



Essex County Council, Regular Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, February 18, 2026

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
 - Tony Gaffan, Councillor, Alternate Member
 - 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
- Absent:
- Kimberly DeYong, Councillor
- Administration:
- Allan Botham, Director, Infrastructure & Planning Services
 - Danielle Dunlop, Interim Director, Human Resources
 - Katherine Hebert, County Clerk
 - Justin Lammers, Chief, Essex-Windsor EMS
 - Darrel Laurendeau, Director, Information Technology
 - Melissa Ryan, Director, Financial Services / Treasurer
 - Natasha Sheeler, Director, Health and Community Services/Sun Parlor Home Administrator
 - David Sundin, Director, Legislative and Legal Services / County Solicitor
 - Crystal Sylvestre, Manager, Records and Accessibility / Deputy Clerk
 - Sandra Zwiers, Chief Administrative Officer

1. Closed Meeting

A Special Closed Meeting of Council was held at 2:30 PM on February 18, 2026.

047-2026

Moved By Kirk Walstedt

Seconded By Larry Verbeke

Pursuant to Sections 239 (2) (f), and (3.1) of the Municipal Act, 2001, as amended for the following reasons:

(f) advice that is subject to solicitor-client privilege, including communications necessary for that purpose; and,

(3.1) A meeting of a council or local board or of a committee of either of them may be closed to the public if the following conditions are both satisfied:

1. The meeting is held for the purpose of educating or training the members.
2. At the meeting, no member discusses or otherwise deals with any matter in a way that materially advances the business or decision-making of the council, local board or committee.

Carried

050-2026

Moved By Dennis Rogers

Seconded By Michael Prue

That Essex County Council adjourn and rise from the Special Closed Meeting of Essex County Council for February 18, 2026 at 4:33 PM.

Carried

Council received training regarding the County roads system and risk management.

A further Closed Meeting was held at 5:00 PM on February 18, 2026.

051-2026

Moved By Kirk Walstedt

Seconded By Tracey Bailey

Pursuant to Section 239 (2) (c), (d), and (f), of the Municipal Act, 2001, as amended for the following reasons:

(c) a proposed or pending acquisition or disposition of land by the municipality or local board;

(d) labour relations or employee negotiations;

(f) advice that is subject to solicitor-client privilege, including communications necessary for that purpose;

Council will receive information regarding the collective bargaining process with CUPE 2974.2 and further, Council will be provided information pertaining to the possible acquisition of a property located in the City of Windsor, and Administration will be seeking Council direction regarding said property.

Carried

056-2026

Moved By Joe Bachetti

Seconded By Larry Verbeke

That Essex County Council adjourn and rise from the Closed Meeting of Essex County Council for February 18, 2026 at 5:51 PM.

Carried

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.

Kim DeYong was absent. Tony Gaffan attended as an alternate member for the Town of Kingsville.

Councillor Shepley arrived at item 14.1.

6. County Warden’s Welcome and Remarks

Warden McDonald offered details regarding the Pre-Election Candidate Information Session being offered by the County of Essex on April 8, 2026. The Information Session was open to anyone interested in learning more about the rules and procedures for running for office in Ontario. The free session would include presentations by the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing, which oversees Ontario’s 444 municipalities and municipal elections, and Clerks on Call, a consulting agency staffed with municipal experts with both administrative and political experience. Attendees will have the opportunity to ask questions and to pick up candidate packages from their respective municipalities, which will have information booths set up during the event. Interested parties were encouraged to visit the County of Essex website to register.

The Warden congratulated the annual winners of the Employee Engagement Cheers for Peers program. Congratulations to Jennifer Mee, Tyler Driedger, Seth Wray and Dustin Anderson who were honoured by their peers for going above and beyond to support their coworkers and the residents of the County of Essex.

7. Disclosure of Pecuniary Interest

There were no disclosures of pecuniary interest raised.

8. Adoption of Regular Meeting Minutes

057-2026

Moved By Larry Verbeke

Seconded By Chris Gibb

That the minutes of the February 4, 2026 Regular Meeting of Essex County Council be adopted as presented.

Carried

9. Delegations and Presentations

There were no Delegations scheduled for February 18, 2026.

10. Communications

10.1. Correspondence

058-2026

Moved By Joe Bachetti

Seconded By Gary McNamara

That the correspondence listed on the Regular Agenda for February 18, 2026, be received and any noted action approved.

Carried

10.1.1 Association of Municipalities of Ontario (AMO)

- [AMO Watchfile Newsletter](#)
- [AMO Policy Advocacy Updates](#)
- [AMO Education Workshops](#)
- [AMO Training Events](#)
- [Make Your Municipal Move Campaign - AMO](#)

10.1.2 Western Ontario Wardens' Caucus (WOWC)

10.2. Resolutions

There were no Resolutions for consideration for February 18, 2026

11. Consent Agenda

059-2026

Moved By Michael Akpata

Seconded By Crystal Meloche

That the recommendations in the Administrative Reports listed as items 11.1 through 11.3, on the Consent Agenda for February 18, 2026, be approved and further that the Minutes listed as item 11.4 on the said Consent Agenda be received.

In Favour (13): Michael Akpata, Joe Bachetti, Tracey Bailey, Sherry Bondy, Tony Gaffan, Chris Gibb, Hilda MacDonald, Gary McNamara, Crystal Meloche, Michael Prue, Dennis Rogers, Larry Verbeke, and Kirk Walstedt

Carried

11.1. Ontario Association of Paramedic Chiefs Conference - 2027

Report number 2026-0218-EMS-R01-JL, Ontario Association of Paramedic Chiefs Conference - 2027, dated February 18, 2026, from Justin Lammers, Chief - Essex-Windsor Emergency Medical Services

11.2.2025 Statement of Councillors' Remuneration

Report number 2026-0218-FIN-R05-MR, 2025 Statement of Councillors' Remuneration, dated February 18, 2026, from Melissa Ryan, Director, Financial Services/Treasurer

11.3. Summary of Outstanding Matters - February 18, 2026

Report number 2026-0218-LLS-R11-KH, Summary of Outstanding Matters, dated February 18, 2026, from Katherine Hebert, County Clerk

11.4 Essex Windsor Solid Waste Authority (EWSWA)

Minutes of the Essex-Windsor Solid Waste Authority Board Meeting

12. Reports and Questions

12.1. Proposed Revisions to Fees and Charges By-law for 2026

Report number 2026-0218-FIN-R06-MR, Proposed Revisions to Fees and Charges By-law for 2026, dated February 18, 2026, from Melissa Ryan, Director, Financial Services/Treasurer

Melissa Ryan provided an overview of the Fees and Charges schedules for 2026 noting an increase in fees for commissioning documents and ambulance call record requests. It was explained that the rate for each of these was not reflective of the actual cost to provide the service and were being gradually increased to cost recovery.

It was further noted that the new user fee for the Green Bin program under Schedule H. Discussion included investigating alternative methods of funding this service. As a result, the adoption of the proposed Fees and Charges By-law was deferred to the March 4, 2026 Regular County Council meeting for consideration.

060-2026

Moved By Tracey Bailey

Seconded By Sherry Bondy

That consideration of the Fees and Charges report and associated by-law be postponed until such time that a report from Administration is provided outlining options to subsidize from reserve funds the User Fee associated with the Green Bin program; and that said administrative report be brought forward for the March 4, 2026, meeting of Council.

In Favour (7): Joe Bachetti, Tracey Bailey, Sherry Bondy, Tony Gaffan, Gary McNamara, Dennis Rogers, and Kirk Walstedt

Opposed (6): Michael Akpata, Chris Gibb, Hilda MacDonald, Crystal Meloche, Michael Prue, and Larry Verbeke

Carried

12.2. Tender Summary – South Dales Drain Culvert Replacement on County Road 34 (C-34-454)

Report number 2026-0218-IPS-R02-KT, Tender Summary – South Dales Drain Culvert Replacement on County Road 34 (C-34-454), dated February 18, 2026, from Karyn Templin, Manager, Design and Construction

061-2026

Moved By Chris Gibb

Seconded By Joe Bachetti

That Essex County Council receive report number 2026-0218-IPS-R02-KT, Tender Summary – South Dales Drain Culvert Replacement on County Road 34 (C-34-454) and award the contract to Front Construction Industries Inc., as the lowest compliant bidder, for a total tender amount of \$1,507,700, plus applicable taxes.

In Favour (13): Michael Akpata, Joe Bachetti, Tracey Bailey, Sherry Bondy, Tony Gaffan, Chris Gibb, Hilda MacDonald, Gary McNamara, Crystal Meloche, Michael Prue, Dennis Rogers, Larry Verbeke, and Kirk Walstedt

Carried

13. Unfinished Business

There were no matters of unfinished business considered for February 18, 2026.

14. New Business

14.1. Public Reporting of Closed Meeting

Council met for a Special Closed meeting at 2:30 PM on February 18, 2026 pursuant to Sections 239 (2) (f), and (3.1) of the Municipal Act, 2001, as amended for the following reasons:

(f) advice that is subject to solicitor-client privilege, including communications necessary for that purpose; and,

(3.1) A meeting of a council or local board or of a committee of either of them may be closed to the public if the following conditions are both satisfied:

1. The meeting is held for the purpose of educating or training the members.
2. At the meeting, no member discusses or otherwise deals with any matter in a way that materially advances the business or decision-making of the council, local board or committee.

Council received training and information pertaining to the County Road system.

The Special Closed meeting adjourned at 4:33 PM.

Council met further in a Closed meeting at 5:00 PM on February 18, 2026 pursuant to Section 239 (2) (c), (d), and (f), of the Municipal Act, 2001, as amended for the following reasons:

- (c) a proposed or pending acquisition or disposition of land by the municipality or local board;
- (d) labour relations or employee negotiations;
- (f) advice that is subject to solicitor-client privilege, including communications necessary for that purpose;

Council received information regarding the collective bargaining process with CUPE 2974.2, and

Council provided Administration with direction to complete the acquisition of a certain property. As a result of Council deliberations, the following recommendation was before Council:

062-2026

Moved By Tony Gaffan

Seconded By Michael Prue

That Essex County Council authorizes Administration to finalize the negotiations related to the County's acquisition of a certain piece of property for EWEMS in the City of Windsor, and authorizes the Warden and the Clerk to execute such documents as may be required to effect same.

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

Carried

The Closed meeting adjourned at 5:51 PM.

14.2. Committee and Board Meeting Videos

At the February 4, 2026 Regular Meeting of Essex County Council, Councillor Bondy brought forward the following Notice of Motion, as amended:

063-2026

Moved By Sherry Bondy

Seconded By Joe Bachetti

Whereas the County of Essex is a government working for the people and wishes to increase transparency and awareness of initiatives happening at the County level on Boards and committees; and,

Whereas those meeting times and locations are not always accessible to members of the public who may work, have transportation or child care challenges.

Now Therefore be it resolved:

That Essex County Council direct County Administration to consult with the Boards and Committees on which members of County Council serve and return a report regarding their willingness and ability to record and post meetings online.

In Favour (11): Michael Akpata, Joe Bachetti, Tracey Bailey, Sherry Bondy, Tony Gaffan, Chris Gibb, Crystal Meloche, Michael Prue, Dennis Rogers, Rob Shepley, and Kirk Walstedt

Opposed (3): Hilda MacDonald, Gary McNamara, and Larry Verbeke

Carried

14.3. Opening of Gordie Howe International Bridge

Councillor Akpata noted the delay in the opening of the Gordie Howe Bridge as a result of interference by the US President and the impact to County municipalities. Councillor Akpata queried if Administration had any information to share.

As a member of both the Border Mayors Alliance and the Windsor-Essex Economic Trade Task Force; CAO Sandra Zwiers reported that both groups were actively advocating for a solution.

15. Adoption of By-Laws

064-2026

Moved By Larry Verbeke

Seconded By Chris Gibb

That By-laws 2026-05 through 2026-06, be given three readings, and having been read a first, second and third time, be finally passed and enacted.

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

Carried

15.1.By-law Number 2026-05 – Deferred to March 4, 2026

Being a By-law to impose Fees and Charges by the Corporation of the County of Essex

15.2.By-law Number 2026-05

Being a By-law to Establish Tax Policy and Levy Property Taxes for the year 2026.

15.3.By-law Number 2026-06

Being a By-law to Confirm the Proceedings of the Council of the Corporation of the County of Essex for the Special, Closed, and Regular Meetings held February 18, 2026

16. Notice of Motion

16.1.Green Bin Program Funding

Councillor Bailey brought forward the following Notice of Motion:

Whereas the Council for the Corporation of the County of Essex has previously decided to adopt a regional green bin organics program; and

Whereas the residents of the Town of Essex, the Municipality of Lakeshore, the Town of LaSalle, and the Town of Tecumseh (the "Phase 1 Municipalities") began to participate in the Program in the autumn of 2025; and

Whereas the residents Town of Amherstburg, the Town of Kingsville, and the Municipality of Leamington (the "Phase 2 Municipalities")

are scheduled to begin to participate in the Program in the autumn of 2026; and

Whereas County Council has previously decided to fund the Program by charging a user fee to the owners of all properties eligible to participate in the Program (the "User Fee"); and

Whereas the residents of the Phase 1 Municipalities are scheduled to be charged the User Fee during the 2026 budget year ending December 31, 2026; and

Whereas the residents of the Phase 2 Municipalities are scheduled to be charged the User Fee during the 2027 budget year ending December 31, 2027; and

Whereas County Council recognizes that the charging of the User Fee may cause undue financial pressures to the residents of the County at a time of extreme economic uncertainty; and

Whereas the County has monetary reserves that Council may direct be used to partially or wholly offset the costs of the Program.

Now Therefore Be It Resolved that County Council directs that:

1. The costs of the User Fee for the Program be funded 100% from Reserves for the 2026 Budget Year; and
2. Administration as part of the 2027 Budget Year process present a plan for the costs for the Program for the 2027 Budget Year to be funded 50% from reserves for the residents of the Phase 1 Municipalities and 100% from Reserves for the residents of the Phase 2 Municipalities;
3. Administration as part of the 2028 budget year ending December 31, 2028, process present a plan for the costs of the Program for the 2028 Budget Year to be funded 50% for the residents of the Phase 2 Municipalities;
4. Administration as part of the 2029 budget year ending December 31, 2029, process present a plan for the costs of the Program to be funded through the County's general municipal tax levy.

16.2.Social Media Analytics Reports

Councillor Bondy brought forward the following Notice of Motion:

Whereas effective communication and transparency are essential components of good governance; and

Whereas residents increasingly rely on digital and social media platforms for timely information regarding County programs, services, and initiatives; and

Whereas tracking social media analytics allows organizations to measure engagement, identify communication gaps, and improve outreach strategies;

Now Therefore Be It Resolved that Administration be directed to:

1. Track and report quarterly on social media analytics, including but not limited to:
 - Follower growth
 - Post reach and impressions
 - Engagement rates (likes, shares, comments)
 - Video views
 - Website click-throughs
 - Public response times
2. Develop key performance indicators (KPIs) related to digital enhancement and community outreach.
3. Present a strategy to enhance the County's digital presence to ensure it is more proactive, accessible, and forward-facing to residents.
4. Report back to Council with findings and recommendations.

17. Adjournment

065-2026

Moved By Tony Gaffan

Seconded By Crystal Meloche

That the Essex County Council meeting for February 18, 2026 be adjourned at 6:49 PM.

Carried

Hilda MacDonald,
Warden, County of Essex

Katherine J. Hebert,
County Clerk

Date Signed