



Essex County Council, Regular Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, December 3, 2025

9:00 AM

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
Dennis Rogers, Councillor
Rob Shepley, Councillor
Larry Verbeke, Councillor
Kirk Walstedt, Councillor

Administration:

Allan Botham, Director, Infrastructure & Planning Services
Katherine Hebert, County Clerk
Justin Lammers, Chief, Essex-Windsor EMS
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
Rebecca Belanger, Manager, Planning Services

Adam Craig, CEO and Chief Librarian, Essex County Library
Jeanie Diamond Francis, Manager, Community Services
Heidi McLeod, Manager, Accounting - Administration / Deputy Treasurer
Claire Bebbington, Deputy County Solicitor
Natasha Sheeler, Director, Health and Community Services/Administrator

1. Call to Order

Warden MacDonald called the meeting to order at 9:00 AM.

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 County of Essex Administration Building, Council Chambers.

6. County Warden's Welcome and Remarks

Warden MacDonald welcomed Council, administration and guests to the 2026 Budget Deliberation meeting.

The Warden expressed gratitude to County Administration for bringing forward the proposed 2026 Budget in response to the strategic priorities set by Council and while being mindful of the challenging economic climate and maintaining service levels.

7. Disclosure of Pecuniary Interest

There were no disclosures of pecuniary interest raised.

8. Adoption of Minutes

There were no minutes for consideration.

9. Delegations and Presentations

There were no delegations or presentations for December 3, 2025.

10. Communications

10.1. Correspondence

346-2025

Moved By Larry Verbeke

Seconded By Crystal Meloche

That the correspondence listed on the Regular Agenda for December 3, 2025, be received.

Carried

10.1.1. The Thrive Network

2025-11-28 Letter of Support for Continued Funding of the Essex County Homelessness Hub (ECH2) Overnight Program, received via Contact Council

10.2. Resolutions

There were no resolutions for consideration for December 3, 2025.

11. Consent Agenda

347-2025

Moved By Gary McNamara

Seconded By Chris Gibb

That the recommendations included in the reports listed as items 11.1 and 11.2 on the Consent Agenda for December 3, 2025, be approved.

Carried

11.1.2025 County of Essex Credit Rating - Standard & Poor's

Report number 2025-1203-FIN-R28-MR, 2025 County of Essex Credit Rating - Standard & Poor's, dated December 3, 2025, from Melissa Ryan, Director, Financial Services/Treasurer

11.2. County Administration Building Ground Floor Renovation

Report number 2025-1203-IPS-R28-AB, County Administration Building Ground Floor Renovation, dated December 3, 2025, from Allan Botham, Director, Infrastructure and Planning Services.

12. Reports and Questions

12.1. Chief Administrative Officer's Summary - 2026 County of Essex Budget

Sandra Zwiers, Chief Administrative Officer provided remarks regarding the development and planning of the 2026 County of Essex Budget.

Sandra Zwiers provided an expression of gratitude to Council for their continued support of Administration, and to Administration for working to provide a fiscally responsible budget that supports the County's overall operation and presents a budget in line with service demands.

12.1.1. County of Essex 2026 Advocacy Priorities

Report number 2025-1203-CAO-R12-SZ, County of Essex 2026 Advocacy Priorities, dated December 3, 2025, from Sandra Zwiers, Chief Administrative Officer.

Sandra Zwiers outlined the five priorities of the 2026 program that would guide coordinated advocacy efforts at the provincial and federal levels and through municipal partnerships, ensuring that the County advances issues critical to regional growth, sustainability, and service delivery.

Next steps would include actioning the priorities on the County's website and social media along with partnering with allied organizations to bring forward a collective voice for action.

348-2025

Moved By Dennis Rogers

Seconded By Crystal Meloche

That Essex County Council receive report number 2025-1203-CAO-R12-SZ, County of Essex 2026 Advocacy Priorities as information and direct Administration to integrate the endorsed priorities into the County's Advocacy Strategy and 2026 Advocacy Calendar.

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

Carried

12.2.2026 Budget Overview - Treasurer's Report

Report Number 2025-1203-FIN-R34-MR, 2026 Budget Overview - Treasurer's Report, dated December 3, 2025 from Melissa Ryan, Director, Financial Services/Treasurer

Melissa Ryan thanked the Financial Services Team for their commitment to the budget process.

The 2026 budget was introduced as a fiscally lean, responsible and sustainable budget that maintained service levels by aligning funding with council priorities and public expectations.

Managing inflation, increasing costs of goods and demographic growth were challenges requiring planned funding to maintain stability and plan for the future.

349-2025

Moved By Joe Bachetti

Seconded By Crystal Meloche

That Essex County Council receive report number 2025-1203-FIN-R35-MR, 2026 Budget Overview- Treasurer's Report, as information; and,

That the 2026 Budget package be received for public deliberation.

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

Carried

12.3.2026 Budget - Community Services/Residential Services Homes

David Sundin, Director, Legislative and Legal Services/County Solicitor, Natasha Sheeler, Director Health and Community Services/Sun Parlor Home Administrator, and Jeanie Diamond-Francis, Manager, Community Services, provided a presentation regarding the Community Services/Residential Services Homes 2026 Budget Estimates.

350-2025

Moved By Tracey Bailey

Seconded By Dennis Rogers

That the presentation for the proposed 2026 Community Services/Residential Services Homes budget be received and further that the 2026 Budget Estimates for Community Services/Residential Services Homes be Received and Approved; provided the City of Windsor increase the per diem rate as well.

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

Carried

12.4.2026 Budget - Sun Parlor Home

Natasha Sheeler, Director, Health and Community Services/Sun Parlor Home Administrator, provided a presentation regarding the Sun Parlor Home 2026 Budget Estimates.

351-2025

Moved By Michael Prue

Seconded By Kimberly DeYong

That the presentation for the proposed 2026 Sun Parlor Home budget be received and further that the 2026 Budget Estimates for Sun Parlor Home be Received and Approved.

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

Carried

352-2025

Moved By Crystal Meloche

Seconded By Michael Akpata

That Essex County Council recess until 10:45 AM.

Carried

The Warden called the meeting back to order at 10:45 AM.

12.5.2026 Budget - Essex-Windsor Emergency Medical Services

Justin Lammers, Chief, Essex-Windsor Emergency Medical Services, provided a presentation regarding the Essex-Windsor Emergency Medical Services 2026 Budget.

353-2025

Moved By Kimberly DeYong

Seconded By Crystal Meloche

That the presentation for the proposed 2026 Essex-Windsor Emergency Medical Services budget be received and further that the 2026 Budget Estimates for Essex-Windsor Emergency Medical Services be Received and Approved.

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

Carried

12.6.2026 Budget - Infrastructure and Planning Services

Allan Botham, Director, Infrastructure and Planning Services provided a presentation regarding the 2026 Infrastructure and Planning Services Budget Estimates; and Rebecca Belanger, Manager, Planning Services, provided a presentation regarding the 2026 Planning Services Budget Estimates.

354-2025

Moved By Chris Gibb

Seconded By Dennis Rogers

That the presentation for the proposed 2026 Infrastructure and Planning Services budget be received and further that the 2026 Budget Estimates for Infrastructure and Planning Services be Received and Approved.

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

Carried

355-2025

Moved By Crystal Meloche

Seconded By Michael Prue

That Essex County Council recess until 12:48 PM.

Carried

The Warden called the meeting back to order at 1:00 PM.

12.7.2026 Budget - Essex County Library Board

Adam Craig, Chief Librarian/Chief Executive Officer, provided a presentation regarding the Essex County Library 2026 Budget Estimates.

356-2025

Moved By Sherry Bondy

Seconded By Joe Bachetti

That the presentation for the proposed 2026 Essex County Library Board budget be received and further that the 2026 Budget Estimates for Essex County Library Board be Received and Approved.

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

Carried

Dennis Rogers, Councillor left the meeting at 1:35 pm.

12.8.2026 Budget - General Government Services

Melissa Ryan, Director, Financial Services/Treasurer, provided a presentation regarding an overview of the General Government Services 2026 Budget Estimates.

- David Sundin, Director, Legal and Legislative Services/County Solicitor provided a presentation regarding the 2026 Legislative and Legal Services Departmental Budget as well as the 2026 Council Budget.

2025-12-03 Essex County Council, Regular Meeting (2026 Budget Deliberations) - Minutes

- Melissa Ryan, Director, Financial Services/Treasurer, provided a presentation regarding the 2026 Financial Services Departmental Budget.
- Darrel Laurendeau, Director, Information Technology Services, provided a presentation regarding the 2026 Information Technology Services Departmental Budget.
- Danielle Dunlop, Interim Director, Human Resources, provided a presentation regarding the 2026 Human Resources Departmental Budget.

357-2025

Moved By Kirk Walstedt

Seconded By Gary McNamara

That Essex County Council reduce the proposed line item 10-560-1101 of the General Government - Council Services budget to maintain the 2025 level.

In Favour (13): Michael Akpata, Joe Bachetti, Tracey Bailey, Sherry Bondy, Kimberly DeYong, Chris Gibb, Hilda MacDonald, Gary McNamara, Crystal Meloche, Michael Prue, Rob Shepley, Larry Verbeke, and Kirk Walstedt

Carried

358-2025

Moved By Larry Verbeke

Seconded By Chris Gibb

That the presentation for the proposed 2026 General Government budget be received and further that the 2026 Budget Estimates for General Government be Received and Approved, as amended.

In Favour (13): Michael Akpata, Joe Bachetti, Tracey Bailey, Sherry Bondy, Kimberly DeYong, Chris Gibb, Hilda MacDonald, Gary McNamara, Crystal Meloche, Michael Prue, Rob Shepley, Larry Verbeke, and Kirk Walstedt

Carried

12.9.2026 Budget - External Commitments

Melissa Ryan, Director, Financial Services/Treasurer, provided a presentation regarding the 2026 External Commitments Budget Estimates.

359-2025

Moved By Gary McNamara

Seconded By Michael Prue

That the Essex County budget be adjusted to reflect the 2025 contribution to the New Windsor Essex Hospital System Reserve to be the sum of \$7,040,000.

In Favour (12): Michael Akpata, Joe Bachetti, Tracey Bailey, Sherry Bondy, Kimberly DeYong, Chris Gibb, Hilda MacDonald, Gary McNamara, Crystal Meloche, Michael Prue, Larry Verbeke, and Kirk Walstedt

Opposed (1): Rob Shepley

Carried

360-2025

Moved By Michael Prue

Seconded By Joe Bachetti

That the presentation for the 2026 proposed External Commitments budget be received and, that the 2026 Budget Estimates for External Commitments be Received and Approved, as amended.

In Favour (13): Michael Akpata, Joe Bachetti, Tracey Bailey, Sherry Bondy, Kimberly DeYong, Chris Gibb, Hilda MacDonald, Gary McNamara, Crystal Meloche, Michael Prue, Rob Shepley, Larry Verbeke, and Kirk Walstedt

Carried

12.10. 2026 Final Budget

361-2025

Moved By Kimberly DeYong

Seconded By Joe Bachetti

That the Room G28 Safety and Efficiency Project be added to the 2026 General Government - Corporate Management budget as outlined on Line 19 of the Appendix III of the Treasurer's Report.

In Favour (11): Michael Akpata, Joe Bachetti, Sherry Bondy, Kimberly DeYong, Chris Gibb, Hilda MacDonald, Gary McNamara, Crystal Meloche, Rob Shepley, Larry Verbeke, and Kirk Walstedt

Opposed (2): Tracey Bailey, and Michael Prue

Carried

362-2025

Moved By Crystal Meloche

Seconded By Kimberly DeYong

That the County Administration Building Generator Study be added to the 2026 Infrastructure and Planning Services budget as outlined on Line 18 of the Appendix III of the Treasurer's Report.

In Favour (11): Michael Akpata, Joe Bachetti, Sherry Bondy, Kimberly DeYong, Chris Gibb, Hilda MacDonald, Gary McNamara, Crystal Meloche, Michael Prue, Larry Verbeke, and Kirk Walstedt

Opposed (2): Tracey Bailey, and Rob Shepley

Carried

363-2025

Moved By Crystal Meloche

Seconded By Kimberly DeYong

That the County Administration Building Summer Humidity Investigation be added to the 2026 Infrastructure and Planning Services budget as outlined on Line 23 of the Appendix III of the Treasurer's Report.

In Favour (10): Michael Akpata, Joe Bachetti, Sherry Bondy, Kimberly DeYong, Chris Gibb, Hilda MacDonald, Gary McNamara, Crystal Meloche, Michael Prue, and Larry Verbeke

Opposed (3): Tracey Bailey, Rob Shepley, and Kirk Walstedt

Carried

364-2025

Moved By Crystal Meloche

Seconded By Kimberly DeYong

That the County Administration Building West to South Sidewalk be added to the 2026 Infrastructure and Planning Services budget as outlined on Line 24 of the Appendix III of the Treasurer's Report.

In Favour (8): Michael Akpata, Joe Bachetti, Sherry Bondy, Kimberly DeYong, Hilda MacDonald, Gary McNamara, Crystal Meloche, and Larry Verbeke

Opposed (5): Tracey Bailey, Chris Gibb, Michael Prue, Rob Shepley, and Kirk Walstedt

Carried

365-2025

Moved By Chris Gibb

Seconded By Crystal Meloche

That the Community Programs Coordinator be added to the 2026 Essex-Windsor EMS budget as outlined on Line 1 of the Appendix III of the Treasurer's Report, to be divided in accordance with the weighted assessment formula.

In Favour (10): Michael Akpata, Joe Bachetti, Sherry Bondy, Kimberly DeYong, Chris Gibb, Hilda MacDonald, Gary McNamara, Crystal Meloche, Michael Prue, and Larry Verbeke

Opposed (3): Tracey Bailey, Rob Shepley, and Kirk Walstedt

Carried

366-2025

Moved By Joe Bachetti

Seconded By Sherry Bondy

That the Additional Training Hours be added to the 2026 Essex-Windsor EMS budget as outlined on Line 5 of the Appendix III of the Treasurer's Report, to be divided in accordance with the weighted assessment formula.

In Favour (10): Michael Akpata, Joe Bachetti, Sherry Bondy, Kimberly DeYong, Chris Gibb, Hilda MacDonald, Gary McNamara, Crystal Meloche, Michael Prue, and Larry Verbeke

Opposed (3): Tracey Bailey, Rob Shepley, and Kirk Walstedt

Carried

367-2025

Moved By Crystal Meloche

Seconded By Michael Akpata

That Essex County Council recess until 2:50 PM.

Carried

The Warden called the meeting back to order at 2:50 PM.

368-2025

Moved By Tracey Bailey

Seconded By Kirk Walstedt

That Essex County Council reserve \$375,000 in the Roadway Expansion reserve for the CWATS Program.

In Favour (12): Michael Akpata, Joe Bachetti, Tracey Bailey, Sherry Bondy, Kimberly DeYong, Chris Gibb, Hilda MacDonald, Gary McNamara, Crystal Meloche, Michael Prue, Rob Shepley, and Kirk Walstedt

Opposed (1): Larry Verbeke

Carried

369-2025

Moved By Crystal Meloche

Seconded By Joe Bachetti

That the Traffic Signal at CR 20 & Martin Lane (LaSalle) be approved and funded from the Roadway Expansion reserve in 2026.

In Favour (13): Michael Akpata, Joe Bachetti, Tracey Bailey, Sherry Bondy, Kimberly DeYong, Chris Gibb, Hilda MacDonald, Gary McNamara, Crystal Meloche, Michael Prue, Rob Shepley, Larry Verbeke, and Kirk Walstedt

Carried

370-2025

Moved By Joe Bachetti

Seconded By Gary McNamara

That the Commander of Operations be added to the 2026 Essex-Windsor EMS budget as outlined on Line 3 of the Appendix III of the Treasurer's Report, to be divided in accordance with the weighted assessment formula.

In Favour (6): Michael Akpata, Joe Bachetti, Sherry Bondy, Gary McNamara, Crystal Meloche, and Larry Verbeke

Opposed (7): Tracey Bailey, Kimberly DeYong, Chris Gibb, Hilda MacDonald, Michael Prue, Rob Shepley, and Kirk Walstedt

Lost

371-2025

Moved By Kimberly DeYong

Seconded By Crystal Meloche

That the Traffic Signal at CR 20 & CR 23 (Essex/Kingsville) be approved and funded from the Roadway Expansion reserve in 2026.

In Favour (11): Michael Akpata, Joe Bachetti, Tracey Bailey, Sherry Bondy, Kimberly DeYong, Chris Gibb, Gary McNamara, Crystal Meloche, Michael Prue, Rob Shepley, and Larry Verbeke

Opposed (2): Hilda MacDonald, and Kirk Walstedt

Carried

372-2025

Moved By Kimberly DeYong

Seconded By Gary McNamara

That Essex County Council Approve as amended the overall proposed 2026 Net Levy requirement for the County of Essex in the amount of \$145,144,950

In Favour (13): Michael Akpata, Joe Bachetti, Tracey Bailey, Sherry Bondy, Kimberly DeYong, Chris Gibb, Hilda MacDonald, Gary McNamara, Crystal Meloche, Michael Prue, Rob Shepley, Larry Verbeke, and Kirk Walstedt

Carried

13. Unfinished Business

There were no items of Unfinished Business for consideration for December 3, 2025.

14. New Business

14.1. New Hospital Delegation Update

Councillor Bondy requested an update to the status of the County's request to receive a delegation regarding the New Hospital.

Sandra Zwiers explained that a Joint meeting between the County and the City of Windsor had been tentatively scheduled twice in the Fall of 2025 to receive an update regarding the Hospital. Finalized information was not yet available and the meetings were subsequently cancelled. Administration was waiting to obtain a date where a meeting can be scheduled that would be meaningful, worthwhile and productive. An update will be provided to Council as soon as more information became available.

15. Adoption of By-Laws

373-2025

Moved By Gary McNamara

Seconded By Joe Bachetti

That By-law 2025-53 be given three readings, and having been read a first, second and third time, be finally passed and enacted.

In Favour (13): Michael Akpata, Joe Bachetti, Tracey Bailey, Sherry Bondy, Kimberly DeYong, Chris Gibb, Hilda MacDonald, Gary McNamara, Crystal Meloche, Michael Prue, Rob Shepley, Larry Verbeke, and Kirk Walstedt

Carried

15.1. By-law Number 2025-53

Being a By-law to confirm the proceedings of the Council of the Corporation of the County of Essex Regular Meeting - 2026 Budget Deliberations, for December 3, 2025

16. Notice of Motion

There were no Notices of Motion for consideration for December 3, 2025.

17. Adjournment

374-2025

Moved By Chris Gibb

Seconded By Larry Verbeke

That the Essex County Council meeting for December 3, 2025, be adjourned at 3:22 PM.

Carried

Hilda MacDonald,
Warden, County of Essex

Katherine Hebert,
County Clerk

Date Signed