



Essex County Council, Regular Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, February 19, 2025

6:00 PM

Council Chambers, 2nd Floor

360 Fairview Avenue West

Essex, Ontario N8M 1Y6

<https://video.isilive.ca/countyofessex/live.html>

Council: Michael Akpata, Councillor
Joe Bachetti, Deputy Warden
Tracey Bailey, Councillor
Sherry Bondy, Councillor
Kimberly DeYong, Councillor
Chris Gibb, Councillor
Hilda MacDonald, Warden
Gary McNamara, Councillor
Crystal Meloche, Councillor
Michael Prue, Councillor
Rob Shepley, Councillor
Larry Verbeke, Councillor
Kirk Walstedt, Councillor
Tony Gaffan, Councillor, Alternate Member, Town of Kingsville

Absent: Dennis Rogers, Councillor

Administration: Allan Botham, Director, Infrastructure & Planning Services
Katherine Hebert, County Clerk
Darrel Laurendeau, Director, Information Technology
Don McArthur, Manager, Communication and Organizational Development
Kyla Pritiko, Director, Human Resources
Melissa Ryan, Director, Financial Services / Treasurer
David Sundin, Director, Legislative and Legal Services / County Solicitor
Crystal Sylvestre, Manager, Records and Accessibility / Deputy Clerk

Sandra Zwiers, Chief Administrative Officer
Ziad Fatallah, Deputy Chief, Planning & Physical
Resources, EWEMS

1. Closed Meeting

There was no Closed Meeting held on February 19, 2025.

2. Moment of Reflection

3. Singing of 'O Canada'

4. Land Acknowledgement Statement

We acknowledge the land on which the County of Essex is located is the traditional territory of the Three Fires Confederacy of First Nations, comprised of the Ojibway, Odawa and Potawatomie Peoples.

We specifically recognize Caldwell First Nation and other First Nations which have provided significant historical and contemporary contributions to this region.

We also value the contributions of all Original Peoples of Turtle Island, who have been living and working on this land from time immemorial.

5. Recording of Attendance

Warden MacDonald and members of Council attended the meeting at the Essex County Administration Building, in the Council Chambers with the exception of Dennis Rogers who was absent. Tony Gaffan attended as the alternate member for the Town of Kingsville.

6. County Warden's Welcome and Remarks

Warden MacDonald expressed gratitude to federal and provincial level of governments for advocating and making plans to respond to trade actions by the U.S. government. The Warden encouraged everyone doing business in Essex County and Windsor to remain solid, stable partners who work with local companies of all sizes by standing by them and purchasing their products.

Warden MacDonald also acknowledged the passing of James Edward MacPherson. James was mayor of the Town of Essex from 1985 to 1991 and also served as reeve and deputy reeve. He died February 8 at the age of 91. Flags were lowered at the County of Essex Administration Building in his honour. His service to his community and at the county council table are appreciated and will not be forgotten.

7. Disclosure of Pecuniary Interest

Warden MacDonald called for any Disclosures of Pecuniary Interest in relation to the matters listed on the Agenda for February 19, 2025. There were no disclosures of pecuniary interest raised.

Warden MacDonald advised that if at any point during proceedings, a matter is raised, for which a member has an interest which is pecuniary in nature, a declaration may be made at any time.

8. Adoption of Regular Meeting Minutes

045-2025

Moved By Gary McNamara

Seconded By Rob Shepley

That the minutes of the February 5, 2025 Regular Meeting of Essex County Council be adopted as presented.

(Voted by show of hands)

Carried

9. Delegations and Presentations

9.1 The Bridge Youth Resource Centre

Krista Rempel, Executive Director, provided an update regarding The Bridge's Tiny Home Community

Krista Rempel, Executive Director, provided an update regarding The Bridge's Tiny Home Community.

Krista outlined plans for the next phase of the development that would offer a mix of market rate and affordable units to the community for residents 14 to 24 years of age.

It was noted that the new units will be accessible and energy efficient.

10. Communications

10.1 Correspondence

046-2025

Moved By Sherry Bondy

Seconded By Rob Shepley

That Essex County Council support correspondence received from Northumberland County dated January 31, 2025 regarding Deposit Return Program.

(Voted by Show of Hands)

Carried

047-2025

Moved By Larry Verbeke

Seconded By Crystal Meloche

That the correspondence listed on the Regular Agenda for February 19, 2025, be received and any noted action approved.

(Voted by show of hands)

Carried

10.1.1 Peterborough County

February 5, 2025 - US Imposition of Tariffs on Canadian Goods

10.1.2 Town of Hanover

February 5, 2025 - US Imposition of Tariffs on Canadian Goods

10.1.3 Northumberland County

January 31, 2025 - Deposit Return Program

10.1.4 Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO)

- AMO [Watchfile Newsletter](#)
- AMO [Policy Updates](#)
- AMO Calendar - [Education Events](#)

10.2 Resolutions

There were no resolutions for consideration for February 19, 2025

11. Consent Agenda

048-2025

Moved By Chris Gibb

Seconded By Michael Prue

That the recommendations in the Administrative Reports listed as items 11.1 and 11.2 on the Consent Agenda for February 19, 2025, be received and approved as required.

(Voted Electronically)

In Favour (14): Michael Akpata, Joe Bachetti, Tracey Bailey, Sherry Bondy, Kimberly DeYong, Chris Gibb, Hilda MacDonald, Gary McNamara, Crystal Meloche, Michael Prue, Rob Shepley, Larry Verbeke, Kirk Walstedt, and Tony Gaffan

Carried

11.1 2024 Statement of Councillors' Remuneration

Report number 2025-0219-FIN-R04-MR, 2024 Statement of Councillors' Remuneration, dated February 19, 2025

11.2 Summary of Outstanding Reports

Report number 2025-0219-LLS-R07-KH, Summary of Outstanding Reports, dated February 19, 2025 from Katherine Hebert, County Clerk

It was noted that there was a missing item from the Outstanding Reports list. Resolution 336-2024 regarding a report from Administration on the subject of IWE services, dated November 28, 2024 was omitted. Administration will update the report to include the missing item.

12. Reports and Questions

049-2025

Moved By Crystal Meloche

Seconded By Chris Gibb

That the order of business be amended so that agenda item 14.1 Invest Windsor-Essex - Rescind Previous Decision of Council and Approval of 2025 Budget for Invest Windsor-Essex, be considered prior to Item 12.1

(Voted by Show of Hands)

Carried

12.1 2025 Tax Policy Discussion and Recommendation

Report number 2025-0219-FIN-R07-MR, 2025 Tax Policy Discussion and Recommendation, dated February 19, 2025 from Melissa Ryan, Director, Financial Services/Treasurer

Melissa Ryan provided Council with the updated levy amount based on Council's resolutions under agenda item 14.1 regarding Invest Windsor Essex.

The County tax levy for 2025 is 3.61% with a dollar requirement of \$140,043,690

052-2025

Moved By Gary McNamara

Seconded By Larry Verbeke

That Essex County Council receive this report for information.

And further that Essex County Council adopt the tax ratios as set out in By-law 2025-07 for the 2025 taxation year;

And further that the Essex County Tax Assistance Program for Low-Income Seniors and Low-Income Persons with disabilities established under By-law 04-2004 and amended under By-law 2021-05 continue with no amendments;

And further that the Essex County Charity tax Rebate Program established under By-law 16-2007 continue with no amendments.

(Voted Electronically)

In Favour (14): Michael Akpata, Joe Bachetti, Tracey Bailey, Sherry Bondy, Kimberly DeYong, Chris Gibb, Hilda MacDonald, Gary McNamara, Crystal Meloche, Michael Prue, Rob Shepley, Larry Verbeke, Kirk Walstedt, and Tony Gaffan

Carried

12.2 Annual Credit Rating-Evaluation-Cost Benefit Analysis

Report number 2025-0219-FIN-R06-MR, Annual Credit Rating-Evaluation-Cost Benefit Analysis, dated February 19, 2025, from Melissa Ryan, Director, Financial Services/Treasurer

Melissa Ryan explained the process undertaken to investigate the cost-benefit analysis and impacts of undergoing the credit review and rating process each year.

It was noted that although the County is not currently borrowing regularly to meet financial and operational obligations, there are projects in the coming years that may require that borrowing is undertaken. There are significant financial obligations for the recently discussed County Roadway Expansion as well as the New Acute Care Hospital, to name a few.

053-2025

Moved By Crystal Meloche

Seconded By Sherry Bondy

That Essex County Council receive report number 2025-0219-06-FIN-MR, Annual Credit Rating Evaluation-Cost Benefit Analysis as information.

(Voted Electronically)

In Favour (14): Michael Akpata, Joe Bachetti, Tracey Bailey, Sherry Bondy, Kimberly DeYong, Chris Gibb, Hilda MacDonald, Gary McNamara, Crystal Meloche, Michael Prue, Rob Shepley, Larry Verbeke, Kirk Walstedt, and Tony Gaffan

Carried

12.3 Appointment of Auditors for the County of Essex

Report number 2025-0219-FIN-R05-MR, Appointment of Auditors for the County of Essex, dated February 19, 2025, from Melissa Ryan, Director, Financial Services/Treasurer

054-2025

Moved By Chris Gibb

Seconded By Tony Gaffan

That Essex County Council receive report number 2025-0219-FIN-R05-MR, Appointment of Auditor and;

That Essex County Council approve the re-appointment of KPMG LLP for a five-year period, commencing January 1, 2025, subject to renewal and confirmation by By-law, in accordance with the fees presented on pg.15 of Appendix A-KPMG Fee Proposal 2025-2029.

(Voted Electronically)

In Favour (14): Michael Akpata, Joe Bachetti, Tracey Bailey, Sherry Bondy, Kimberly DeYong, Chris Gibb, Hilda MacDonald, Gary McNamara, Crystal Meloche, Michael Prue, Rob Shepley, Larry Verbeke, Kirk Walstedt, and Tony Gaffan

Carried

12.4 Administration Building Renovations Phases

Report number 2025-0219-IPS-R05-AB, Administration Building Renovations Phases, dated February 19, 2025, from Allan Botham, Director, Infrastructure and Planning Services

Allan Botham provided Council with an update regarding the renovations to the County of Essex Administration Building that

began in 2011. The renovations that had been completed and that are currently underway, addressed outdated systems and provided enhancements to safety and accessibility features.

Current renovations were on the upper-floor and relate primarily to the meeting rooms. There still remain areas within the building which need to be brought up to code and modernized to suit the operations of the County, and those include the lobby spaces and basement areas.

It was noted that this type of report would be helpful if it were to be brought forward at the beginning of each term of Council.

055-2025

Moved By Gary McNamara

Seconded By Joe Bachetti

That Essex County Council receive report number 2025-0219-IPS-R05-AB, Administration Building Renovation Phases as information.

(Vote Electronically)

In Favour (14): Michael Akpata, Joe Bachetti, Tracey Bailey, Sherry Bondy, Kimberly DeYong, Chris Gibb, Hilda MacDonald, Gary McNamara, Crystal Meloche, Michael Prue, Rob Shepley, Larry Verbeke, Kirk Walstedt, and Tony Gaffan

Carried

13. Unfinished Business

There was no Unfinished Business for February 19, 2025

14. New Business

14.1 Invest Windsor-Essex - Rescind Previous Decision of Council and Approval of 2025 Budget for Invest Windsor-Essex

Members of Council discussed the resolution from the November 28, 2024 Budget meeting and information that had become available since that time.

It was noted that Invest WindsorEssex had begun the process of a Strategic Plan and it would be prudent for Administration to wait until the information from that process was available to provide Council with a fulsome report in Q3.

Whereas at its December 4, 2024 meeting County Council passed resolution number 337-2024 which was duly moved by Tracey Bailey and seconded by Sherry Bondy as follows:

That Essex County Council reduce the funding allocation to Invest WindsorEssex by 15% to \$953,750; and

That a letter be sent to the Board of Directors and the interim CEO advising them of the reduction.

Whereas that motion was carried by a vote of 8-6 in favour by members of County Council.

050-2025

Moved By Joe Bachetti

Seconded By Gary McNamara

That Essex County Council resolution # 337-2024 which states '*That Essex County Council reduce the funding allocation to Invest Windsor Essex by 15% to \$953,750*', be rescinded.

(Voted Electronically)

In Favour (8): Michael Akpata, Joe Bachetti, Chris Gibb, Hilda MacDonald, Gary McNamara, Crystal Meloche, Michael Prue, and Larry Verbeke

Opposed (6): Tracey Bailey, Sherry Bondy, Kimberly DeYong, Rob Shepley, Kirk Walstedt, and Tony Gaffan

Carried

051-2025

Moved By Joe Bachetti

Seconded By Gary McNamara

That Essex County Council approve 2025 funding of Invest Windsor Essex at the originally proposed level of \$1,122,060, with the difference of \$168,310 between the original proposed funding level and the amount included in the Budget being added to the County's tax levy for 2025, and with Invest Windsor Essex being advised that the County requires that Invest Windsor Essex complete its strategic plan in 2025.

(Voted Electronically)

In Favour (8): Michael Akpata, Joe Bachetti, Chris Gibb, Hilda MacDonald, Gary McNamara, Crystal Meloche, Michael Prue, and Larry Verbeke

Opposed (6): Tracey Bailey, Sherry Bondy, Kimberly DeYong, Rob Shepley, Kirk Walstedt, and Tony Gaffan

Carried

14.2 Removal of Interprovincial Trade Barriers

Whereas the recent threats of an imposition of tariffs on Canadian production would have had a substantial effect on the items produced in the County of Essex.

And that there has only been granted a 30-day reprieve before they may be implemented.

And that these tariffs were going to be applied by another country and therefore can be deemed as being external to the Province and the Country.

And Whereby the Internal trade has been deemed by the Canadian Federation of Independent business (CFIB) to represent 18 % of Canada's GDP. And that in July, the CFIB released a report that said removing interprovincial barriers could boost the economy by up to \$200 billion annually. And that items produced, grown, and manufactured in Essex County are sent across Canada and are in many cases subject to these interprovincial barriers.

056-2025

Moved By Michael Akpata

Seconded By Crystal Meloche

That the County of Essex call upon both the Provincial and Federal Government to eliminate inter provincial trade barriers to ensure that items produced in the County of Essex can move without barriers freely across the country; and

that a letter be sent to Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO), Western Ontario Warden's Caucus (WOWC), Eastern Ontario Ontario Warden's Caucus (EOWC) and all Local MP's and MPPs for support.

(Voted Electronically)

In Favour (14): Michael Akpata, Joe Bachetti, Tracey Bailey, Sherry Bondy, Kimberly DeYong, Chris Gibb, Hilda MacDonald, Gary McNamara, Crystal Meloche, Michael Prue, Rob Shepley, Larry Verbeke, Kirk Walstedt, and Tony Gaffan

Carried

14.3 Buy Canadian Procurement Strategy

Whereas the recent threats of an imposition of tariffs on Canadian production would have had a substantial effect on the items produced in the County of Essex.

And that there has only been granted a 30-day reprieve before they may be implemented.

And that these tariffs were going to be applied by another country and therefore can be deemed as being external to the Province and the Country. And that the County of Essex, the Province of Ontario, and Canada as a whole has a widely diverse economic base.

And that much like any other 2 tier system the County of Essex is a consumer of both goods and services.

057-2025

Moved By Michael Akpata

Seconded By Chris Gibb

That the County of Essex begin the process to examine the viability of beginning a "Buy Canadian Procurement strategy" And that as part of the strategy Canadian content is reviewed and percentages of Canadian content are clearly defined as part of the procurement; and,

That the County of Essex clearly define the term "Canadian Content" for the purposes of procurement of both goods and services.

(Voted Electronically)

In Favour (14): Michael Akpata, Joe Bachetti, Tracey Bailey, Sherry Bondy, Kimberly DeYong, Chris Gibb, Hilda MacDonald, Gary McNamara, Crystal Meloche, Michael Prue, Rob Shepley, Larry Verbeke, Kirk Walstedt, and Tony Gaffan

Carried

15. Adoption of By-Laws

058-2025

Moved By Joe Bachetti

Seconded By Tracey Bailey

That By-laws 2025-06 through 2025-08, be given three readings, and having been read a first, second and third time, be finally passed and enacted.

(Voted Electronically)

In Favour (14): Michael Akpata, Joe Bachetti, Tracey Bailey, Sherry Bondy, Kimberly DeYong, Chris Gibb, Hilda MacDonald, Gary McNamara, Crystal Meloche, Michael Prue, Rob Shepley, Larry Verbeke, Kirk Walstedt, and Tony Gaffan

Carried

15.1 By-law Number 2025-06

Being a By-law to Appoint Auditors of the Corporation of the County of Essex for the five-year period commencing for the fiscal year ended December 31, 2025

15.2 By-law Number 2025-07

Being a By-law to Establish Tax Policy and Levy Property Taxes for the year 2025

15.3 By-law Number 2025-08

Being a by-law to Confirm the Proceedings of the Council of the Corporation of the County of Essex for the Regular Meeting held February 19, 2025

16. Notice of Motion

There were no Notices of Motion brought forward for February 19, 2025.

17. Adjournment

059-2025

Moved By Kimberly DeYong

Seconded By Crystal Meloche

That the Essex County Council meeting for February 19, 2025 be adjourned at 8:11 PM.

(Voted by show of hands)

Carried

Hilda MacDonald,
Warden, County of Essex

Katherine J. Hebert,
County Clerk