



Essex County Council Special Meeting Minutes

**Thursday, September 5, 2024
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, Deputy Mayor, Town of LaSalle
Joe Bachetti, Deputy Warden / Deputy Mayor, Town of Tecumseh
Tracey Bailey, Mayor, Municipality of Lakeshore
Sherry Bondy, Mayor, Town of Essex
Kimberly DeYong, Deputy Mayor, Town of Kingsville
Chris Gibb, Deputy Mayor, Town of Amherstburg
Hilda MacDonald, Warden / Mayor, Municipality of Leamington
Gary McNamara, Mayor, Town of Tecumseh
Crystal Meloche, Mayor, Town of LaSalle
Michael Prue, Mayor, Town of Amherstburg
Dennis Rogers, Mayor, Town of Kingsville
Rob Shepley, Deputy Mayor, Town of Essex
Larry Verbeke, Deputy Mayor, Municipality of Leamington
Kirk Walstedt, Deputy Mayor, Municipality of Lakeshore

Administration: Allan Botham, Director, Infrastructure & Planning Services
Katherine Hebert, County Clerk
Don McArthur, Manager, Communication and Organizational Development
Crystal Sylvestre, Coordinator, Legislative and Community Services
Sandra Zwiers, Chief Administrative Officer
Rebecca Belanger, Manager of Planning Services
Dee Blais, Administrative Assistant to the CAO

1. Recording of Attendance

Warden MacDonald and members of Council attended the meeting at the Essex County Civic Centre, Council Chambers.

2. Indigenous Land Acknowledgement

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.

3. Disclosure of Pecuniary Interest

There were no disclosures of pecuniary interest raised.

4. County Warden's Welcome and Remarks

The Warden welcomed attendees and highlighted that the meeting aimed to gather feedback on the draft of the County's new Official Plan, a key policy document.

Initiated in 2022, the plan review incorporated extensive research and public input. It was designed to guide the significant growth expected from major economic investments, ensuring Essex County remains a desirable place to live, work, and play.

Warden MacDonald thanked staff and the community for their contributions to the process.

5. Official Plan Review

Essex County Council held a statutory public meeting, pursuant to Section 26(3) of the Planning Act, R.S.O., 1990, as amended, for the purpose of discussing the proposed new Official Plan.

The Public Meeting was intended to provide an opportunity for the public to offer comments regarding the draft of the new Official Plan.

The long-term prosperity, health and well-being of residents living and working in Essex County would, to a large degree, be shaped by the land use, transportation, growth management, environmental, housing and fiscal policies that were incorporated as part of the County of Essex Official Plan. It was one of the most important policy documents that County Council adopts, and contains a broad range of goals and policies that guide and provide direction to landowners, business owners, and the community at large pertaining to how growth was managed and resources were protected.

The Planning Act required that an Official Plan conform with provincial plans or that it did not conflict with them; had regard to matters of provincial interest; was consistent with provincial policy statements; and addressed recent legislative changes. Considering the timing of the approval of the current Official Plan, the introduction of a 2020 Provincial Policy Statement and amendments to the Planning Act, R.S.O., 1990, the County underwent a comprehensive review to prepare the new Official Plan.

5.1. Introductory Remarks

Opening remarks and introductions were provided by Rebecca Belanger, Manager, Planning Services-County of Essex; Mary Lou Tanner and Larry Silani, Planning Consultants-NPG Planning Solutions

Rebecca Belanger explained that the Official Plan Review, initiated in 2022, was an extensive process that included significant public input and collaboration with the County's seven local municipal partners. Rebecca noted that all input from the meeting as well as information received at other public meetings would be incorporated into the final version of the plan, which would be presented to Council at a meeting in the near future.

Mary Lou Tanner provided an overview of the development process for the draft Official Plan. The three-phase project began with a population forecast to quantify the County's expected growth.

The draft document, available on the County's website for months, outlined key components such as housing, employment, infrastructure, and mobility.

The draft plan integrates sustainable growth principles, focusing on primary settlement areas, agricultural land use, and protecting natural heritage. New policies would be introduced to enhance community development, support the economy, and secure tourism. Infrastructure and transportation services were emphasized as vital for mobility, and climate change mitigation strategies were included to address risks like flooding.

This comprehensive effort, which also involved reconciliation and engagement with First Nations and Métis communities, represented a collaborative approach, ensuring that Essex County would remain a vibrant, welcoming place to live, work, and play.

6. **Delegations and Presentations**

6.1. James Sylvestre Investments Ltd.

225-2024

Moved By Gary McNamara

Seconded By Joe Bachetti

That William Pol, representative of James Sylvestre Investments Ltd. be permitted to address County Council.

(Voted by show of hands)

Carried

William Pol, MCIP, RPP, Pol Associates Inc. provided a presentation regarding requesting a change in the County Structure Plan to change the Official Plan land use designation at:

- 483 Renaud Line, Lakeshore, from Agricultural Area to Urban Area;
- 1241 County Road 2 plus two smaller parcels to the west, Lakeshore, from Hamlet Area to Agricultural Area.

The request to alter the land use designation on the two parcels was outlined, and it was noted that there would be no impact to the available building footprint for the County as the two parcels would essentially result in no change to either designation.

Mr. Pol noted that reclassifying the Rochester/Deerbrook from secondary settlement area to agricultural land was appropriate due to its Class 1 status and potential for environmental constraints like flooding.

In exchange, designating the Renaud Line Road parcel as Urban rather than Agricultural would provide an opportunity for development. Pol noted that this site, adjacent to the Atlas Tube Recreation Centre, offered better infrastructure, access to services, and development potential.

This proposal was submitted for consideration as part of the ongoing review process for the Official Plan as an opportunity to manage growth sustainably across Essex County.

6.2. John DeMarco

226-2024

Moved By Kimberly DeYong

Seconded By Chris Gibb

That John DeMarco, Essex County resident, be permitted to make a presentation to County Council.

(Voted by show of hands)

Carried

John Demarco expressed concerns about insufficient information and consultation throughout the review process, and suggested creating a summary document to outline what was changing versus what remains the same. The importance of preserving the natural environment and seizing this opportunity to restore it was emphasised and advocacy for a "landscape with a vision", drawing inspiration from projects like the Rouge National Urban Park which connects green spaces and natural areas in the Toronto area. The delegation further called for interim measures to strengthen environmental protection during the review process.

6.3. Giovanni Abati

227-2024

Moved By Michael Akpata

Seconded By Larry Verbeke

That Giovanni Abati, Essex County resident, be permitted to make a presentation to County Council.

(Voted by show of hands)

Carried

Giovanni Abati expressed concerns about the review process and emphasized the need to protect coastlands and wetlands by promoting the development of natural heritage network to enhance air quality, link natural areas, and plant trees.

6.4. Judy Wellwood-Robson

228-2024

Moved By Kirk Walstedt

Seconded By Tracey Bailey

That Judy Wellwood-Robson, Essex County resident, be permitted to make a presentation to County Council.

(Voted by show of hands)

Carried

Judy Wellwood Robson expressed concerns about the Essex County Official Plan's emphasis on employment growth in the Oldcastle area at the expense of residential development and objected to the plan's focus as an employment-only region for Oldcastle, which conflicts with the Provincial Policy Statement direction for complete communities.

An emphasis was placed on the need for balanced growth, the inclusion of residential development and the creation of a community where people can live, work, and interact.

6.5. Canada South Land Trust

229-2024

Moved By Chris Gibb

Seconded By Michael Prue

That Patricia McGorman, Chair, Canada South Land Trust, be permitted to make a presentation to County Council.

(Voted by show of hands)

Carried

Patricia McGorman expressed concerns about the state of the environment and emphasized the importance of protecting wetlands. She further noted the significance of the upcoming Provincial Planning Statement on October 20, 2024 and highlighted the unique opportunities for Essex County to develop its lands responsibly.

McGorman stressed the need to preserve the region's limited remaining wetlands by creating natural linkages and protecting water intake zones and urged planners to implement forward-thinking environmental strategies.

7. **Communications**

7.1. Correspondence

230-2024

Moved By Crystal Meloche

Seconded By Larry Verbeke

That the correspondence listed on the regular agenda for September 5, 2024 Special meeting of Essex County Council, be received as information.

(Voted by show of hands)

Carried

7.1.1 Notice of Public Meeting: Proposed New Official Plan

August 9, 2024 - [Notice to the public](#)

7.1.2 Lower Thames Valley Conservation Authority

August 21, 2024 Letter RE Essex County OP, August 2024 Draft

7.1.3 Judy Wellwood-Robson

July 16, 2024 Email Correspondence from Judy Wellwood-Robson RE Official Plan wording

8. **Reports and Questions**

8.1. Statutory Public Meeting to hear comments on the Draft County of Essex Official Plan

Report Number 2024-0905-IPS-R20-RB, Statutory Public Meeting to hear comments on the Draft County of Essex Official Plan, from Rebecca Belanger, Manager, Planning Services, dated September 05, 2024

Rebecca Belanger explained that the next steps in the process will be to review the information provided at the meeting and consider each before the plan's final adoption. A detailed summary of all feedback and recommendations will be presented to County Council on October 16, 2024 to outline the analysis undertaken for the feedback received.

Discussion took place regarding the importance of protecting the natural environment of the County of Essex and the information shared by the delegations.

231-2024

Moved By Gary McNamara

Seconded By Joe Bachetti

That Essex County Council receive report number 2024-0905-IPS-R20-RB, Statutory Public Meeting to hear comments on the Draft County of Essex Official Plan and direct administration to summarize the comments received at this public meeting in a report back to County Council.

(Voted Electronically)

Carried

9. Adoption of By-Laws

232-2024

Moved By Crystal Meloche

Seconded By Chris Gibb

That By-law 2024-41 be given three readings, and having been read a first, second and third time, be finally passed and enacted.

(Voted Electronically)

Carried

9.1 By-law Number 2024-41

Being a By-law to confirm the proceedings of the Council of Corporation of the County of Essex for September 5, 2024.

10. Adjournment

233-2024

Moved By Kimberly DeYong

Seconded By Tracey Bailey

That the Essex County Council Special meeting for September 5, 2024 be adjourned at 7:32 PM.

(Voted by show of hands)

Carried

Hilda MacDonald
Warden - County of Essex

Katherine J. Hebert
County Clerk

Date Signed