



## **Essex County Council, Regular Meeting Minutes**

**Wednesday, March 4, 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  
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  
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  
Danielle Dunlop, Interim Director, HR  
Natasha Sheeler, Director, Health and Community Services/SPH Administrator

**1. Closed Meeting**

A Closed Meeting was held at 5:00PM on March 4, 2026.

**066-2026**

**Moved By** Rob Shepley

**Seconded By** Joe Bachetti

That Essex County Council move into a Closed Meeting, pursuant to Section 239 (2) (d) of the Municipal Act, 2001, as amended for the following reasons:

(d) labour relations or employee negotiations;

**Carried**

**070-2026**

**Moved By** Michael Prue

**Seconded By** Dennis Rogers

That Essex County Council adjourn and rise from the Closed Meeting of Essex County Council for March 4, 2026 at 5:15 PM

**Carried**

**2. Moment of Reflection**

A moment of silence was observed in honour of Jennifer Miner, Primary Care Paramedic and member of the Community Paramedicine Team of Essex-Windsor EMS. Jennifer passed away Saturday, February 28, 2025 while off duty. Jennifer served the residents of Windsor and Essex County honourably for 29 years.

**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 honourees, friends and family to the second annual Employee Excellence Awards. The Warden commended all of the honourees for their exceptional commitment to the County of Essex and thanked them for their service.

**7. Disclosure of Pecuniary Interest**

There were no disclosures of pecuniary interest raised.

**8. Adoption of Regular Meeting Minutes**

**071-2026**

**Moved By** Chris Gibb

**Seconded By** Rob Shepley

That the minutes of the February 18, 2026 Regular Meeting of Essex County Council be adopted as presented.

**Carried**

**9. Delegations and Presentations**

**072-2026**

**Moved By** Gary McNamara

**Seconded By** Sherry Bondy

That the order of the agenda for March 4, 2026 be amended, to consider the Administrative Report listed as item 12.1 Introduction of Employee Excellence Awards under Delegations and Presentations item 9.1.

**Carried**

**9.1. Employee Excellence Awards (*Considered with Reports and Questions item 12.1*)**

Recipients of the County of Essex Employee Excellence Awards were present, to receive their respective awards and recognition.

**9.2. Green Bin Program Fees (*Considered with Reports and Questions item 12.2, New Business item 14.2, and Unfinished Business Item 13.1*)**

Doug Doher, resident of the County of Essex, to provide a presentation regarding Green Bin Fees.

**074-2026**

**Moved By** Kimberly DeYong

**Seconded By** Chris Gibb

That the order of the agenda for March 4, 2026 be amended, to consider the Administrative Report listed as item 12.2 Financial Implications of Proposed Motion for Green Bin User Fee Funding from Reserves, New Business item 14.2 Green Bin Program User Fee, as well as Unfinished Business Item 13.1 Update to Fees and Charges By-law, following the Delegations and Presentations listed as item 9.2.

**Carried**

Doug Doher provided a presentation in opposition to the Green Bin Program Fees and the diversion of organics to Seacliff Energy.

**10. Communications**

**10.1. Correspondence**

**079-2026**

**Moved By** Chris Gibb

**Seconded By** Larry Verbeke

That the correspondence listed on the Regular Agenda for March 4, 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](#)

### **10.1.2 Municipal Pre-Election Candidate Information Session**

Registration is Now Open! Visit the County of Essex website for more information on the [Municipal Pre-Election Candidate Information Session](#)

- **Date:** April 8, 2026
- **Time:** 6:00 PM - 9:00 PM
- **Location:** County of Essex Administration Building, 360 Fairview Ave West, Essex, ON
- **How to Sign up:** Fill out the event [Registration Form](#)  
There are options for Virtual or In-Person Attendance

### **10.1.3 Windsor-Essex County Health Unit (WECHU)**

[NEWS RELEASE: WECHU is launching its 2026–2030 Strategic Plan, a guide that outlines how WECHU will support and improve public health over the next five years.](#)

### **10.1.4 Ontario Public Works Association (OPWA)**

[NEWS RELEASE: 2026 Board of Directors Announcement](#)

### **10.1.5 Tourism Windsor Essex Pelee Island (TWEPI)**

- [W.E. Keep You Informed: Just Released: Destination Playbook, Staycation Registration is NOW OPEN & MUCH More!](#)
- [Last Chance to Vote for the Best of Windsor Essex Awards + March Break Fun, Maple Month & More!](#)

### **10.1.6 Ontario Community Infrastructure Fund (OCIF)**

Resolutions to review and extend OCIF Funding for municipalities:

- Township of Edwardsburgh/Cardinal
- Town of Fort Frances

### **10.1.7 Bill 21, Protect Our Food Act, 2025**

Resolution in support of Bill 21:

- Township of Southgate

**10.1.8 Western Ontario Wardens' Caucus (WOWC)**

[WOWC News](#)

**10.1.9 County Road 42 Project**

[Project update: February 25, 2026](#)

**10.2. Resolutions**

There were no Resolutions for consideration for March 4, 2026

**11. Consent Agenda**

**080-2026**

**Moved By** Joe Bachetti

**Seconded By** Gary McNamara

That the Administrative Reports listed as items 11.1 and 11.2 on the Consent Agenda for March 4, 2026 be received and approved.

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

**Carried**

**11.1. Update-City of Windsor 2026 Budget-Residential Services Homes (RSH) Per Diem Rate**

Report number 2026-0304-FIN-R07-MR, Update-City of Windsor 2026 Budget-Residential Services Homes (RSH) Per Diem Rate, dated March 4, 2026, from Melissa Ryan, Director, Financial Services/Treasurer

**11.2. Summary of Outstanding Matters - March 4, 2026**

Report number 2026-0604-LLS-R18-KH, Summary of Outstanding Matters, dated March 4, 2026 from Katherine Hebert, County Clerk

**12. Reports and Questions**

**12.1. Employee Excellence Awards 2026 (*Considered ahead of Delegations and Presentations item 9.1*)**

Report number 2026-0304-LLS-R13-DM, Employee Excellence Awards 2026, dated March 4, 2026 from Don McArthur, Manager, Communication and Organizational Development

Don McArthur welcomed the honourees and guests to the Council Chamber for the annual presentation of the Employee Excellence Awards.

It was explained that the awards were presented to employees from across the corporation who embody organizational values, who demonstrate excellence in their roles, and who inspire others to achieve their best.

Awards were handed out in the following four categories: Team Spirit, Innovation, Service Excellence, and Empowerment.

**073-2026**

**Moved By** Joe Bachetti

**Seconded By** Tracey Bailey

That Essex County Council receive report number 2026-0304-LLS-R13-DM, Employee Excellence Awards for 2025 as information.

**Carried**

**12.2. Financial Implications of Proposed Motion for Green Bin User Fee Funding from Reserves (*Considered following Delegations and Presentations item 9.2*)**

Report number 2026-0304-FIN-R08-MR, Financial Implications of Proposed Motion for Green Bin User Fee Funding from Reserves, dated March 4, 2026 from Melissa Ryan, Director, Financial Services/Treasurer.

Melissa presented the report outlining the research requested by Council to fund the Green Bin Program from Reserves. Melissa noted that that funding approach was not fiscally responsible and was counter to the Council's initial direction.

County CAO Sandra Zwiers and Treasurer, Melissa Ryan were not in support of an approach that would result in using capital reserves to fund operations.

**075-2026**

**Moved By** Crystal Meloche

**Seconded By** Dennis Rogers

That Essex County Council receive report number 2026-0304-FIN-R08-MR, Financial Implications Related to Funding the Green Bin Program from Reserves as information

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. Public Petitions Policy**

Report number 2026-0304-LLS-R17-KH, Public Petitions Policy, dated March 4, 2026, from Katherine Hebert, County Clerk

Katherine Hebert provided a high level overview of the proposed policy, and noted that the procedures outlined therein were a formalization of current practices.

#### **081-2026**

**Moved By** Kimberly DeYong

**Seconded By** Crystal Meloche

That Essex County Council receive report number 2026-0304-LLS-R17-KH, Public Petitions Policy as information, and approve the Public Petitions Policy, and corresponding By-law as presented.

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**

## **13. Unfinished Business**

### **13.1. Proposed Revisions to Fees and Charges By-law for 2026 (Considered following Unfinished Business item 14.2)**

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

**077-2026**

**Moved By** Crystal Meloche

**Seconded By** Chris Gibb

That Essex County Council approve report number 2026-0218-FIN-R06-MR, Proposed Revisions to Fees and Charges By-law for 2026 and direct administration to charge the updated deposits and fees from the date of approval of the By-law.

In Favour (9): Michael Akpata, Joe Bachetti, Sherry Bondy, Chris Gibb, Hilda MacDonald, Gary McNamara, Crystal Meloche, Michael Prue, and Larry Verbeke

Opposed (5): Tracey Bailey, Kimberly DeYong, Dennis Rogers, Rob Shepley, and Kirk Walstedt

**Carried**

**078-2026**

**Moved By** Sherry Bondy

**Seconded By** Michael Akpata

That Essex County Council direct Administration to present an option to transition the Green Bin Program to a levy funded program for the 2028 budget year.

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

**Carried**

**14. New Business**

**14.1. Public Reporting of Closed Meeting**

Council met in a Closed meeting at 5:00 PM pursuant to Section 239 (2) (d) of the Municipal Act, 2001, as amended for the following reason:

(d) labour relations or employee negotiations;

Council received information regarding the collective bargaining process with CUPE 2974.2.

The Closed meeting adjourned at 5:15 PM.

**14.2. Green Bin Program User Fee (*Considered following Reports and Questions item 12.2*)**

At the February 18, 2026 meeting of Essex County Council, Councillor Tracey Bailey introduced the Green Bin Program User Fee motion.

Considerable discussion on the motion took place regarding the use of reserve funds purposely saved for designated projects and programs, to offset ongoing operating costs for a different program.

**076-2026**

**Moved By** Tracey Bailey

**Seconded By** Kirk Walstedt

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 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 it be resolved:

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 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 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 present a plan for the costs of the Program to be funded through the County's general municipal tax levy.

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

Opposed (11): Michael Akpata, Joe Bachetti, Sherry Bondy, Kimberly DeYong, Chris Gibb, Hilda MacDonald, Gary McNamara, Crystal Meloche, Michael Prue, Dennis Rogers, and Larry Verbeke

**Lost**

### **14.3.Social Media Reporting**

At the February 18, 2026 meeting of Essex County Council, Councillor Sherry Bondy introduced the following:

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.

*Note: When called upon by the Warden, Councillor Bondy withdrew the Motion.*

## **15. Adoption of By-Laws**

### **082-2026**

**Moved By** Gary McNamara

**Seconded By** Chris Gibb

That By-laws 2026-04, and 2026-07 through 2026-08, 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, Kimberly DeYong, 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 2026-04 (Deferred from February 18, 2026 Meeting)**

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

### **15.2. By-law Number 2026-07**

Being a By-law to Adopt Policy 2026-001 Public Petitions Policy for the Corporation of the County of Essex.

### **15.3. By-law Number 2026-08**

Being a By-law to confirm the Proceedings of the Council of the Corporation of the County of Essex for the Regular and Closed Meetings held March 4, 2026

## **16. Notice of Motion**

### **16.1. Social Services Responsibility**

Tracey Bailey brought forward the following Notice of Motion:

**Whereas**, since April 1, 1999, the City of Windsor has been the provincially designated Consolidated Municipal Service Manager (the "**CMSM**") responsible for the administration and delivery of provincially funded social services, which social services included the administration of Ontario Works, child care, and social housing (the "**Social Services**") in the City of Windsor, the County of Essex, and the Township of Pelee Island (collectively, the "**Region**"); and

**Whereas** the division of costs for Social Services have been governed by a decision that arose from a Division-of-Costs Arbitration, dated March 9, 1999 (the "**Arbitrated Agreement**"); and

**Whereas** the CMSM model was established by the Province of Ontario to promote efficiency, consistency of service delivery, and economies of scale across municipal boundaries; and

**Whereas** the CMSM model and the Arbitrated Agreement did not address funding to address homelessness and housing issues in the Region, beyond social housing; and

**Whereas** there has been recent discussion at County Council to advocate for separate provincial and/or federal funding to be provided to the County to address homelessness and housing issues in the County, outside of the established CMSM model; and

**Whereas** there would likely be additional administrative costs for having the County manage homelessness and housing funding outside of the CMSM model, and there has been no indication that separate provincial or federal funding would be included in any separate payments made to the County; and

**Whereas** the creation of a parallel administrative system to address social service delivery in the County would result in duplication of staffing, governance, infrastructure, systems, and overhead costs; and

**Whereas** in the absence of new provincial or federal funding, any increased administrative or service costs to address social services in the County would necessarily be borne by local municipal taxpayers, namely the residents of the County's constituent lower-tier municipalities; and

**Whereas** the County addressing homelessness and housing issues on its own and outside of the CMSM model, presents a material risk of increased property taxes, service disruption during transition, and inefficiencies that may not result in improved outcomes for residents.

**Now Therefore** be it resolved that the Council of the Corporation of the County of Essex formally expresses its opposition to the pursuit or development of a County-administered social services delivery system, to operate outside of the CMSM model; and

**Further** that Council affirms its support for the existing CMSM model for the Region and encourages collaborative, evidence-based discussions between the County and City focused on service improvement within the current CMSM model rather than creating administrative duplication; and

**Further** that Council directs that this resolution be forwarded to the City of Windsor, the Minister of Municipal Affairs and Housing, the Minister of Children, Community and Social Services, MPP Trevor Jones, MPP Anthony Leardi, and MPP Andrew Dowie for information; and

**Further** that Council directs County Administration to request that the City of Windsor revisit the Arbitrated Agreement, to discuss areas of mutual agreement, discuss areas for improvement, and to discuss incorporating the costs for homelessness and housing initiative into the Arbitrated Agreement.

## **17. Adjournment**

**083-2026**

**Moved By** Gary McNamara

**Seconded By** Joe Bachetti

That the Essex County Council meeting for March 4, 2026 be adjourned at 7:51 PM.

**Carried**

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Hilda MacDonald,  
Warden, County of Essex

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Katherine J. Hebert,  
County Clerk

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Date Signed