



Essex Centre BIA Board Meeting Minutes

Wednesday, April 16, 2025, 7:00pm

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
Mesba Qasim, BIA Board Treasurer
Kelly Baillargeon, Coordinator
Katie McGuire-Blais, Ward 1 Councillor

Also Present: Doug Sweet, CAO, Town of Essex
Josh Girard, Josh's NoFrills

Regrets: RaeAnn Schroeder, Economic Development, Town of Essex
Nelson Silveira, Economic Development, Town of Essex

1. Call to Order

The Chair called the meeting to order at 7:00 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 conflicts of interest noted at this time.

4. Adoption of Published Agenda

4.1. Essex Centre BIA Board Meeting Agenda for April 16, 2025

BIA25-04-001

Moved by A. Schinkel

Seconded by G. Laframboise

That the published agenda for the April 16, 2025 Essex Centre BIA Board Meeting be adopted as presented.

Carried.

5. Adoption of Minutes

5.1. Essex Centre BIA Board Meeting Minutes for March 19, 2025

BIA25-04-002

Moved by A. Schinkel

Seconded by G. Laframboise

That the minutes of the Essex Centre BIA Board Meeting held March 19, 2025 be adopted as circulated.

Carried.

6. Correspondence

6.1. Treasurer's Report

The Treasurer's report is attached.

6.2. Report from Council Representative

Councillor McGuire-Blais provided the following report:

- Council received a notice of motion to create a poster and slogan about harassment and bullying.
- The Balance Wellness Centre was contacted regarding diversity training.
- It was suggested that the BIA could offer HR and diversity training for small business employees, possibly discussed at the upcoming BIA Mix & Mingle.
- Downtown garbage remains an issue. Council requested a report on bin quantity and placement, with an update expected in June and a full report by the end of summer.
- Patio season is approaching, and a new patio policy is in effect. Businesses interested in a patio should contact the Economic Development Department for more information.
- Some bollards from the streetscape project are being removed due to parking concerns. Planters or other barriers will be installed in their place.
- Green Day garage clean-up is scheduled for May 10 with the Green Team. Members are welcome to participate.
- Some business owners and staff continue to park in front of their stores. A reminder may be needed to encourage keeping those spaces available for customers.

BIA25-04-003

Moved by A. Schinkel

Seconded by G. Laframboise

That the Correspondence listed in Agenda Item 6 be received.

Carried.

7. Members

7.1. Member Requests

Summary from Downtown Walkthrough – April 3, 2025

Participants: Kelly and Raeann (Economic Development Department)

As part of the April 3rd downtown walkthrough, Kelly and Raeann met with several business members. Below is a summary of the key concerns, suggestions, and feedback received:

- **Accessibility:**
Multiple businesses expressed the need for accessible entrances but noted that the cost of upgrades is a barrier.
- **Grants & Funding:**
There is strong interest in financial support for equipment upgrades, energy efficiency improvements, staffing, and point-of-sale (POS) systems.
- **Web & Technology Needs:**
Several businesses requested assistance with modernizing their websites and enhancing online sales capabilities.
- **Operational Challenges:**
Common issues include staffing shortages, limited space, rising rents, and decreased foot traffic.
- **Municipal Concerns:**
Business owners raised concerns about the Town's procurement processes and challenges with commercial recycling pickup.
- **Positive Feedback:**
Some members expressed appreciation for local community programs and noted the value of recent grant information, particularly for new or transitioning businesses.

7.2. New Businesses/Closing/Change of location

- Blimey's has announced it will be closing in May 2025.
- Wine O'Willies has also announced it will be closing in May 2025.
- It was noted that an Aesthetician will be opening up at 41 Talbot St N, Essex.

BIA25-04-004

Moved by A. Schinkel

Seconded by G. Laframboise

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

Carried.

8. The Ontario Business Improvement Area Association (OBIAA) Annual Conference Review

Leadership & BIA Development

- Understanding leadership styles improves team dynamics and decision-making.
- Confident, adaptable leadership supports a thriving BIA.
- Collaboration and shared vision build community trust.
- Practical tools like role-play and vision-mapping can enhance planning and communication in Essex.

FICE (First Impressions Community Exchange)

- Affordable way to gather feedback from new visitors.
- Helps identify blind spots and improve the downtown experience.
- Recommended for Essex BIA to support tourism and branding.

Creemore BIA Tour – Placemaking

- Village Green Project turned vacant land into a public space through private funding.

- Community-led spaces boost events and foot traffic.
- Essex could explore underused areas for seasonal or public use.

Thornbury BIA Tour – Local Identity

- Strong branding through local shops and consistent programming.
- Highlighted the power of storytelling and business-owner pride.
- Essex can benefit from more storytelling and seasonal community events.

9. Events

9.1. Downtown Dollar Spring Campaign- May 6, 2025

\$75,000 worth of Downtown Dollars will be available for sale.

9.2. Member Spring Mixer- May 22, 2025

The Mix & Mingle will be held at The Original Michigan Diner at 27 Victoria, Essex.

9.3. Essex Centre Streetfest

The 2025 Essex Centre Streetfest will take place on June 21, August 16, and October 11.

9.4. Soap Box Derby- September 27, 2025

No updates were presented.

BIA25-04-005

Moved by A. Schinkel

Seconded by K. Dennison

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

Carried.

10. Marketing, Promotions & Social Media

10.1. Easter Promotion-April 20, 2025

No updates were presented.

10.2. Essex Free Press Business Profiler

No updates were presented.

10.3. Neighbours Magazine

The Essex BIA has sent an email to members inviting them to participate in the *Essex Neighbours* magazine feature. Each month, one BIA member will be randomly selected to be featured in a \$750 ad space, with no cost to the selected business. Additionally, BIA members are offered an exclusive discount on all advertising packages with *Essex Neighbours*.

BIA25-04-006

Moved by A. Schinkel

Seconded by G. Laframboise

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

11. Beautification

11.1. Downtown Parkette

No updates were presented.

11.2. 2 Talbot Street South Unit 1

The fencing will be installed by the end of the month.

BIA25-04-007

Moved by A. Schinkel

Seconded by G. Laframboise

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

Carried.

12. New Business

Video production for member business commercials is scheduled for April 24 at the following locations: Beau's Autoeverything, Red Apple Essex, Bright Yoga, and Billy's Taphouse.

Jane's Walk – Alice in Wonderland: A Stroll Down Historic Alice Street is scheduled for April 25, 2025. The walk will explore one of Essex Centre's oldest neighbourhoods and share details about local conservation plans.

It was suggested that the Town of Essex welcome sign, which displays service groups and community organizations and is owned by the Essex BIA, be reviewed for a potential update or refresh.

13. Adjournment

BIA25-04-008

Moved by A. Schinkel

Seconded by G. Laframboise

That the meeting be adjourned at 8:07pm.

Stephanie Winger – Chair

Kelly Baillargeon –Recording Secretary