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County Council Highlights for March 4, 2026

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News Notices and Announcements



2025 Employee Excellence Awards winners



Warden honours Paramedic, celebrates County employees

Warden Hilda MacDonald opened Wednesday night's Council meeting paying tribute to Jennifer Miner, an Essex-Windsor EMS Paramedic who passed away last Saturday while off

duty.

"Jen, as her beloved and admiring colleagues called her, was one of our devoted, front-line community Paramedics. She served the community for nearly 30 years and received her Governor General's Exemplary Service Medal in 2019," said MacDonald. "Jen was universally admired for her kindness and the compassion she always demonstrated while caring for patients around the region ... It is a tragedy her life was cut short so abruptly. But you will never be forgotten, Jen – by the countless residents you cared for and by everyone who worked proudly alongside you at Essex-Windsor EMS."

Following a moment of silence, MacDonald welcomed County of Essex employees and their families who were in Council Chambers for the second annual Employee Excellence Awards. Awards are handed out in four categories aligned with the County's Strategic Plan – Team Spirit, Innovation, Service Excellence and Empowerment.

"These awards are presented annually to employees from across our corporation, who best embody our organizational values, who demonstrate excellence in their roles, and who inspire others to achieve their best," said MacDonald. "I know I speak for all County Councillors in passing along our heartfelt thanks, and appreciation, for jobs well done."

Employee Excellence Awards presented to outstanding county staff

Twenty employees from multiple departments in the County of Essex were celebrated Wednesday night at the second annual Employee Excellence Awards. Employees were recognized in four categories aligning with the County's Strategic Plan – Team Spirit, Innovation, Service Excellence and Empowerment.

Sue Vidinovski, a Human Resources Assistant, won the Team Spirit Award for her "consistent commitment to collaboration, support and fostering a positive team environment" and for always displaying "an upbeat, energetic attitude and a genuine willingness to help, making her a trusted and valued team member."

Jay Gilchrist, a Network Administrator with the Information Technology department, won the Innovation award because he "consistently delivers creative solutions, improvements and ideas to drive progress and enhance County of Essex operations."

Cat Griffin, Communications Coordinator for the Essex-Windsor Solid Waste Authority, won the Service Excellence award for always making herself available "to ensure an emergency or urgent deadline is met, even if it means stepping in for another team member who is not available." She was praised for her dedication and support for others, which leaves "a lasting effecting on everyone fortunate enough to have worked alongside her."

Jeanie Diamond-Francis, the Manger of Community Services, won the Empowerment award for her tireless advocacy "for the vulnerable in our community and the members of her staff on her small but mighty team." She was lauded for her efforts to address affordable housing and homelessness in the County and delivering "exceptional service every day."

[Read the full write-ups for the Winners and Honourable Mentions!](#)

Council approves User Fee By-law, Green Bin charges

Council approved a User Fee By-law for 2026 that includes charges for the Green Bin program and directed Administration to report on transitioning to a levy-based funding model for the 2028 budget year.

Council had previously voted to charge eligible residential households user fees to cover the costs of the new organics collection service. For 2026, that would include eligible residential households in Essex, Lakeshore, LaSalle and Tecumseh. Residents in the Phase 2 municipalities of Amherstburg, Kingsville and Leamington would not be charged a user fee until 2027, after organics collection begins for them in the autumn of 2026. A number of properties, including institutional, commercial and industrial properties, are not being offered the service at this time, and, as such, are not subject to the initially proposed user fee.

"The Green Bin user fee is not a tax and does not form part of the County levy. It is a service-specific charge intended to recover the cost of providing the Green Bin program from eligible households," **said a report to Council.**

Green Bin program user fees will vary by municipality and are based on actual program costs, including tonnage collected and fixed operational expenses. This ensures the user fee is tied as closely as possible to the cost of service delivery within each municipality, consistent with the user-pay principle.

Proposed details, including the **estimated** household costs by Phase 1 municipality for all of 2026 and three months of 2025, are shown in the table below:

Municipality	Number of eligible households	2025 budgeted costs to be recovered	2026 budgeted costs to be recovered	Total to be recovered (2026 tax bill)	Green Bin user fee per household
Essex	8,478	\$254,231	\$1,323,577	\$1,577,808	\$186.11
Lakeshore	15,168	\$459,421	\$2,389,693	\$2,849,114	\$187.84
LaSalle	11,307	\$342,176	\$1,782,097	\$2,124,273	\$187.87
Tecumseh	8,410	\$248,772	\$1,295,642	\$1,544,414	\$183.64

Municipalities are authorized under Section 391 of the Municipal Act, 2001, to impose fees or charges for services provided, including solid waste services, on a cost-recovery basis. Council voted in June of 2024 to endorse the user-fee funding model that would see the charge appear on local tax bills, with the revenue collected on behalf of the County and paid to the Essex-Windsor Solid Waste Authority, which operates the Green Bin program.

For more information about the Green Bin program, please visit the County's FAQ page at www.countyofessex.ca/greenbin.

Also included in the proposed User Fees and Charges By-law for 2026 is a proposed increase in the fee for commissioning documents, from \$20 to \$25, and a proposed increase in the fee for Ambulance Call Report (ACR) Requests, from \$75 to \$100. There is no fee charged when an individual submits an ACR request related to their own care.

[Read the report!](#)

[Read the Fees and Charges By-law Schedule!](#)

Council votes to receive Green Bin program funding report

Council voted to receive a report from Melissa Ryan, Director of Financial Services/Treasurer, outlining the implications of offsetting the costs of the Green Bin program with reserves.

“Reserves are established to protect the County against financial risk, revenue volatility, and unforeseen pressures,” [said the report](#). “They are not intended to support ongoing operating programs on a recurring basis.”

The report noted that no reserve had been established for the Green Bin program and that it would not be appropriate or financially prudent to draw funds from other reserves.

[Read the report!](#)

Notice of Motion to offset Green Bin costs defeated

Council voted against a motion by Councillor Tracey Bailey to offset Green Bin program costs by using reserves.

The motion sought to fund 100 per cent of the program from reserves in 2026 and offset costs again in 2027 and 2028.

The Green Bin funding report prepared by Melissa Ryan, Director of Financial Services/Treasurer, identified the impact to the Rate Stabilization Reserve if the proposed plan was approved, noting the reserve would fall into a significant deficit position.

Public Petitions Policy formalized

Council approved a By-law that formalizes the County’s Public Petitions Policy, outlined until now only as an item under the County Council section on the County’s website.

Read the [Policy!](#)

Notice of Motion on regional social services delivery

Councillor Tracey Bailey introduced a Notice of Motion calling on the County to formally express its opposition to “the pursuit or development of a County-administered social services delivery system” and to affirm its support for the existing model.

The Notice of Motion will be debated at a future meeting of Council.

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Contact Us

County of Essex

360 Fairview Ave W, Essex ON N8M 1Y6

Telephone: **519-776-6441**

TTY: **1-877-624-4832**

Fax: **519-776-4455**

coeinfo@countyofessex.ca

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360 Fairview Ave W, Essex ON N8M 1Y6

Telephone: [519-776-6441](tel:519-776-6441)

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Fax: [519-776-4455](tel:519-776-4455)

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