



Essex County Council Special Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, March 18, 2026

2:00 PM

Council Chambers, 2nd Floor

360 Fairview Avenue West

Essex, Ontario N8M 1Y6

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

- Council: 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
- Absent: Michael Akpata, Councillor
Dennis Rogers, Councillor
- Administration: Allan Botham, Director, Infrastructure & Planning Services
Danielle Dunlop, Interim Director, HR
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/SPH Administrator
David Sundin, Director, Legislative and Legal Services / County Solicitor
Crystal Sylvestre, Manager, Records and Accessibility / Deputy Clerk
Sandra Zwiers, Chief Administrative Officer

1. Recording of Attendance

Warden MacDonald and members of Essex County Council attended the Special Meeting at the Essex County Administration Building, Council Chamber.

Councillors Akpata and Rogers were absent.

Councillors Bondy, DeYong, Meloche and Shepley were expected to be late.

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 conflicts of pecuniary interest declared.

4. Welcome and Remarks

Warden MacDonald welcomed Council, staff and guests to the review of the County's first Strategic Plan.

The 2024-2027 Strategic Plan was adopted by Council in December 2023. The Plan remained directionally sound and significant progress had been made in implementing the plan's directions. The purpose the Special Meeting workshop was to celebrate and reflect on the progress to that point and to clarify areas where ambiguity had surfaced through implementation, stabilize high-exposure files, and ensure the next term of Council inherited a transition roadmap with defined priorities for their decision and action.

5. Delegations and Presentations

5.1. Strategic Plan Update - What Has Advanced, What Work Remains, and What Must Be Clarified Before Transition

Chris Loreto, Managing Principal, and Julie Gonyou, Vice-President - Strategy Corp, facilitated the Strategic Planning, Check-In and Alignment Session

Crystal Meloche, Councillor joined the meeting at 2:22 pm.

Rob Shepley, Councillor joined the meeting at 2:35 pm.

Sherry Bondy, Councillor joined the meeting at 2:37 pm.

Kimberly DeYong, Councillor joined the meeting at 2:37 pm.

Chris Loretto opened the presentation by shaping the conversation around reviewing the successes, how the County's landscape has changed and evaluating outstanding items of the 2023-2027 Strategic Plan.

Councillors had the opportunity to share reflections on instances where the directions of the Strategic Plan had been strengthened or executed and where opportunities exist for this Council and the next. Directions that would continue to be advanced before the transition to the next council included:

- efforts towards maintaining momentum on foundational regional priorities;
- apply disciplined sequencing and fiscal guardrails;
- clarifying governance expectations for complex regional files; and
- a plan to protect the progress through the transition to ensure integrity is maintained.

Strategy Corp would provide Council with a follow up report to support the discussion themes. The report would including a roadmap for the remainder of the term that identifies where to advance, stabilize, or prepare major files to help strengthen continuity, clarity, and informed governance for the next Council.

085-2026

Moved By Larry Verbeke

Seconded By Crystal Meloche

That the information presented by Strategy Corp, in relation to the Strategic Plan Update, be received as information.

Carried

6. Adjournment

086-2026

Moved By Gary McNamara

Seconded By Rob Shepley

That the Essex County Council Special Meeting for March 18, 2026 be adjourned at 4:51 PM.

Carried

Hilda MacDonald
Warden - County of Essex

Katherine Hebert
County Clerk

Date Signed