



2024 Annual General Meeting

Member Information Package

Table of Contents	page
Territorial Acknowledgement	1
2024 AGM Agenda	2
2023 AGM Minutes, including:	3
• Addendum I - List of attendees	6
• Addendum II - 2023 Treasurer's Report	7
• Addendum III - Consolidated Board Report	11
• Addendum IV – New Business	19
2024 Treasurer's Report, including:	20
2023-24 Financials	21
2024-25 Proposed Budget	22
2024 Consolidated Directors' Report	23
New Business: (1)	

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

Monday, May 13, 2024 - 7:00 PM

AGENDA

7:00 pm

Annual General Meeting

Welcome - Jason Thompson
Territorial Acknowledgment - Jason Thompson
Call to order - Emily Bennett
Approval of Agenda and Previous year's minutes - Emily Bennett

In Memoriam

Remembering members – Emily Bennett

Financials – Brandon Correia, Treasurer

2023-24 Financials
2024-25 Budget

Directors' Report - Emily Bennett, Jason Thompson

New Business

Jason Thompson

Election of the Board of Directors

Emily Bennett, Director, Volunteering and Membership

Volunteer Recognition

Emily Bennett, Director, Volunteering and Membership

Guest Speaker

Liz Coelho introducing Laura MacGregor

Meeting Adjourned

Minutes of the 2023 Annual General Meeting

Tuesday, May 16th, 2023 at 7:00 p.m.

Edelweiss Tavern Meeting Room

Directors Present:

Annie Côté-Kennedy
Didier Thevenard
Emily Bennett
Hélène St. Amand
Jason Thompson
Lisa Stewart
Liz Coelho
Mary-Ellen Currie
Sandy Pell

Members Present: Meeting met quorum of at least 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 recited the Territorial Acknowledgement.

2. Approval of Agenda

Moved by Bill McDonald, seconded by Klas Bockasten to approve the agenda as follows:

1. Welcome
2. Territorial Acknowledgement
3. Call to Order
4. Approval of Agenda and Previous Year's Meeting Minutes
5. In Memoriam
6. Approval of GVTA Financials for 2022-2023 and Budget, 2023-2024 Fiscal Year
7. Consolidated Directors Report for the 2021-2022 Year
8. New Business: Proposed Membership Fee Increase
9. New Business: Appointment of Honorary Life Members
10. Election of the Board of Directors
11. Adjournment of AGM

Carried.

3. In Memoriam recognized long standing members who have passed in the last year: Gregory Vincent, Pablo Machetzki and Valerie Haiser.

4. Approval of Minutes of Last Year Minutes

Moved by Mary-Ellen Currie, seconded by Therese Markus that the minutes of the May 31, 2022 AGM be accepted as presented. **Carried.**

5. Approval of the GVTA Financials for 2022-2023 and Budget, 2023-2024 Fiscal Year a) Lisa Stewart presented the financials for the past year and GVTA budget for the next fiscal year which had already been reviewed and endorsed by the Board.

b) Moved by Michael de Andrade, seconded by Mary-Ellen Currie that the financials for the 2022-2023 fiscal year and the budget for the 2023-2024 budget be approved. **Carried.**

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

A consolidated directors' report was presented by Annie Côté-Kennedy. See attached addendum. Jason Thompson announced one change: Tony Kelly will take on Trail Director - Carolinian Crest role.

7. New Business

a) Proposed Membership Fee Increase

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.

Moved by Jan Hember. Seconded by Catherine Scott . **Carried.**

b) Honorary Life Membership

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

Moved by Bill McDonald. Seconded by Nick Kuret. **Carried.**

7. Election of Board of Directors

Moved by Bill McDonald and seconded by Nick Kuret 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
- Hélène St. Amand, Vice President
- Lisa Stewart, Treasurer (to September 2023)
- Brandon Correia, Treasurer (as of October 2023)
- Emily Bennett, Director, Membership and Volunteering
- vacant, Director, Marketing
- vacant, Director, Programs / Special Events
- Erin Huston, Secretary
- Liz Coehlo, Director, Hikes
- Jason Thompson, Director, Trail Maintenance
- Didier Thevenard, 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 adjourned at 8:15 p.m. **Carried.**

Addendum I - List of Attendees

Presented in alphabetical order:

1. Ernst Alge
2. Emily Bennett
3. Klas Bockasten
4. Liz Coelho
5. Annie Côté-Kennedy
6. Mary Ellen Currie
7. Michael De Andrade
8. David Fennell
9. Judy Gingrich
10. Debbie Grant
11. Val Haiser
12. Quinn Hanley
13. Michael Helfinger
14. Jamie Hember
15. Jan Hember
16. Jacob Keller
17. Tony Kelly
18. Jane Kenyon
19. Nick Kuret
20. Anita Kuret
21. Theresa Markus
22. Bill McDonald
23. Pat McDonald
24. Gordon Nicholls
25. Rose Noonan
26. Sandy Pell
27. Paula Sawicki
28. Catherine Scott
29. Luciene Sestrem
30. Hélène St-Amand
31. Lisa Stewart
32. Michael Stewart
33. Petra Suffling
34. Rolf Thiessen
35. Jason Thompson
36. John Tyler
37. Janice Vassallo
38. Jeanette Vincent
39. Margot White
40. Ryan Wicks

Addendum II – 2023 Treasurer’s Report

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

Addendum III – Consolidated Directors Report

Consolidated GVTA board report 2022-2023

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 last 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 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 use 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 changes 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
- Helene 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 canceled 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 land ownership 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, Président 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

Addendum IV – New Business: Revisions to bylaws

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.



2024 Treasurer's Report

for the year ending March 31, 2024

Summary

The Grand Valley Trails Association (GVTA) prepares financial statements on a cash basis. For the year ending March 31, 2024, GVTA recognized Receipts totaling \$21,269 and Expenditures of \$19,459 resulting in a net excess of \$1,810.

Receipts

Membership fees of \$6,960 were deposited as of March 31, 2024, down from the previous year's \$7,500 total. This decrease of \$540 is driven by a number of 2024/2025 membership renewals outstanding.

Donations for the current year came in at \$2,726, which is down from the previous year total of \$5,322. This could be attributed to the current high cost of living, as charitable donations are down across the province of Ontario.

An HST rebate was received for \$5,927, which is well above the \$806 rebate from the previous year.. This is due to the grant which was received in 2022-2023 which resulted in higher spending on trails and promotion and resulted in a higher HST rebate the following year..

Guidebook sales as of March 31, 2024 totalled \$2,586, up from \$2,390 in the prior year. This could be attributed to the release of the most recent version of the Guidebook and a couple of larger orders from local vendors, as well as some sales at special events (Cairn event in Belwood, Festive Dinner, etc).

Expenditures

Trail Maintenance spending this year totalled \$5,695 this year versus \$6,425 in the previous year. Overall spending was in line with prior years as the GVTA is dedicated to maintaining the quality of its trail system.

Insurance expenses totaled \$2,841 for the year ending March 31, 2024, which is up from \$1,592 from the prior year. This is due to rising insurance costs as well as the timing of Hike Ontario membership payments (2 payments made in May'23 and March'24).

In the year ending March 31, 2024, a total of \$2,167 was spent on Website and App maintenance, as compared to \$2,145 in the previous year. These costs include ongoing support for our website and Ondago maps as well as annual Mapgears fees.

A Budget for the period of April 1, 2024 to March 31, 2025 has been drafted and will be voted on at the annual meeting.

Brandon Correia
Treasurer, GVTA



2023-24 Financials

	Budget \$ 12 months 2023-2024	Actual \$ 12 months 2023-2024	Actual \$ 12 months 2022-2023
RECEIPTS			
Membership Fees	\$ 7,875.00	\$ 6,960.00	\$ 7,500.00
Sale of Guidebooks	\$ 2,000.00	\$ 2,586.00	\$ 2,390.35
Sale of Merchandise	\$ 1,000.00	\$ 590.50	\$ 963.00
Donation	\$ 5,400.00	\$ 2,726.24	\$ 5,322.06
Holiday Party	\$ 3,900.00	\$ 2,210.00	\$ 2,760.00
HST Rebate	\$ 5,927.37	\$ 6,606.33	\$ 806.28
PayPal Charges	\$ (467.39)	\$ (410.20)	\$ (446.34)
	\$ 25,634.98	\$ 21,268.87	\$ 19,295.35
Non-Recurring:			
Shipping			\$ 331.00
HHB RTR Grant			\$ 52,800.00
	\$ 25,609.98	\$ 21,268.87	\$ 72,426.35
EXPENDITURES			
Office	\$ 2,000.00	\$ 466.24	\$ 2,435.94
Trail Maintenance	\$ 9,600.00	\$ 5,695.25	\$ 6,425.49
Events	\$ 6,300.40	\$ 4,180.32	\$ 4,845.71
Insurance	\$ 1,700.00	\$ 2,841.25	\$ 1,592.00
Merchandise	\$ -	\$ -	\$ 2,599.00
Storage	\$ 2,600.00	\$ 2,656.26	\$ -
Marketing	\$ 500.00	\$ 211.23	\$ 92.60
Guidebook Printing	\$ -	\$ 710.16	\$ -
Website Fees	\$ 2,100.00	\$ 2,166.74	\$ 1,874.06
App (Ondago)	\$ 300.00	\$ -	\$ 271.20
Volunteer Management	\$ -	\$ 331.36	\$ -
Bank Charges	\$ -	\$ 56.50	\$ -
Hike Leaders	\$ 1,000.00	\$ -	\$ -
Membership Fees	\$ 500.00	\$ 144.00	\$ 496.00
	\$ 26,600.40	\$ 19,459.31	\$ 20,632.00
Non-Recurring:			
HHB RTR Grant			\$ 59,515.00
	\$ 26,600.40	\$ 19,459.31	\$ 80,147.00
Net Gain (Loss) for period	\$ (965.42)	\$ 1,809.56	\$ (7,720.65)
** Bank Balance - opening	\$ 30,489.99	\$ 30,489.99	\$ 38,210.64
Bank Balance - closing	\$ 29,524.57	\$ 32,299.55	\$ 30,489.99

** Bank Balance inclusive of GIC balance



2024-25 Proposed Budget

	Budget \$ 12 months 2024-2025	Budget \$ 12 months 2023-2024	Actual \$ 12 months 2023-2024	Actual \$ 12 months 2022-2023
Receipts				
Membership fees	7,050.00	7,875.00	6,960.00	7,500.00
Grants	-	-		
Sale of guidebooks	2,240.00	2,000.00	2,586.00	2,390.35
Shipping	-	-		331.00
Sale of Merchandise	606.00	1,000.00	590.50	963.00
Receipted Donations	7,500.00	5,400.00	2,726.24	5,322.06
Unreceipted donations	incl above	incl above		
Events (holiday party)	2,640.00	3,900.00	2,210.00	2,760.00
Advertising income	-	-		
Programs - cost recovery events	-	-		
Transfer of Funds	-	-		
HST Rebate	1,790.56	5,927.37	6,606.33	806.28
Interest	-	-		
PayPal charges	(425.00)	(467.39)	(410.20)	(446.34)
Grant - HHB RTR	-	-		52,800.00
	<u>21,401.56</u>	<u>25,634.98</u>	<u>21,268.87</u>	<u>72,426.35</u>
Expenditures				
Office	600.00	2,000.00	466.24	2,435.94
Trail maintenance	7,000.00	9,600.00	5,695.25	6,425.49
Storage	2,704.00	2,600.00	2,656.26	
Events (holiday party, AGM, etc.)	5,765.00	6,300.40	4,180.32	4,845.71
Insurance	2,500.00	1,700.00	2,841.25	1,592.00
Newsletter	-	-		
Merchandise	-	-		2,599.00
GB Printing	800.00	-	710.16	
Marketing	250.00	500.00	211.23	92.60
Web Hosting Fees/Maintenance	2,200.00	2,100.00	2,166.74	1,874.06
App (Ondago)	300.00	300.00		271.20
Hike Leaders	800.00	1,000.00		
Programs - cost recovery events	-	-		
Landowner relations	-	-		
Bank charges	60.00	-	56.50	
Membership Fees (Expenses)	400.00	500.00	144.00	496.00
Volunteer Management	-	-	331.36	
Grant - HHB RTR	-	-		59,515.00
	<u>23,379.00</u>	<u>26,600.40</u>	<u>19,459.31</u>	<u>80,147.00</u>
Net Gain (Loss) for the period	(1,977.44)	(965.42)	1,809.56	(7,720.65)
Bank Balance - beginning of year	32,299.55	30,489.99	30,489.99	38,210.64
Bank Balance - end of period	<u>30,322.11</u>	<u>29,524.57</u>	<u>32,299.55</u>	<u>30,489.99</u>

** Bank Balance inclusive of GIC Balance



Consolidated board report April 1, 2023 to March 31, 2024

Hike Program

We were pleased that in 2023, our hiking program regained its momentum, offering a total of 63 hikes from April 2023 to March 2024. This marked a 25 percent increase in the number of hikes compared to the previous period from April 2022 to March 2023.

Our hiking program aims to provide a variety of weekly hikes, encompassing different activities, distances, and difficulty levels. Throughout the April 2023 to March 2024 period, our offerings included:

- Organized end-to-end hikes of the Grand Valley Trail
- Independent hikes in the Bruce Peninsula and Pennsylvania
- Urban hikes
- Youth hikes
- Family-friendly hikes
- Earth Day hikes and trail clean-ups
- 4 Seasons at the Guelph Arboretum" series
- Guelph Arboretum hikes led by an arboretum docent
- Flora and fauna hikes, such as birdwatching and plant identification
- Educational "Life of Bees" hike, featuring insights from a beekeeper at the Backyard Honey Company
- Brewery hikes

The success of our hiking program relies on two key components:

1. A dedicated team of hike leaders who plan, organize, and lead the hikes.
2. Active participation from our members in organized hikes.

We're immensely grateful for our committed hike leaders, including Didier Thevenard, Joanna Mazur, Marie Cowie, Laura MacGregor, Michele Martin, and Charles Whitlock.

This year, we've observed a growing number of participants in our organized hikes. The consistent offering of organized hikes seems to have stimulated overall participation, with an average of ten participants per hike and some hikes attracting as many as 21 participants. Notably, the end-to-end hike series, spanning from April to October 2023, saw an average of 20 people registered for the complete series of hikes.

We're also excited to announce a fresh addition to our program: a hiking blog titled "Tales from the Grand Valley Trail." This blog will serve as a valuable resource for our hiking community, offering insights, tips, and engaging stories to enrich our outdoor adventures. We look forward to

sharing this new platform with you and sharing the beauty and wonder of the Grand Valley Trail through captivating tales.

Offered Hikes & Registrations: April 2023 - March 2024

Month	2023 -2024 Total Hikes Offered	2023 -2024 Registrations
April	6	64
May	6	61
June	6	66
July	2	19
August	4	43
September	5	52
October	5	62
November	10	75
December	7	30
January	4	37
February	4	42
March	4	42

Year-Over-Year	2022 - 2023	2023 - 2024
Total Hikes	53	63
Total Registrations	341	593

Hike Ontario rep report

Hike Ontario (HO) is the umbrella organization that acts as the voice for Ontario’s hikers and provides resources and services to 28 hiking clubs in the province. HO’s Trail Associations directly manage approximately 3,000 kilometers of pedestrian trails, which are largely interconnected. Hike Ontario provides insurance to the clubs, organizes hike leader certification courses, and delivers seminars on topics of interest to its membership. Quarterly meetings were held virtually on May 27, 2023, November 29, 2023 and Feb 28, 2024. The annual general meeting was held in person in London, ON, on Sep 23, 2023.

The next AGM will be hosted by the Guelph Hiking Club in the Fall of 2024.

Topics discussed during the HO meetings in 2023-2024 included:

- The development of a new standard on-line waiver for hikes, with the help of a lawyer;
- Work on a new Strategic Plan;
- Work on risk management strategies.

Work on these three points is ongoing and is expected to lead to tangible results in 2024.

Hike Ontario continues to negotiate insurance coverage provided to member organizations; they also continue to organize Hike leader certification courses. The GVTA hopes to be able to organize such a course locally in 2024. HO also renews hike leader certifications, with flexible requirements and a minimal cost (\$5 for 5 years).

Trail Maintenance

As outlined in our financial update, in 2023-2024, GVTA spent ~ \$5,700 on trail maintenance which is in line with previous spending average of ~ \$6000 for the past several years (not including the \$59,000 we spent in 2022-2023 based on the grant we were awarded). During the 2023 season, trail maintenance volunteers focused their efforts on addressing day-to-day maintenance and overall improvement of the trail, utilizing several new tools acquired through the above-mentioned grant. As we move into 2024-2025, we are budgeting an extra \$1,000 to the trail maintenance allotment as we anticipate more activity in the Towpath section this coming year (see Towpath section below for more information).

Some notable 2023-2024 trail maintenance activities that are not section specific, include:

- A four-day *Sustainable Trail Building Workshop* with Zane Davies: 16 trail maintenance volunteers learned about sustainable trail building design, development and implementation culminating in an experiential on-trail redesign of two small sections in Carolinian Crest.
- We've initiated a connection with John Kemp (Giant Hog Weed expert in the Grand River watershed) to inform our hikers about the hazards of Giant Hog Weed (hope you had time to visit his table before the business portion of this AGM)
- We have started the AllTrails Public Lands Program - Special thanks to Tony Kelly for initiating this! This program is a free service that will provide GVTA with a "dashboard" in AllTrails, where we can:
 - see data of GVT use,
 - manage trail information on the app that is GVTA verified
 - communicate with AllTrails users about GVT hikes.
- An obvious shortcoming in the later part of 2023 and early 2024 has been the loss of our GIS expert (with Jamie Hember's retirement from GVTA volunteering). But as of two weeks ago, we are extremely delighted to welcome Lauren Brunton as a new volunteer who, with her knowledge of GIS, has agreed to assist with keeping our re-routes up-to-date on our website and in the Ondago app.

BELWOOD

The Belwood section at ~ 35 km is the smallest segment of the Grand Valley Trail due to altering the northern terminus that now ends in the village of Belwood Ontario (instead of Alton, ON). We are delighted to inform you that a **new terminus cairn** was completed in Belwood, Ontario in Fall 2023.

The Belwood section trail director is Jessica Leger and there are three trail captains and 4 occasional trail maintenance volunteers who tend to join in the fun during organized work parties. Of note, Jessica is looking for an additional trail captain.

In addition to regular ongoing trail maintenance, Jessica and team refurbished the walking path along the Carrol Creek bridge near Elora Gorge just in time for the End-to-End'ers crossing back in late April 2023.

The Grand River Conservation Authority (GRCA) plays prominently in the Belwood section as much of it directly traverses GRCA lands. Along the West side (some consider it the North side) of Belwood Lake, the GRCA engaged in tree thinning in the area in 2023 which altered the terrain and resulted in the loss of a few "blazed trees" which the TCs are attending to this year. Additionally, we renewed our GRCA-GVTA agreement allowing GVTA members to enter the Elora Gorge Conservation Area (EGCA) during the regular season (May 1 – Oct 15) providing you show a valid GVTA membership card with GRCA authentication sticker. So, if you plan to hike the Belwood section this coming season contact info@gvta.on.ca and ask for a EGCA sticker!

Possible directions in 2024 include connecting with a developer of a 180 dwelling property to explore building a connection trail to the GVT in hopes to promote the GVT in the area and to secure ongoing support for the GVTA from the developer. Follow up with other landowners is being planned in hopes to get more of the trail off the road and closer to the Grand River.

BLACK WALNUT

The Black Walnut section, at ~ 77 km, is the longest section of the Grand Valley Trail. The trail director is Ryan Wicks and there are 19 trail captains and several volunteers.

In the past year, there were 2 work parties, one of which involved replacing a bridge in Woolwich Township, and as typical for this section, several "grass cutting" sessions were organized to provide a concentrated maintenance effort.

There are a few outstanding items (some noted by the End-to-End hikers) that need to be addressed which the maintenance crew will tend to as part of their ongoing maintenance in 2024. A priority for this coming season is replacement of a staircase just North of Victoria Rd.

Reroutes:

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

- Map 9 – (reiteration from 2023) In the Alps Road/Dumfries Road/401 area, changes were made and the trail is now on road between Roseville Road and Alps Road as requested by the landowner.
- Map 11 – (reiteration from 2023) In the Bloomindale-Snyders' Flats area, a segment is still temporarily closed due to construction.
- Map 12 – long Middlebrook Rd near km 69, re-route to the road around a property just north of the 26-foot bridge that was built by GVTA/Woolwich Township two years ago. There will be a blue trail to provide "in/out access" to be near the Grand River. We are currently negotiating with a neighboring property to lessen the distance on the road of this reroute.
- Note: Reroutes for Map 9 and 11 from the previous year will be updated in May 2024.

The GVTA's ongoing working relationship with Woolwich Township has been continually productive for Black Walnut. Woolwich Township has allocated some funds to help improve some of the shared trail and are planning to refurbish 3 small bridges/boardwalks in 2024. We'd like to thank Ann Robers, Environmental Coordinator at Woolwich Township for assisting with landowner relations in the area...and for always keeping GVTA in mind.

CAROLINIAN CREST

The Carolinian Crest section at ~ 72 km is the second longest section of the Grand Valley Trail. The trail director is Tony Kelly and there are seven trail captains and seven regular volunteers. Ongoing maintenance has also been supported by several trail maintenance volunteers.

Carolinian Crest organized some 13 work parties in the past year to provide focused maintenance of sections of the trail evident by the GVTA Facebook posts of completed projects. Tony has also been a GVTA ambassador and has been working to seek donations from various companies in his area. A James Dick Construction donation of \$400 is one example of his success. As well, connecting with landowners has been an ongoing focus in Carolinian Crest.

Reroutes:

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

- Map 6 – (reiteration of 2023 reroute) 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 8 – a pending new reroute to move the trail at km 56.8 to continue adjacent to the Grand River to come to the road at 76 Curtis Rd in Paris. The parking at km 57.2 will still be accessible and connected via a blue trail.

Significant accomplishment this year:

Aside from the typical trail maintenance, the 13 work parties also had an infrastructure focus. Some specific tasks included: removal of 2 temporary bridges at km 47, repairing 82 feet of boardwalk at km 50, a new bridge at km 49.5 and significant widening of tread from km 47-49.

Additionally, the Carolinian Crest section has seen much, and will see much more attention from the local media. Tony has been connecting directly with several partners in the area. More information about this promotion work can be found in the Marketing section of this report.

TOWPATH SECTION

The Towpath section is ~ 65 km with a significant amount of road walking. We have indicated last year that we were unable to find a Trail Director for this section for several years. We are thrilled to announce that Paul Personnic is our new Towpath Trail Director! As a side note, Paul was courted to take on the position during the GVTA End-to-End hike. He is an avid hiker having done the Bruce Trail and GVTA End-to-Ends among other hiking adventures! In addition, Paul has one active volunteer that acts as a trail captain, maintenance crew of one AND landowner.

The plan for 2024 is to ensure blazing is updated along most of this section. At the same time, Paul is seeking to build relationships with public and private landowners as we aim to get more of the Towpath section off the road and into the forest or close to the Grand River. To that end, Paul has contacted the Ministry of Natural Resources and Forestry (MNR) to inquire about two parcels of Crown Land between Cayuga and Dunnville – with the intent to create tier 3 (naturalized urban) hiking trails through these lands. Discussions are pending.

Additional landowner work has been happening with Haldimand County, the main jurisdiction in Towpath. In February 2024 the GVTA was invited to present at the Haldimand County Trail Advisory Committee, which resulted in the direct involvement of GVTA with their Trail Master Plan. Next steps involve a consultant review of Haldimand County's existing (and possible new) trails. GVTA is listed as a key stakeholder and will be engaged in future consultations and planning work.

Significant accomplishment this year:

These two men have been hard at work not only on the trail but also building a strong relationship with Haldimand County. One concrete result of this relationship-building is GVTA's presence and engagement in the Haldimand County Trails Master Plan as a key stakeholder. Thanks to this new team, Towpath has been promoted locally more in the past 8 months than it has over the previous 5 years!

Marketing

A brief introduction to the New Marketing Director - Alex Sherman

Hi everyone! As an avid Hiker and an experienced marketer, I'm thrilled to join the GTVA and combine two of my passions.

I bring over 5 years of experience in communications and marketing, combined with a solid academic background specializing in business and writing. Experience in technology, government business programs, sportswear, and real estate has given me a broad perspective on multiple industries and how they run their marketing programs.

As a lifelong resident of the Waterloo Region, graduate of the University of Waterloo ARBUS program and currently working in the local tech sector, I'm proud to help promote the Grand Valley Trail and all the wonders it offers.

Some projects marketing will take on for 2024-2025:

- Optimizing the newsletter and increasing user engagement and subscribership
- Streamlining the use of GVTA social media through a content planner/scheduler
- A donation page recognizing donations and providing a form to easily donate
- Adding GVTA trail listings to the Alltrails app, to increase awareness of the trail digitally
- More photos, more videos and more updates via social media!
- Multiple web projects

On the trail side:

Tony Kelly, Trail Director of trail maintenance in Carolinian Crest, has been doing some direct marketing work, outreach and promotion of the GVT and GVTA in the Brant County and City of Brantford areas.

Specifically, he has facilitated an agreement with the BrantBeacon to publish 7 articles focused on GVTA's 7 off single-track trails in the area. The articles are slated to be published starting in May and run into June 2024.

Additionally, Tony has been working with Brantford Tourism and Brant County and both have agreed to publish the GVTA's Off Road trails on their websites targeting tourists in the area. You can find these 7 hikes on the GVTA website > Hiking Program > Self-Guided Hikes > Brantford Area

Membership:

The GVTA membership year runs from April 1, 2023 to March 31, 2024. In total, the GVTA has:

282 Members: 191 annual members and 91 Lifetime Members. We have had 2 annual members who converted their annual membership to lifetime.

New Members in this period: 43 (compare to 63 in previous year)

Expired Memberships: 72. These are members who did not renew their membership for 2024. These expired members are in their grace period, and we are reaching out by phone and personal email. We will send out Expiry Notices in May.

Last year we did some analysis and noted that we have a variety of membership durations (that is members who kept up their memberships). Many of our longtime members (> 3 years) sustain their membership and we need to encourage this.

Volunteering

Our membership database tracks all members, landowners, partners and volunteers. In addition we track non-members who have expressed an interest in volunteering and do our best to accommodate their requests for work. In 2023, we established volunteer teams to handle the specific jobs, the first one being the Newsletter team who successfully deployed Trail Markings for our fall, winter and recently our Spring issue. At this time I would like to acknowledge the team who jumped in to write and distribute our winter and spring issues. The Team includes:

Claire Rouleau (Lead)

Hannah Clyde

Aeron Humaid

Nichollette Ivany

Using a team approach allows us to have a pool of like-minded volunteers who have specific responsibilities. We are doing this also with the online store – “The Store Team” under the leadership of Tipa Olides and the volunteers: Erin Huston, Marguerite Cardinal and Mark Wilson to distribute guidebooks, GVTA chevrons and badges, GVTA branded merchandise, Elora Conservation Area passes and brochures.

Almost all of our volunteers come into the GVTA by way of the Volunteer Action Centre here in Waterloo Region. The Volunteer Action Centre posts our volunteer jobs similar to job boards where candidates can search for us and learn about the role. This year, we streamlined the intake process so that we have only one place with the job openings and where candidates can sign up. We have also had callouts to various organizations to post for our open roles, but it is difficult to fill some of the roles with responsibilities. We ask you, our members, to help us by asking your hiking friends to help us with our organization. If you are interested in volunteering, let me know.

Events

All the work parties were scheduled and implemented in Carolinian Crest. We have 9 events, some were well attended. We also setup a booth at the Festive Dinner, and the Mayor’s Levee in Ayr.

Volunteer Roles

The board thanks the following volunteers for their dedication and hard work:

Members and Volunteers:

Vice President / Director At Large - H  l  ne St. Amand

Director, Membership & Volunteering - Emily Bennett

The board welcomes the following new Board Members and Volunteers:

Director, Programs and Special Events - Folake Adineran

Director, Marketing - Alex Sherman

Trail Director - Towpath: Paul Personnic (promoted from Trail Captain)

Store Manager: Tipa Olides

Newsletter Team with lead: Claire Rouleau

I would like to end this report by sending my deepest thanks and appreciation to the GVTA board past and present, and mostly, to the members and friends I have made belonging to the GVTA. It has been a pleasure to act as a Director for you. You won't be getting rid of me too soon as I will be taking on a Membership volunteer role so I can still keep our membership database updated, and produce the reports for the new Director.

Member Events

Festive Dinner – This year, we held a festive dinner for members and guests at the Rockway Golf Club on December 10, 2023. We had a fantastic turnout with a record number of attendees, who generously donated non-perishable food for the Food Bank as we requested. Looking ahead, we aim to continue this tradition and host another festive dinner this year.

Online Maps

This year marks the sixth year of our partnership with ONDAGO, which offers online maps of the trail. To align the online maps with the newly updated Guidebook maps, we conducted a thorough review and update. After experiencing a slight decline in usage last year, we have seen a resurgence of interest in the online maps this year. Downloads have increased by approximately 70 percent compared to last year, with the Carolinian Crest and Towpath maps showing the most significant growth.

Map	Downloaded		Opened	
	2022-23	2023-24	2022-23	2023-24
End-to-end	561	274	1498	562
Black Walnut	335	561	893	746
Carolina Crest	451	216	2368	674
Pinnacle	713	275	4041	606
Towpath	468	174	3044	469

Respectfully submitted,
GVTA Board

Board members:

Emily Bennett
Director, Volunteer and
Membership

Folake Adeniran, Director,
Programs & Special
Events

Paula Sawicki,
Secretary

Alex Sherman
Director, Marketing

Brandon Correia
Treasurer

Liz Coelho
Director, Hikes

Jason Thompson
Director, Trail Maintenance

Didier Thevenard
Hike Ontario Rep.

Addendum IV – New Business: Revisions to bylaws

New Business

The board is:

- Planning meeting to focus on succession planning and board structure
- Continue to make updates to standing rules & bylaws

- Continue to work with the volunteers to access job scope
- Work to improve our marketing reach

Slate of Candidates for 2024-2025 Board of Directors

President	Vacant
Treasurer	Brandon Correia
Director, Membership and Volunteering	Vacant
Director, Marketing	Alex Sherman
Director, Programs & Special Projects	Folake Adeniran
Secretary	Paula Sawicki
Director, Hikes	Liz Coelho
Director, Trail Maintenance	Jason Thompson
Hike Ontario representative	Didier Thevenard

