



**The Corporation of the Town of Essex**

**Affordable Housing Task Force Meeting Minutes**

May 27, 2025, 4:00 pm

Location: Essex Municipal Building, 33 Talbot Street South

Present: Lynda Leopold - Chair  
Richard Kokovai - Vice-Chair  
William Baker  
Chris Carpenter  
Fiona Coughlin  
Frazier Fathers  
Fred Groves  
Rodney Hammond, Councillor, Ward 4  
Dorene Lester  
Rachael Mills  
Kim Verbeek, Councillor Ward 2

Absent: Jo-Ann Conrod  
Amanda Morgan

Also Present: Lori Chadwick, Director, Development Services  
Marsha Buchta, Recording Secretary  
RaeAnn Schroeder, Business Analyst, Economic Development and Business Relations

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

**1. Call to Order**

The Chair, Lynda Leopold, called the meeting to order at 4:09 p.m. Mr. Chris Carpenter arrived at 4:17 p.m.

**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 Affordable Housing Task Force Meeting Agenda for May 27, 2025**

**AHTF25-05-08**

Moved By Fred Groves

Seconded By Richard Kokovai

**That** the published agenda for the May 27, 2025 Affordable Housing Task Force Meeting be adopted as amended to add agenda item 7.2 - Council's delegation request at the AMO Conference.

**Carried**

**5. Adoption of Minutes**

**5.1 Affordable Housing Task Force Minutes for February 11, 2025**

**AHTF25-05-09**

Moved By Richard Kokovai

Seconded By Frazier Fathers

**That** the minutes of the Affordable Housing Task Force meeting held February 11, 2025 be adopted as circulated.

**Carried**

**6. Unfinished Business**

**AHTF25-05-10**

Moved By Richard Kokovai

Seconded By Frazier Fathers

That all the items listed in Agenda Item 6 Unfinished Business be received.

**Carried**

**6.1 Update on the Harrow High School RFP**

No proposals were submitted during the Request for Proposal (RFP) period between December 2024 - March 2025. The RFP was revised as per Council direction to remove the 20 percent mandatory affordable housing requirement. The RFP was reposted in April 2025 and has a closure date of July 9, 2025. Mr. Chris Carpenter suggested we may have to go outside of the region to garner interest in affordable housing development. Home building associations in London and Toronto have much more experience in redevelopment of property. The Town has completed several studies to evaluate the current site conditions, to ensure developers have relevant information on the property prior to submitting proposals.

**6.2 Surety Bonds Update**

Council has adopted a surety bond policy allowing developers to submit securities in the form of surety bonds, in addition to cash and letter of credit. Website improvements are being completed to ensure all the development-related fees information is housed in one location.

**6.3 Mobile Homes / Land Leases - Strategies to Help**

6.3.1 Council direction to send a letter to various agencies and bodies regarding rent rates for land lease properties

A letter to the County of Essex has been drafted. Member Kokovai recommended a lawyer review the documents to ensure that what the mobile home operators are doing is illegal prior to sending letters of support to the province. Member Baker offered to have the documents reviewed by a lawyer for information purposes. Mayor Bondy hosted two open houses attended by many residents who detailed similar issues of large increases in land leases. Infrastructure issues continue to be an issue for some of the mobile home parks and even with large rent increases, infrastructure improvements allegedly are not being completed. As more people discuss the issue with land leased communities, more opportunities for solutions may be brought forward. Member Kokovai suggested there may be an opportunity to approach the University Law program to see if they would be able to host legal workshops to better educate residents on their rights within the mobile home community.

**AHTF25-05-11**

Moved By Kim Verbeek, Councillor Ward 2

Seconded By Fiona Coughlin

That the Affordable Housing Task Force support Council's direction of a letter to the County of Essex regarding Land leased communities within the region.

**Carried**

**7. New Discussions**

**AHTF25-05-12**

Moved By Dorene Lester

Seconded By Richard Kokovai

**That** all the items listed in Agenda Item 7 New Business be received for information.

**Carried**

**7.1 Affordable Housing Strategies and Tactics to Address Barriers**

Members presented proposed and potential strategies and tactics to address key barriers to affordable housing, as assigned at the February 2025 Task Force Meeting:

**7.1.1 Regulatory & Policy as presented by Lynda Leopold and William Baker**

- Streamline zoning and approval process - small counties have community planning permit systems which combines zoning, site plan and minor variance in a streamlined approval process delegated to staff.
- Permitting Additional Dwelling Units.
- Permitting mixed use dwellings / expanding the types of housing options.

- Bill 17 - Members should read the executive summary to familiarize themselves with the changes Bill 17 may have if it receives Royal Assent.

#### 7.1.2 Financial & Economic as presented by Richard Kokovai and Chris Carpenter

- Municipal Incentives and Funding Programs - Waive or reduce development charges and create a local Housing Reserve Fund.
- Leverage Federal & Provincial Programs - Tap into CMHC's Co-Investment Fund, Rapid Housing Initiative, and provincial grants.
- Innovative Financing & Partnerships - Encourage public-private partnerships, community bonds, and shared-equity homeownership models.

#### 7.1.3 Supply & Development as presented by Dorene Lester and Fiona Coughlin

- Lack of suitable and serviced land - land banking, surplus land use, land trust, GIS updates.
- Access to land and land readiness - proactive study completion (environmental, geotechnical), library for developers, demolition of unsafe structures, pre-zone for medium density, servicing investment.
- Municipal process delays and capacity limitations - Housing facilitator employment, increase staff, encourage preapproved design and CSA modular development.
- Skilled labour shortages and rising construction costs- Pilot modular and prefab construction, encourage cost effective designs
- Perceived market challenges in rural areas - development of marketing materials promoting Essex as affordable.
- Zoning Restrictions - Allow more diverse options.

#### 7.1.4 Community & Social as presented by Councillor Rodney Hammond

- Public Engagement & Education - promote Essex as Affordable place to live.
- Foster Social Integration - ensure supportive services are available near housing.

#### 7.1.5 Partnerships & Collaboration as presented by Rachael Mills and Fred Groves

- Cross-Sector collaboration - housing roundtable including municipal, non-profit, developers and employers.
- Engage Private Sector - incentivize developers to include below market units through expedited approvals.
- Strengthen Non-Profit Capacity - provide training, foster partnerships with developers.

7.1.6 Data & Information as presented by Councillor Kim Verbeek & Frazier Fathers

- Improve Data Collection & Sharing - Maintain up-to-date local data on vacancies, housing stock and demographic trends, create accessible dashboards.
- Public Awareness of Programs - Centralize information on all housing-related incentives on a user-friendly platform.
- Monitoring & Evaluation - Establish clear targets and KPIs, regularly report progress to Council and the public.

**7.2 Council is seeking the Affordable Housing Task Force’s input on the delegation request at AMO Conference**

Mr. Chris Carpenter and Mr. Fred Groves to draft a statement on behalf of the Affordable Housing Task Force on affordable housing issues specific to Essex and the criticality of the land leased communities.

**8. Adjournment**

**AHTF25-05-13**

Moved By Fiona Coughlin

Seconded By Dorene Lester

**That** the meeting be adjourned at 6:54 p.m.

**Carried**

**9. Future Meetings**

Tuesday, August 12, 2025, at 4:00 p.m. at The Harrow and Colchester South Community Room, Harrow Arena, 243 McAfee Street, Harrow.

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Chair

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Recording Secretary