTA's new Territorial Statement followed by a guided visit at The Woodland Cultural Centre, Museum & Art Gallery. Thank you to Jan Hember and Jane Kenyon for organizing this enlightening event.

Festive Dinner – Again this year, we held a festive dinner for members and guests at the Rockway Golf Club on December 11. We had a record number of attendees and hope to continue the tradition again this year.

Food Bank Drive – A food drive was organized again this year to support the local food bank. A total of 230 lbs (104 kg) of food donations for the Food Bank. Combined with a \$50 online donation, the contribution was enough to provide 280 meals to people in need.

Relationships with Public Landowners

Elora Gorge Conservation Area – Last year, we entered into an agreement with the Grand River Conservation Authority that allows the GVTA to continue running a portion of our trail through the Elora Gorge and which provides our members with passes to enter the Elora Gorge Park when the site is open. Under this agreement, our members are asked to enter the park at official entrances and to show their membership pass when asked or upon entering. A similar agreement had been in place several years prior but had been cancelled as a result of illegal entries into the park by various people. We are happy to have reached an agreement last year and urge all our members using the park to adhere to the park rules and regulations particularly regarding park hours of operation and entry points. Members wishing to obtain a pass can simply email their request to info@gvta.on.ca and the passes are distributed on a first-come-first-serve basis.

Grand River Conservation Authority – Our trail runs through many of the GRCA properties and we continue to enjoy very good relations with the Grand River Conservation Authority. We appreciate the advance notice they provide us when the trail on their property is affected by work they are doing or changes they are implementing. We appreciate and value this relationship.

Centre Wellington Township – GVTA has been building a sound relationship with Centre Wellington on various fronts, such as the agreement for the GVTA terminus cairn to be erected at Maple Park in Belwood. The township has also helped with GIS and landownership questions in the area as GVTA considers possible future reroutes.

Woolwich Township – The township and the GVTA have worked together and in collaboration to maintain the trails in the township. Ann Roberts, Environmental Coordinator in the Recreation and Community Services Department works closely with Ryan Wicks, trail director for the Black Walnut section to address issues and maintain the trail in good repair. We have a maintenance agreement with the township that is in place and a landowner agreement that was recently resolved relating to a parcel of land owned by the GRCA. Our insurer took issue with the language of the draft agreement and after some discussion and consultation with Hike Ontario and others, the issue was successfully addressed and the agreement is now approved in principle.

City of Brantford – We also enjoy good relations with the City of Brantford. Our trail maintenance team work with Brantford Parks and Recreation staff to maintain the trail through the city with the understanding of each other's responsibilities. The city has also provided some supplies for trail repairs in the area.

Ruthven Park National Historical Site – After several email exchanges and discussions, we were disappointed to hear last May 2022 from Ruthven that they will be managing the trails on their property independently which means the Grand Valley Trails will no longer be running on the Ruthven Park property. We were disappointed with this decision as we understood from their earlier conversation that given our long-standing history, our arrangement would be allowed to continue under a grandfathered clause. Thank you to Jan and Jamie Hember and Nick and Anita Kuret for kindly rerouting and blazing the trail around the property.

GVTA Guidebook

The 8th edition of the GVTA Guidebook was published this year! To date, we have sold 81 guidebooks and we have a potential order of another 10 books being confirmed. The Guidebook was produced by a three-person committee: Jan Hember, Jamie Hember and Annie Côté-Kennedy, with support from a number of trail consultants and volunteer photographers.

Please refer to the guidebook acknowledgement page for full recognition of all who made this edition possible. A special thank you to Jan and Jamie Hember, who have been involved with the guidebook since 2003, and have officially announced their retirement from this work.

Online maps

This is now the fifth year of our relationship with ONDAGO which provides online maps of the trail. To ensure that the online maps aligned with the new updated Guidebook maps, this year we did a thorough review and updating of the online maps. After a small drop in usage last year, we have had a resurgence in interest this year in the online maps. The maps have

been downloaded roughly 70 percent more this year than last year, with the Carolinian Crest and Towpath maps seeing the greatest increase.

Map	Downloaded		Opened	
	2021-22	2022-23	2021-22	2022-23
End-to-end	328	561	957	1498
Towpath	178	335	504	893
Carolinian Crest	262	451	1335	2368
Black Walnut	429	713	2897	4041
Belwood	412	680	1977	3044

Respectfully submitted,
Annie Côté-Kennedy, President GVTA

Board members:

Emily Bennett
Director, Volunteer and Membership

Mary-Ellen Currie, Director,
Programs

Erin Huston,
Secretary

Sandy Pell
Director, Marketing

Lisa Stewart
Treasurer

Liz Coelho
Director, Hikes

Jason Thompson
VP, Trail Maintenance

Didier Thevenard
Hike Ontario Rep.

Helene St-Amand
Director-at-Large



New Business

The board is bringing forward the following two motions:

MOTION:

To change the rate and structure of the lifetime membership to:

- Increase the rate from \$300 to \$600
- To have the lifetime membership include members of the household
- To continue providing Canada Revenue tax receipts to the individual who pays the membership.

MOTION:

To nominate Jan Hember and Jamie Hember as Honorary Lifetime Members.



Slate of Candidates for 2023-2024 Board of Directors

President (to October 1, 2023)	Annie Côté-Kennedy
Vice-President	Helene St-Amand
Treasurer (to September 2023)	Lisa Stewart
Treasurer (post September 2023)	Brandon Correia
Director, Membership and Volunteering	Emily Bennett
Director, Marketing	Vacant
Director, Programs/Special Projects	Vacant
Secretary	Erin Huston
Director, Hikes	Liz Coelho
Director, Trail Maintenance	Jason Thompson
Hike Ontario representative	Didier Thevenard