



Essex County Library Board Regular Meeting Minutes

(also available at www.essexcountylibrary.ca under About the Library)

Wednesday, July 30, 2025

**Council Chambers, 2nd Floor
360 Fairview Avenue West
Essex, Ontario N8M 1Y6**

Mission

Essex County Library welcomes you to a world of discovery, creativity and lifelong learning through accessible resources, programs, and innovative services.

Vision

ECL strives to welcome a diverse community to a warm and inviting space where:

- Knowledgeable staff are sensitive to the needs and aspirations of the community
- Innovative ideas and cutting-edge technology are embraced
- Engaging programs and current comprehensive collections are created
- Creative partnerships encourage social interaction and cultural vitality

Members:

Joe Bachetti, Chair
Tracey Bailey
Sherry Bondy, Vice Chair
Terry Burns
Chris Gibb
Heather Latam
Lauren Segedin

Administration:

Bianca Batto, Coordinator HR
Adam Craig, Chief Librarian/C.E.O.
Manuela Denes, Manager, Community Services
Grant Munroe, Manager, Public Services

Natalie Hatch, Manager, Support Services

6:00 PM Regular Meeting

1. Land Acknowledgement

We begin by acknowledging that 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 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.

2. Recording of Attendance

All members attended the meeting in Council Chambers.

3. Approval of the Agenda

25/26

Moved by Mr. Gibb

Seconded by Mr. Burns

That the Agenda be accepted as distributed.

Carried

4. Adoption of Regular Meeting Minutes

25/27

Moved by Ms. Segedin

Seconded by Ms. Latam

That the minutes of the June 25, 2025 Regular Meeting of Essex County Library Board be adopted as presented.

Carried

5. Consent Agenda

A) Chief Executive Officer's Report

Branch Updates & Key Initiatives

Two major projects are currently in focus: the reopening of the Stoney Point branch and the opening of the new Cottam location.

The Stoney Point branch is nearly ready, with only a few remaining odds and ends to finalize. While there is no official reopening date yet, communication with the Town of Lakeshore is in progress to confirm one in the near future.

The Cottam branch opening has faced delays due to contractor-related issues. Preparations for the move began in mid-August, but an official opening date has yet to be confirmed. Coordination with the Town will also include plans for a grand opening celebration. The current Cottam branch will remain open until the last possible moment to ensure service continuity. Although there were past concerns about the new branch's size, those concerns have now been resolved.

Programs & Community Engagement

The Municipal Reading Challenge continues to gain traction online. The figures included in the most recent report are now outdated—Essex and Tecumseh are currently in the lead as of today's date.

Program attendance saw an increase in June, with numbers rising from 7,500 in May to 8,100 in June. The branches with the highest program participation were Leamington, Tecumseh, and Kingsville. Circulation is also expected to rebound in July, largely due to participation in the Summer Reading Program.

IT & Service Improvements

Staff are actively supporting the rollout of the Green Bin Program in partnership with EWSWA, with promotional materials now available in branches to help raise awareness.

The IT department recently launched a new platform that allows patrons to book book club kits online, specifically for private book clubs run through the library. Additionally, IT is preparing to launch an internal ticketing system that will enable staff to report tech issues and receive support more efficiently.

25/28

Moved by Ms. Segedin
Seconded by Mr. Burns

That the Board receive the consent items: CEO report for information.

Carried

6. Reports

A) Branch Closure Report

There has been a fairly serious trend of weather-related closures in 2025. While the report focuses solely on closures that occurred this year, it's important to note that there have been sporadic climate-related closures since 2022. However, 2025 has been a record-breaking year, with **nine closures to date**, primarily due to extreme heat impacting branch conditions.

The closures are triggered when indoor temperatures exceed the acceptable threshold—currently set at **79°F (26°C) for a duration of three hours**. In most cases, equipment malfunction is the root cause. A notable example is the Amherstburg branch: while the air conditioning unit is functioning, the building itself is unable to maintain a cool temperature. As of today, the AC unit has been replaced, but given the building is over 100 years old, structural limitations appear to be contributing to the ongoing issue.

We are actively monitoring the situation and tracking staff movement and hours closely. When thresholds are reached, staff are reassigned to alternate locations to complete their shifts. This process is being documented thoroughly to ensure transparency and support future planning.

While closures at the Comber branch were isolated incidents that have since been addressed, the primary concern remains the Amherstburg branch.

Mr. Gibb has recommended that, at the end of the season, a motion be passed to send a formal letter and summary report to the Town of Amherstburg. The letter would outline the recurring issues and emphasize the operational impacts of these closures on both staff and service delivery.

25/29

Moved by Ms. Bailey

Seconded by Mr. Burns

That the Board receive the Branch Closure Report for information.

Carried

B) Branch Update – Town of Essex

This report provides an overview of activity and trends at the Essex, Harrow, and McGregor branches.

Circulation and Program Attendance

Circulation at both the Essex and Harrow branches is trending upward and showing encouraging signs of returning to pre-pandemic levels. In contrast, the McGregor branch has experienced a plateau in both circulation and program attendance. However, these figures remain within expected statistical norms.

Membership Trends

Overall membership rates have fluctuated across all branches in 2025. Earlier in the year, we saw both increases and decreases in reported numbers due to changes in how memberships were being counted in the Sirsi system. Despite that adjustment, year-to-date statistics show membership trends are once again on the rise.

Essex Branch: Challenges and Successes

The Essex branch is currently facing three key challenges:

- 1. Facility Condition:**

The branch operates out of an aging facility, which contributes to recurring maintenance and infrastructure issues. That said, the Town of Essex has been responsive when facility concerns are raised.

- 2. Changing Patron Usage:**

There has been a noticeable shift in how patrons use the space. Increasingly, people of all ages are visiting the branch to lounge, study, or take part in tutoring sessions. This evolving usage is raising questions about whether current furnishings and layouts adequately support these new needs.

- 3. Furniture and Space Needs:**

Much of the existing furniture is aging and in need of replacement or reupholstering. Planning is underway to address these updates to better accommodate patrons.

Despite these challenges, the Essex branch has seen several successes. One highlight is the Adult Crafternoon Program, which brings community members together once a month for a hands-on crafting activity. This program, along with both adult and children's programming, has seen increased participation.

Harrow and McGregor Branch Highlights

At the Harrow branch, access to materials remains a concern due to shelving constraints, but steps are being taken to address this. One staff member was recently recognized with an honourable mention in an internal recognition initiative—highlighting their exceptional contribution. A shelving expansion has also been completed to improve access to materials for all patrons.

The McGregor branch continues to serve the community well. While activity has plateaued, usage remains consistent, and the branch is maintaining strong community connections.

25/30

Moved by Mr. Gibb
Seconded by Ms. Latam

That the Board receive the Branch Report for information.

Carried

C) Health and Safety Policy Report

Recent changes to Occupational Health & Safety legislation have introduced new requirements related to the cleaning of washroom facilities.

As of July 1, 2025, it is mandatory to document the frequency of washroom cleanings. While the requirement to publicly post these records does not come into effect until January 1, 2026, posting has already been implemented at all branches as a proactive measure to support transparency and compliance.

These changes are part of ongoing efforts to maintain consistent hygiene standards across all public facilities. Additional updates or recordkeeping templates will be shared as necessary.

25/31

Moved by Mr. Burns
Seconded by Mr. Gibb

That the Board receive the Health and Safety Report for information; and, approve the Washroom Facility Cleaning and Maintenance policy.

Carried

D) Operational Policy Report

In coordination with the County's legal team, updates have been made to address gaps in existing policy language.

The communications policy has been revised to expand its scope. It now covers all forms of public communication and clearly defines who is authorized to speak on behalf of the library. This change supports consistency in messaging and ensures accountability in external communications.

The code of conduct has also been updated to broaden its application. It now explicitly applies to staff, volunteers, and board members. In addition, clearer processes for addressing violations have been included. These updates help reduce the risk of mixed messaging and provide management with clear guidance for handling concerns or infractions.

25/32

Moved by Mr. Gibb
Seconded by Mr. Burns

That the Board receive the Operational Policy Report for information; and, approve the Communications and Media policy and the Code of Conduct policy.

Carried

7. Communication

A) Mr. Bachetti expressed his thanks to the members involved in the CEO performance appraisal. The final appraisal will be shared with the board in the near future.

8. New Business

A) Motion

There were no motions.

B) Notice of Motion

There was no notice of motion.

9. Date and Location of Next Meeting

Date: Wednesday, September 24, 2025

Location: Council Chambers, County of Essex Administration Building

10. Adjournment

Upon motion of Ms. Segedin and Mr. Gibb, the Chair declared the meeting adjourned at 6:39 PM.



Joe Bachetti
Chair – Essex County Library Board



Adam Craig
CEO/Chief Librarian, Essex County Library
Secretary and Treasurer to the Board