



# MINUTES

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## **ROMA Board Meeting**

**Friday, December 20, 2024**

**9:00 AM – 1:30 PM**

## **VIRTUAL Meeting**

### **PRESENT:**

Chair Christa Lowry, Municipality of Mississippi Mills (Zone 8)

### **Zone and AMO Rural Caucus Representatives:**

Jamie McGrail, Councillor, Municipality of Chatham-Kent (Zone 1)

Steve McCabe, Councillor, Township of Wellington North (Zone 2)

Dave Beres, Deputy Mayor, Township of Tillsonburg (Zone 3)

Christina Early, Councillor, Town of Caledon (Zone 4)

Pam Sayne, Councillor, Township of Minden Hills (Zone 5)

Jennifer Murphy, Councillor, County of Renfrew (Zone 6)

Carma Williams, Deputy Mayor, Township of North Glengarry (Zone 7)

Mark Wilson, Councillor, City of Temiskaming Shores (Zone 9)

Janet Hager, Councillor, Municipality of Red Lake (Zone 10)

Dane Nielsen, Deputy Mayor, Municipality of Grey Highlands (AMO Rural Caucus)

Nathan Townend, Deputy Warden, County of Lennox & Addington (AMO Rural Caucus)

Nicole Martin, CAO, Township of Amaranth (AMO Rural Caucus)

Tanya Vrebosch, Councillor, City of North Bay (AMO Rural Caucus)

### **Staff:**

Brian Rosborough, Executive Director, AMO

Petra Wolfbeiss, Director, Membership Centre, AMO

Lindsay Jones, Director, Policy and Governmental Relations, AMO

Judy Dezell, Director Enterprise Centre, Business Partnerships & LAS

Afshin Majidi, ROMA Executive Treasurer

Karen Nesbitt, Senior Manager, Policy, AMO

Alicia Neufeld, Senior Manager, Policy, AMO

Farah Tayabali, Vice-President, Redbrick

Stewart McDonough, Municipal Engagement Advisor, AMO

Lora Tigno, Administrative Assistant, Membership Centre, AMO

### **Guests:**

Hon. Kevin Holland, Associate Minister of Forestry and Forest Products

**Early Departures:**

Nathan Townend, Deputy Warden, County of Lennox & Addington (AMO Rural Caucus)

**Regrets:**

Natasha Salonen, Mayor, Township of Wilmot (AMO Rural Caucus)

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1. Chair's Welcome and Introductions – ROMA Chair, Christa Lowry

Chair Lowry welcomed members and staff to the board meeting.

Land Acknowledgment:

"We recognize that our work as the ROMA Board, and the work of our members, takes place on traditional Indigenous territories across Ontario. We recognize and respect the history, languages, and cultures of the First Nations, Metis, Inuit and all Indigenous peoples whose presence continues to enrich our communities."

2. Declaration

- Pecuniary interest – none declared
- Early departure – identified above

**ADMINISTRATIVE MATTERS**

3. Approval of Friday, December 20, 2024, Meeting Agenda (*Pages 1-3*)

The agenda was approved as amended including a verbal report update for Teeny Tiny Summits from Pam Sayne under Information items.

**Motion:** *"That the Board approve the agenda for Friday, December 20, 2024, as amended."*

MOVED: Steve McCabe

SECONDED: Carma Williams

4. Approval of Friday, November 15, 2024, ROMA Meeting Minutes (*Pages 4-11*)

The Board approved the minutes as provided.

*Motion: "That the Board approve the minutes from the November 15, 2024, meeting".*

MOVED: Nathan Townend

SECONDED: Janet Hager

**CARRIED**

5. Executive Treasurer Report – Afshin Majidi, Executive Treasurer

- i. 202412 MEMO - ROMA FS SEPT 2024 v3 (Pages 12-13)
- ii. 09-2024 ROMA Statement of Financial Position (Pages 14)
- iii. 09-2024 ROMA Statement of Operations Summary (Pages 15)
- iv. 09-2024 ROMA Statement of Operations (Pages 16-17)
- v. 09-2024 ROMA Conference Statement of Operations (Pages 18)
- vi. 2025 Budget memo to ROMA Board - Dec 2024 v4 (Pages 19-20)
- vii. 2025 - ROMA Budget v4 IS Summary1 (Pages 21)
- viii. 2025 - ROMA Budget v3 IS Details1 (Pages 22-24)
- ix. 2025 - ROMA Budget v3 - CONF Sheet1 (Pages 25-26)

Afshin Majidi presented to the Board the Financial Statement, the 2025 proposed budget and 2025 annual conference budget. ROMA's strong conference revenues continue and provide a strong financial position for ROMA. The 2025 budget as presented was adjusted to reflect minor cost increases over 2024 associated with the delivery of the annual conference specific to food and beverage, venue and production costs.

**Motion:** *"That the September 2024 financial statements be accepted as presented."; and*

*"That the proposed 2025 ROMA budget be approved as presented."*

MOVED: Mark Wilson

SECONDED: Nicole Martin

**CARRIED**

**DISCUSSION ITEMS**

6. Policy Briefing

- i. Key Policy Updates - Karen Nesbitt, Senior Manager, Policy Centre, AMO (Supplemental Package)
  - 1. Housing and Homelessness

Staff provided a briefing on AMO's groundbreaking paper- "[Municipalities Under Pressure: The Growing Human and Financial Cost of Ontario's Homelessness Crisis](#)" that reveals the unprecedented and growing toll of homelessness on individuals, families, communities, and governments. The paper quantifies the number and demographic of Ontario's homeless including as well as encampments.

Staff also updated the Board on

- Homelessness encampments legislation: Safer Municipalities Act, 2024 and the Restricting Public Consumption of Illegal Substances Act, 2024
- AMO's work on explaining the dip in 2024 housing starts
- Advocacy and issues related to removing barriers for qualified building officials

## 2. Infrastructure

Staff provided insight and analysis into Infrastructure Ontario \$1 billion financing program for housing-enabling water system projects.

## 3. Trains and Drains

ROMA has been accepted as an intervener in the Chatham-Kent drainage case, allowing it to submit evidence. The ROMA lawyer is compiling data from municipalities affected by railway drainage issues. Evidence submission is due by the end of January, with CP's response in February and potential witness cross-examinations in May. Progress remains slow, but this is a significant step forward. Other interveners include the Ontario Federation of Agriculture and the municipality of Lakeshore, while Hornepayne has observer status. ROMA will keep members informed as things progress.

## 4. Health

An update on expanded diagnostic services in long-term care homes was provided.

## 5. Ontario's Rural Economic Development Strategy

The Board was advised that information on Ontario's Rural Economic Development Strategy would be provided by Minister Thompson at the ROMA Conference.

## 6. Codes of Conduct

On December 12, the province introduced long-awaited codes of conduct legislation for municipalities, addressing requests for standardization, provincial Integrity Commissioner involvement, and mechanisms for removing council members for serious violations. While this is a major step forward, the bill must pass before an election is called to become law. ROMA will review and provide input at the Standing Committee.

## 7. AMO's gender-based violence resources for elected officials

AMO shared with the Board its gender-based violence resources for elected officials released in advance of and in recognition of the December 6 National Day of Remembrance.

## 8. Conservation Authority Freeze

The Minister of Natural Resources extended the freeze on conservation authority fees until the end of 2025, giving authorities little time to adjust. AMO continues to advocate for fair, transparent, and stable funding to ensure conservation authorities can effectively deliver essential services that benefit municipalities and communities.

9. Energy: expanded procurements

The province has expanded long-term energy procurements by 50%, which will lead to increased contact from energy developers with municipalities. A new funding proposal for last mile connections will extend payment timelines for developers and homebuyers, but AMO cautions that municipalities and local distribution companies (LDCs) can't bear the additional costs.

10. Bill 228

Bill 228 introduced environmental proposals, including a wildfire management framework, and increased provincial responsibility for abandoned oil and gas wells, which AMO supports.

11. Bill 227

Bill 227, which included various administrative changes, passed without public consultation, but AMO supports a proposal to streamline approval for brownfield sites with low contamination risk to facilitate faster development.

**Motion:** *"That the ROMA Board receive as information the AMO policy update".*

MOVED: Jennifer Murphy  
SECONDED: Steve McCabe

**CARRIED**

ii. AMO Pre-election Strategy Rollout – Lindsay Jones, Director, Policy Centre, AMO (*Supplemental Package*)

Lindsay Jones briefed the Board on AMO's pre-election strategy including the campaign roll-out beginning with a news conference on the Sunday of the ROMA Conference. ROMA Chair, Christa Lowry, will participate in the event.

**Motion:** *"That the ROMA Board receive as information the AMO Pre-election Strategy, and:*

*"That the ROMA Board support the launch of the AMO Election Strategy at the ROMA Annual Conference."*

MOVED: Carma Williams  
SECONDED: Pam Sayne

**CARRIED**

7. AMO Rural Caucus Report Back - Chair Christa Lowry/All (*Verbal*)

Chair Lowry reviewed key discussions arising from the November 29 AMO meeting of the Board:

- The Board confirmed its 2025 Strategic Objectives. The coming years objectives in large part build on the current/2024 key priorities.
- Discussion on spring municipal meetings; OSUM/NOMA/FONOM.
- Further discussion on matters related to policing costs; and Mayor Marianne Meed Ward shared that H.E.R Halton will be undertaking an initiative focusing on promoting respectful discourse inline with the efforts on improving local democracy.

**Motion:** *“That the AMO Rural Caucus report back be received as information.”*

MOVED: Jennifer Murphy  
 SECONDED: Mark Wilson

**CARRIED**

8. ROMA Communications Update – Farah Tayabali, Vice President, and Megan Abraham, Consultant, Redbrick *(Verbal)*
  - i. ROMA Conference Zone Meet Up Deck *(Pages 27-40)*

Redbrick is focused on preparing for the upcoming ROMA conference, including media engagement, social media strategy, and logistics. They are proactively sharing relevant content, particularly around election speculation, and working to increase visibility on platforms like LinkedIn and Facebook and X though engagement on this platform largely remains low.

Tailored slide decks are being prepared for the Zone meet-ups. The slides will focus on the Board’s key priorities and advocacy work.

**Motion:** *“That the ROMA Communications update be received as information; and*

*“That the Board direct Redbrick to finalize the Zone Meet up slide deck for distribution to Zone representatives in advance of the Conference.”*

MOVED: Dave Beres  
 SECONDED: Dane Nielsen

**CARRIED**

**TIMED ITEMS**

9. 10:45AM-11:00AM – Pre-briefing on Discussion with MPP Kevin Holland – AMO Staff, *(Verbal)*

The Board confirmed its key messages/areas of focus for discussion with MPP Holland.

10. 11:00AM–11:30AM - Discussion with MPP Kevin Holland, MPP Thunder Bay - Atikokan *(Verbal)*

Board members shared with MPP Holland ROMA's priorities for 2024-2025. Discussion with MPP Holland focused on matter such as housing, homelessness, mental health and addiction and opportunities to address these from the rural perspective.

MPP Holland discussed forestry and the importance of natural resources specific to research and innovation.

11. 11:30AM-12:00PM – ONE Investment, Investment Options for Smaller Municipalities – Judy Dezell, Director Enterprise Centre, Business Partnerships & LAS (*Pages 41-60*)

Judy Dezell provided insight into the opportunities and benefits to smaller and rural municipalities of the Prudent Investor program. The presentation included how the program works and what is required from a municipality to participate and importantly, the benefits.

**Motion:** *"That the ONE Investment presentation be received as information."*

MOVED: Carma Williams

SECONDED: Tanya Vrebosch

**CARRIED**

12. 12:00PM–12:15PM -ROMA 2025 Executive Committee Election – Brian Rosborough, Executive Director, AMO (*Pages 61-62*)

Brian Rosborough ran the Board through the process of the ROMA Board Executive Committee meetings. The Board agreed that given the onsite scheduling at the annual conference, the election will be held at the February 14 meeting of the Board.

**Motion:** *"That the ROMA Board receive the ROMA Executive Committee Election process as information; and  
"That the ROMA Board approve the date of the Executive Committee election as the February 14, 2025, meeting of the Board."*

MOVED: Jennifer Murphy

SECONDED: Dane Nielsen

**CARRIED**

13. 12:45PM-1:15PM – AMO's Healthy Democracy Project – Stewart McDonough, Municipal Engagement Advisor, AMO (*Pages 63-70*)

Stewart McDonough briefed the Board on the origins, priorities, deliverables to date and current projects of

the AMO Healthy Democracy Project. Stewart shared the outcomes of the October Forum and the benefit of holding a one-day, rural focused Healthy democracy Forum. The Board agreed this would be worth pursuing.

**Motion:** *"That the Healthy Democracy Project presentation be received as information"; and*

*"That the Board support the development and delivery of a one-day rural focused Healthy Democracy Forum adjacent to the Board Spring Meeting in June 2025"*

MOVED: Nicole Martin

SECONDED: Christina Early

**CARRIED**

## **INFORMATION ITEMS**

### 14. ROMA Conference Update – Petra Wolfbeiss, Director, Membership Centre, AMO (*Verbal*)

Petra Wolfbeiss updated the Board members on the development of the annual conference. Indications are the Conference will meet if not exceed the 2024 participation. The Board was briefed on what they could expect once on site as well as their participation on the pre-conference workshop with Redbrick and the Board briefing on the Saturday of the event.

**Motion:** *"That the ROMA Board receive as information the update on the 2025 ROMA Conference planning."*

MOVED: Steve McCabe

SECONDED: Christina Early

**CARRIED**

### 15. **Teeny Tiny Summit Report Back**

Pam Sayne briefed the Board on expectations for the 2025 Teeny Tiny Summits including the expectation that one of the in-person sessions will be held in the north. Pam will update the Board at future meetings.

**Motion:** *"That the ROMA Board receive as information the update on the Teeny Tiny Summits."*

MOVED: Carma Williams

SECONDED: Dave Beres

**CARRIED**

### 16. Resolutions Summary (*Pages 71-74*)



**Motion:** *"That the ROMA Board receive as information the Resolutions Summary Report."*

MOVED: Jennifer Murphy  
SECONDED: Pam Sayne

## **CARRIED**

### 17. Correspondence

- i. Association Outreach Letter to Eastern Ontario Wardens' Caucus (EOWC) (Pages 75)
- ii. Association Outreach Letter to Federation of Northern Ontario Municipalities (FONOM) (Pages 76)
- iii. Association Outreach Letter to Northwestern Ontario Municipal Association (NOMA) (Pages 77)
- iv. Association Outreach Letter to Ontario's Big City Mayors (OBCM) (Pages 78)
- v. Association Outreach Letter to Ontario Small Urban Municipalities (OSUM) (Pages 79)
- vi. Association Outreach Letter to Western Ontario Wardens' Caucus (WOWC) (Pages 80)
- vii. Report on Good Roads Reception November 27, 2025 (Pages 81-83)

## **OTHER BUSINESS**

### 18. Other business brought forward by members

### 19. Agenda items for future ROMA Board meetings

- Workforce Development Project
- Emerging issues
- Executive election
- Potential delegation with Dr. Philpott, Ministers Calandra and Jones
- Policy update

## **ADJOURNMENT**

### 20. Next meeting:

- **February 13, 2025** (5:00 – 8:00PM) – *Committee of the Whole (Hybrid)*
- **February 14, 2025** (9:00AM – 1:30PM) – *ROMA Board Meeting (Hybrid)*

### 21. Adjournment

**Motion:** *"That there being no further business, the Board move to adjourn."*

MOVED: Dane  
SECONDED: Jenn

**CARRIED**