



Essex Centre BIA Board Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, October 16, 2024, 6:00pm

Location: Essex Centre Sports Complex, 60 Fairview Ave W, Essex, ON

Accessible formats or communication supports are available upon request. Please contact the Clerk's Office at clerks@essex.ca or 519-776-7336 extension 1100 or 1101.

Present: Stephanie Winger, Chair
Gregg Laframboise, BIA Board Member
Andrea Schinkel, BIA Board Member
Kim Dennison, Vice Chair
Kelly Baillargeon, Coordinator
Katie McGuire-Blais, Ward 1 Councillor

Also Present: Kate Giurissevich, Corporate Services/Treasurer, Town of Essex
Nelson Silveria, Economic Development, Town of Essex

Regrets: Mesba Qasim, BIA Board Treasurer

1. Call to Order

The Chair called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm.

2. Land Acknowledgement

We acknowledge that this land is the traditional territory of the Three Fires Confederacy of First Nations (comprised of the Ojibway, the Odawa, and the Potawatomi Peoples), and of the Huron-Wendat Peoples. We value the significant historical and contemporary contributions of local and regional First Nations and all of the Original Peoples of Turtle Island who have been living and working on the land from time immemorial.

3. Declarations of Conflict of Interest

There were no declarations of conflict of interest noted at this time.

4. Adoption of Published Agenda

4.1. Essex Centre BIA Board Meeting Agenda for October 16, 2024

BIA24-10-001

Moved by A. Schinkel

Seconded by G. Laframboise

That the published agenda for the October 16, 2024 Essex Centre BIA Board Meeting be adopted as presented.

Carried

5. Adoption of Minutes

5.1. Essex Centre BIA Board Meeting Minutes for September 17, 2024

BIA24-10-002

Moved by G. Laframboise

Seconded by K. Dennison

That the minutes of the Essex Centre BIA Board Meeting held September 17, 2024 be adopted as circulated.
Essex Centre BIA Board Meeting Minutes October 16, 2024

6. Correspondence

6.1. Treasurer's Report

6.1.1. Proposed Budget 2025

K. Giurissevich delivered a comprehensive presentation to the Board outlining the municipal budgeting process. This included an overview of budget preparation, a review of the current BIA reserves, proposed process improvements for 2025, and an explanation of the BIA tax rate and its calculation. This information proved invaluable in assisting the Board in formulating the proposed budget for 2025. A follow-up meeting with the Board treasurer and Ms. Giurissevich was recommended and will be scheduled before November 21.

6.2. Report from Council Representative

Councillor McGuire-Blais provided the following report:

- The Town of Essex downtown banner policy was discussed;
- It was suggested that the Board collaborates with the Town of Essex to create seasonal designs, changing them four times annually;
- It was suggested that better signage is needed for the public parking lots in the downtown core;

BIA24-10-003

Moved by G. Laframboise

Seconded by A. Schinkel

That the Correspondence listed in Agenda Item 6 be received.

Carried

7. Members

7.1. Member Requests

No discussion or updates at this time.

7.2. Membership Feedback Survey Findings

The findings document is attached for reference.

7.3. New Businesses/Closing/Change of location

No discussion or updates at this time.

BIA24-10-004

Moved by A. Schinkel

Seconded by G. Laframboise

That the Members updates listed in Agenda Item 7 be received.

Carried

8. Annual General Meeting (AGM)

8.1. Notice of Meeting

A meeting invitation has been mailed out to all Essex Centre property owners and business owners. A meeting notice has also been placed in the Essex Free Press.

BIA24-10-005

Moved by G. Laframboise

Seconded by K. Dennison

That the Annual General Meeting updates listed in Agenda Item 8 be received.

Carried

9. Events**9.1. Essex Centre Streetfest Sponsorship Review**

It was suggested that the Essex Centre Streetfest Committee be invited to an upcoming meeting to provide an overview of the successes, suggestions, and areas for improvement, as well as proposed dates for 2025.

9.2. September Business Mix & Mingle Review

The Mix and Mingle event was held on September 26 at Brenko's House of Pizza, with 30 members in attendance. The event was well-received, and it was suggested that it be held again in the spring and potentially become a recurring event.

9.3. Halloween Tiny Tot Parade

The Essex Area Food Bank was contacted and will set up a truck at the beginning of the parade route to collect canned donations from participants.

A Special Events permit has been submitted and the safety plan has been approved.

The Essex Highschool Leadership class will be volunteering for the event.

9.4. Santa's Village & Market- December 14, 2024

No discussion or updates at this time.

9.5. Essex BIA Santa Claus Parade- December 14, 2024

No discussion or updates at this time.

BIA24-10-006

Moved by G. Laframboise

Seconded by K. Dennison

That the Events updates listed in Agenda Item 9 be received.

Carried

10. Marketing, Promotions & Social Media**10.1. Produced commercials**

Commercials for Talbot Street Pharmacy, The Broeckel Clinic, Five Star Image, and Stationery and Stuff are currently in production, with final versions expected to be ready by November.

10.2. Monthly Business Profiler

It was suggested that a meeting be scheduled with the Essex Free Press to discuss advertising plans for 2025.

10.3. Website Updates

No discussion or updates at this time.

BIA24-10-007

Moved by G. Laframboise

Seconded by K. Dennison

That the Marketing, Promotions and Social Media updates listed in Agenda Item 10 be received.

Carried

11. Beautification

11.1. Christmas Display Project

The displays have been ordered and shipped and are set to be installed directing following Remembrance Day.

11.2. Downtown Parkette

It was suggested that a design plan, including quotes, be prepared and presented to the property owner for approval.

11.3. Amphitheatre Project

No discussion or updates at this time.

BIA24-10-008

Moved by G. Laframboise

Seconded by K. Dennison

That the Beautification updates listed in Agenda Item 11 be received.

Carried

12. Management & Operations

12.1. 2025 Meeting schedule

- January 15
- February 19
- March 19
- April 16
- May 21
- June 18
- July 16
- August 20
- September 17
- October 15
- November 19 Annual General Meeting

12.2. Constitution Review

It was suggested that the Board schedule a meeting with J. Malandrucolo, Director of Legal Services at the Town of Essex, to review the proposed changes.

BIA24-10-009

Moved by A. Schinkel

Seconded by K. Dennison

That the Management and Operations updates listed in Agenda Item 12 be received.

13. New Business

M. Pollett from Best Version Media, the producers of Essex Neighbours Connecting Communities magazine, offered a proposal for an annual advertising campaign.

M. Pollett noted that the Essex Neighbours Connecting Communities magazine is new to the area and will be delivered to 2,800 residential homes. The magazine also offers Google ad displays, Facebook ads, as well as print and digital advertising options. Additionally, they claim to have a 90% readership rate.

The Board requested that an official quote be sent for review and approval.

14. Adjournment

BIA24-09-010

Moved by A. Schinkel

Seconded by K. Dennison

That the meeting be adjourned at 8:35pm

Carried

Stephanie Winger – Chair

Kelly Baillargeon –Recording Secretary

Business Occupancy in Essex Centre

The survey results regarding the duration of business operation in Essex Centre are as follows:

- **5 Years or Less:** 62.50%
- **6-10 Years:** 20.83%
- **11-20 Years:** 4.17%
- **21+ Years:** 12.50%

Overall, a significant majority of respondents (62.50%) have been in business for 5 years or less, indicating a strong presence of newer businesses in the area.

Awareness of the BIA

The survey results indicate a strong awareness of the Business Improvement Area (BIA) among respondents:

- **Yes:** 87.50%
- **No:** 12.50%

The majority of respondents are familiar with the BIA and its purpose, suggesting a positive level of engagement with the BIA.

Capital Project Prioritization

Summary

We assessed the priorities for potential capital projects. The survey results indicate distinct preferences that should guide our budget decisions.

Key Findings

1. **Top Priorities:**

- **Amphitheatre in Heritage Park:** Ranked as the most important project, highlighting strong community support for enhancing cultural and recreational opportunities.
- **Downtown Sound System:** Also identified as a high priority, suggesting significant interest in improving public events and community gatherings.
- **Parkette at 49 Talbot St. N** and **Additional Garbage and Recycling Receptacles:** Both received favorable rankings, indicating community interest in enhancing green spaces and promoting sustainability.

2. **Lower Priorities:**

- **Downtown Murals/Art Installations:** Ranked as the least important project, indicating limited interest. This category may require further evaluation to understand community perceptions.
- **Additional Season Décor:** This received low rankings, indicating it may not be a priority right now or that there's already plenty of décor in place.

Conclusion

The survey results provide a clear direction for capital investment, emphasizing community priorities that focus on enhancing public spaces and services.

Summary of Challenges Faced by Small Business Owners in Downtown

Greatest Challenges:

1. **Cash Flow:** The top concern, indicating financial management issues.
2. **Marketing and Promotion:** Many business owners struggle with effectively promoting their offerings.
3. **Hiring Talented People:** Attracting and retaining skilled employees is a significant challenge.
4. **Increasing Brand Awareness:** Many are focused on making their brands more recognizable.
5. **Balancing Quality and Growth:** Maintaining high standards while expanding is a common issue.
6. **Lack of Funds:** Access to financial resources poses a barrier for growth.
7. **Market Competition:** Competing with other businesses is a noted concern.

Not Major Concerns:

- **Customer Satisfaction:** Relatively low concern, suggesting it may not be a significant issue for most.

Challenges that were also identified:

- Lack of Parking
- Minimum Wage Increases
- Attracting New Clients
- Making Connections

Potential Marketing and Promotional Projects for the BIA

Overview

This question sought input on specific marketing and promotional projects that the BIA could undertake and/or currently offers to support local businesses.

Key Findings

1. **Professionally Produced Commercials:**
 - People are really excited about having high-quality videos for social media and websites. This could help get the word out about local businesses.
2. **Business Profile Feature in Local Newspapers:**
 - Monthly features in the newspaper could really help local businesses get noticed and attract more customers.
3. **Shop Local Videos:**
 - There's a lot of interest in making videos that highlight local business owners. This could help build a stronger sense of community.
4. **Downtown Dollar Program:**
 - People appreciate this program and see it as a helpful way to support local businesses.
5. **Seasonal Social Media Giveaways:**
 - Running giveaways for different seasons is a fun way to get the community involved and encourage more interactions.
6. **Local Newspaper/print ads:**
 - Traditional print ads are still seen as useful, but they're not as popular as some other ideas.

Marketing/Promotional items that were also identified:

- Social Media

Conclusion

The results show a clear preference for professionally produced content and featured promotions in local media. The BIA should consider prioritizing initiatives such as commercials and business profiles to maximize support for local businesses.

Attendance and Benefits of the Annual AGM

The survey results regarding attendance and perceived benefits of the Annual General Meeting (AGM) indicate the following:

- **70.83% of respondents** expressed an interest in attending
- **29.17% of respondents** indicated they may not find the AGM beneficial or may choose not to attend.

Suggestions for Capital and Beautification Projects in Essex Centre

We asked local business owners and community members to share their thoughts on capital and beautification projects the BIA could take on to improve their properties and the look of Essex Centre.

Key Suggestions

1. Cigarette Butt Disposal and Additional Garbage Cans:

- Respondents emphasized the need for more disposal options to maintain cleanliness and promote responsible waste management.

2. Consistency in Exterior Design:

- A call for uniformity in the look and feel of building exteriors was noted, as it contributes to a cohesive aesthetic throughout Essex Centre.

3. Digital Commercial Displays:

- The introduction of digital displays could enhance marketing opportunities for local businesses and attract visitors.

4. Addressing Space Between Buildings:

- Suggestions to close the gap between the Talbot Street Pharmacy and the Goat building highlight a desire for improved aesthetic appeal.

5. Seasonal Décor and Waste Management:

- There is interest in seasonal decorations alongside better garbage and recycling receptacles, which can enhance the area's visual appeal throughout the year.

6. Window Lighting:

- Implementing creative window lighting solutions was suggested to add vibrancy and attract attention to local businesses.

7. Signage Grants:

- A proposal for a signage grant to improve business signage was made, aiming to boost visibility and enhance branding efforts.

8. Tree Removal:

- Some respondents suggested removing the tree in front of Talbot Street North, likely for reasons related to visibility or space utilization.

9. Praise for the New Streetscape:

- Positive feedback regarding the new streetscape indicates appreciation for recent improvements and a desire to build on this momentum.

10. Healing or Community Wellness Garden:

- A proposal for a healing garden or community wellness garden reflects a growing interest in green spaces that promote well-being and community engagement.

Conclusion

The feedback from everyone involved shows a wide range of ideas for making Essex Centre even better through various projects. The focus on keeping things clean, having a consistent look, and creating welcoming public spaces highlights our shared goal of building a lively and attractive community.

Ideas for Marketing and Promotional Projects to Benefit Essex Centre

Businesses were asked to share their thoughts on potential marketing and promotional projects that the BIA could implement to benefit both individual businesses and the Essex Centre community. The feedback brought in a mix of creative and inclusive suggestions that focus on boosting community engagement and shining a spotlight on local businesses.

Key Suggestions

1. Block Parties on Main Street:

- People suggested having block parties a bit off the main street to keep things running smoothly for businesses, while still offering fun activities. Heritage Park could be a great spot for this!

2. More Inclusive Advertising:

- There is a strong call for advertising that reflects the diversity of the community and ensures all businesses are represented.

3. Open Streets for Seasonal Events:

- Hosting open street events where all businesses can join in would encourage community fun and help bring in more shoppers.

4. Social Media Spotlight for Businesses:

- Highlighting individual businesses on social media could boost their visibility and promote what they have to offer.

5. Increased Social Media Engagement:

- Respondents expressed a need for more social media efforts to create buzz around Essex Centre and its businesses.

6. Radio Advertising:

- Utilizing radio as a marketing tool was mentioned multiple times, highlighting its potential to reach a wider audience and promote community events.

7. Stroll the Street Events:

- The idea of organizing stroll-the-street events was noted, providing an opportunity for residents and visitors to explore local shops and enjoy a festive atmosphere.

8. Exploring Off-Main Street Opportunities:

- Encouragement to explore marketing initiatives that highlight businesses located off the main street could help diversify traffic and awareness.

9. Ongoing Promotion of Downtown:

- A consistent effort to promote downtown Essex Centre as a whole was identified as essential to attract visitors and support local businesses.

10. Enhanced Social Media Posts and Promotions:

- More frequent and engaging social media posts were recommended to keep the community informed and excited about local events and offerings.

Conclusion

The insights gathered from stakeholders reveal a strong desire for collaborative, engaging, and inclusive marketing strategies that not only promote individual businesses but also enhance the overall appeal of Essex Centre.

Feedback for the BIA Board of Directors

We asked businesses to share their thoughts with the Board of Directors, welcoming both positive feedback and constructive criticism. The responses reflect a mix of appreciation for the BIA's efforts, suggestions for improvement, and insights into the community's evolving needs.

Positive Feedback

1. Engagement and Support:

- Many respondents praised the BIA for effectively engaging local businesses and fostering a sense of community. Comments highlighted the positive shift in the BIA's direction and the friendly atmosphere created for newcomers.

2. Community Events:

- The mixers and events like Santa's Village and the StreetFest received particular acclaim. Participants noted that these initiatives provide valuable networking opportunities and enhance community spirit.

3. Communication Efforts:

- Several respondents expressed appreciation for the BIA's presence on social media and efforts to connect small businesses, acknowledging the hard work involved in these initiatives.

4. Support for New Owners:

- New business owners specifically noted the helpfulness of BIA members in answering questions and providing guidance, making their transition into the community smoother.

Constructive Criticism

1. Event Ticket Sales:

- A suggestion was made to sell tickets for events like the Sip n' Shop at multiple businesses or to rotate participating locations each year to increase engagement and exposure.

2. Communication Challenges:

- Some respondents mentioned issues with emails ending up in junk folders and expressed a desire for more inclusive benefits that cater to all businesses. A few indicated they could benefit from becoming more involved with the BIA.

3. Clarity on BIA's Role:

- A respondent noted uncertainty regarding the BIA's functions, suggesting that clearer communication about the organization's purpose and activities could enhance engagement.