

SERPENT RIVER FIRST NATION

195 Village Road
Cutler ON, P0P 1B0



Telephone: (705) 844-2418
Facsimile: (705) 844-2757

SRFN Chief and Council Meeting
Thursday, March 26, 2026
Approved Minutes
5:00pm

Chair: James Owl

Council: Erin Carne, Nicole Pelletier, Rebecca Csaszar, Angela Trudeau, Justin Urquhart, George Coughlin, Angela Trudeau

Regrets: None at this time

Director of Operations (DOO): None at this time

Staff: Leila Maccumber – Director of Health

Recording Secretary: Erin Carne/Councillor

1) Call to Order/Opening Prayer/Remarks:

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">- Meeting was called to order at 5:00 p.m.- Opening prayer provided by Councillor Urquhart- LNHL – U13 team won this year |
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2) Adoption of Agenda

MOTION: 2026-03-26-01

That Chief and Council adopt the Agenda for the Council Meeting of Thursday, March 26, 2026, as presented

Moved by	Erin Carne
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Seconded by	Justin Urquhart
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CARRIED	By Consensus
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3) Declaration of Conflict of Interest:

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| <ul style="list-style-type: none">- 10 (b) and 10(d) Erin Carne |
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4) Community Presentations:

2024-2025 Audit

MOTION: 2026-03-26-02

That Chief and Council approve the 2024-2025 Consolidated Financial Statements and Auditor's Report as presented by BDO

Moved by	Angela Trudeau
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Seconded by	George Coughlin
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Recording Secretary:	Erin Carne	Date Approved	2026-04-09
2026-03-26 APPROVED CHIEF AND COUNCIL MINUTES		Motion of Approval	2026-04-09-02

CARRIED	By Consensus
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2024–2025 Consolidated Financial Statements and Auditor’s Report
The auditor (BDO) presented the 2024–2025 consolidated financial statements and auditor’s report.

The audit resulted in a qualified opinion on two items only:

- Payroll controls (missing documented approvals on timesheets/timecards)
- Asset Retirement Obligations (ARO), which have not yet been implemented under PSAS but are planned for future years.

Apart from these qualifications, the financial statements are reported to be in accordance with Public Sector Accounting Standards.

The community remains in a strong financial position, with:

- Significant net financial assets and reserves
- Key financial ratios (liquidity, sustainability, working capital to revenue) above minimum benchmarks.

Results for 2024–2025 were heavily influenced by one-time Robinson Huron Treaty settlement payouts to members:

- On paper, this creates a large deficit due to the payouts.
- When these one-time treaty payouts and related interest are removed, the underlying operations show an approximate \$3M surplus (vs. about \$5M in the prior year).

The auditor highlighted several internal control improvements needed (e.g., reconciliations, payroll approvals, avoiding duplicate payments and late reports).

Council and community discussed the land acquisition and related improvements in Sault Ste. Marie, recorded as approximately \$15M in tangible capital asset additions for 2024–2025. The auditor confirmed that roughly \$11–12M of this amount was funded from Robinson Huron Treaty (RHT) funds, with approximately \$4M paid from Band operational funds, contributing to the current members’ equity deficit. Community members raised concerns about the fact that this project and its financing decisions were made in camera by the previous Council.

Land purchase (\$15M total):

- About \$11–12M from RHT funds.
- About \$4M from Band operations (not broken down yet by program)

The current Council committed to (1) working with Finance to identify and report the precise sources of the ~\$4M operational funding, (2) conducting a full review of the project’s viability and options with professional advice, and (3) bringing the results and options back to the community for further discussion and direction.

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Question whether housing arrears deducted from member RHT payouts helped fund the land purchase.

- No, \$400K+ in arrears were recovered against RHT payouts; this mainly strengthened the housing replacement reserve, not the Sault Ste Marie land purchase.
- Council has sought a legal opinion on the housing arrears “fallback” issue (how arrears were treated against entitlements); follow-up still pending and will be pursued.

Council and administration acknowledged these issues and committed to strengthening financial controls and budget management going forward.

5) Approval of Previous Minutes

a) March 26, 2026

MOTION: 2026-03-26-03

That Chief and Council approve the previous Council Meeting Minutes of Thursday, March 12, 2026, as presented.

Moved by	Rebecca Csaszar
Seconded by	Erin Carne
CARRIED	By Consensus

6) Business Arising From Previous Minutes:

a) RHW/RHTLF Protocol BCR

Council reviewed an RHT/RHW protocol and a proposal to allocate approximately \$255M for language revitalization at the RHT level. Councillors strongly supported language revitalization but raised concerns about placing a large amount under an external political office with limited local control, and about gender balance and inclusion of matriarchs in RHT governance.

The Chief noted the funds originated as a legal fee “give-back” now returned to the CDA, and that communities could instead manage their own share for language. No final position was taken; Council will further analyze the protocol and consider community consultation on how to use language-related funds.

b) Transition Home Update

Additional documents provided

- Position posted for Manager

c) Employment & Training Plan

Employment & Training Coordinator position has been filled. She will be working ISETS and developing a training pathway for the Waasmoowin project.

May 20th tentative date – Trade Fair in coordination with Mississaugi and Sagamok

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7) **Reports:**

a) **Chief's Report**

MOTION: 2026-03-26-04	
That Chief and Council approve the Chief's Report dated March 7 – 20, 2026	
Moved by	Rebecca Csaszar
Seconded by	Erin Carne
CARRIED	By Consensus
<p>Recruitment: The Chief reported several staffing updates: a Nisoonag Project Manager for the residential school project has started (though funding delays remain), a Finance Manager has been hired to address audit and control issues, and a Mental Health position has been filled to support vulnerable members. Some weaknesses remain in the finance area (e.g., payroll capacity). Interviews happening for the Director of Operations in April.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - A suggestion was made to create a staff booklet or org chart, so members know who staff are and how to reach them; this remains a goal as capacity allows. - Community member shares appreciation of support during the snowstorm. 	

8) **Doodem & Committee Minutes & Reports:**

Question – Will gift cards continue for members attending Doodems?
- This will continue for members to show appreciation

9) **Standing Items:**

a. **Audit**

Council confirmed that BDO will still be used for the audit

b. **Community Safety**

<p>The community secured \$47,600 under Ontario's Community Emergency Preparedness grant program. Funds will support:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Equipment upgrades - Infrastructure improvements - Emergency planning initiatives <p>The OPP Emergency Response Team will conduct a training exercise at the community centre on Tuesday, May 12, 2026</p>
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c. **Quarterly Meetings**

<p>New date of April 11, 2026, at the LSC 10:00 p.m. – 4:00 p.m. Ongoing issues with potholes and local road conditions.</p>

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Chief acknowledged these issues and linked them to the broader budget and infrastructure planning discussions.

d. Governance Manual

No update at this time. As positions are filled, more time can be spent on

e. RHTLF/RHT (as arises)

Nothing at this time

f. CHRT 41 Projects

Reviews are happening, hopeful projects will move forward

10) New Business:

a. 2026/2027 Operating Budget

MOTION: Deferred	
Moved by	
Seconded by	
CARRIED	
<p>Chief presented an overview of the 2026–2027 operating budget: Targeted revenue: \$39,468,193.22</p> <p>Largest segment tied to the acid site project (significant share of total revenue).</p> <p>Council emphasized the need to ensure revenues exceed expenses while directing funds to community needs rather than simply building surpluses, and highlighted ongoing work to improve segment breakdowns and transparency so both Council and community can better understand the budget.</p>	

b. Political Office Support Extension

MOTION: 2026-03-26-05	
That Chief and Council approve the motion to extend the political office support initiative for an additional 6 months and re-evaluate following that period	
Moved by	Angela Trudeau
Seconded by	George Coughlin
CARRIED	By Consensus
<p>Councillor Carne has been working in-office to support the Chief with administrative duties. Interviews for the Director of Operations position are scheduled for April 12.</p>	

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In the interim, a proposal was discussed to extend Councillor Carne’s support to the Chief in an administrative and operational capacity within the band office for a period of 6 to 12 months.

Concerns were raised regarding the separation of governance and administration, in alignment with the Governance Manual, which states that a Councillor cannot be employed by the Band while holding office. Options discussed included appointing Councillor Carne to an interim Deputy Chief role (without establishing it as a permanent position) or having Councillor Carne take a leave of absence from Council while fulfilling these duties.

The proposed compensation structure includes a salary of \$75,000 in addition to Council honorarium, with no benefits, and with the position not classified as employment.

It was agreed that, provided a clear plan and end date for the interim role is established, the arrangement could proceed for an initial six-month period, to be reviewed at that time.

c. Donation Request – Robinson Huron Treaty Youth Advisory

MOTION: 2026-03-26-06	
That Chief and Council approve the donation request of \$5000.00 to be paid to the Robinson Huron Treaty Youth Advisory	
Moved by	Rebecca Csaszar
Seconded by	Angela Trudeau
CARRIED	By Consensus
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d. Application Requests – Community Advancement Fund (CAF)

Council noted that CAF funds for the current fiscal year are fully expended, so new CAF applications will be brought forward at the next meeting. A CAF task team (including Cheryl and others) is updating policies, improving member education, and working to move CAF back to committee-level governance, with a commitment to fair distribution between on- and off-reserve members.

i. Housing Related Request

Deferred

ii. Property Improvements

Deferred

iii. Professional Development Support

Deferred

e. Legal Matters – In-Camera – BCR

MOTION: 2026-03-26-07

Recording Secretary:	Erin Carne	Date Approved	2026-04-09
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That Chief and Council approve a motion to open an In-Camera session immediately following this duly convened meeting for the purpose of reviewing documents related to a legal matter to off-reserve business interests, and advancing a decision that will direct a response from legal counsel.	
Moved by	Erin Carne
Seconded by	Rebecca Csaszar
CARRIED	By Consensus
The Chief reviewed the appropriate use of in-camera sessions (for legal, HR, and child-welfare or privacy matters) and noted legal advice that in-camera decisions should be supported by a recorded resolution stating the reason.	
The \$11M Sault Ste Marie properties matter was cited as an example of a previous in-camera decision now being handled with more transparency.	

11) Community Questions and Answers:

Community questions about Council confidentiality and conflicts of interest were addressed, confirming all Councillors (including Erin) are bound by the same oath and must declare conflicts.
Council agreed the governance manual needs a comprehensive review and overhaul to strengthen transparency, community involvement, conflict-of-interest processes, and realistic workload expectations.

12) Next Meeting Date(s):

April 7, 2026

13) Adjournment:

MOTION: 2026-03-26-08	
That Chief and Council adjourn the Chief and Council Meeting of Thursday, March 26, 2026, at 8:56 pm.	
Moved by	Justin Urquhart
Seconded by	George Coughlin
CARRIED	By Consensus

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