



The Corporation of the Town of Essex
Essex Festival Committee Meeting Minutes

February 18, 2026, 6:00 pm
Barnett Room, Essex Centre Sports Complex, 60 Fairview Ave W, Essex, ON N8M 1B6

Present: Councillor - Garon, Joe, Ward 1
Vice Chair - Tapping, Richard
Member - Atkinson, Nicole
Member, Caitlynn Back
Member - Knapp, Derek
Member - Verbeek, Kim

Absent: Member - Hellinga, Chris
Member - McGuire-Blais, Katie

Also Present: Jake Morassut, Director, Community Services
Donna Pearson

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.

1. Call to Order

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

No conflicts of interest to report.

4. Adoption of Published Agenda

4.1 Essex Festival Committee Meeting Agenda for February 18, 2026

Moved By Kim Verbeek

Seconded By Caitlynn Back

That the published agenda for the February 18, 2026, Essex Festival Committee Meeting be adopted as presented.

Carried

5. Adoption of Minutes

5.1 Essex Festival Committee Minutes for January 22, 2026

Moved By Derek Knapp
Seconded By Richard Tapping, Vice Chair

That the minutes of the Essex Festival Committee meeting held January 22, 2026, be adopted as circulated.

Carried

6. Financials

- Joe Garon, Chair, explains the financial situation, noting reserves of \$191,159.06 and a budget of \$280,000, detailing the budget breakdown, including sponsorships, gate donations, and entertainment costs.
- Review the convention/conference fees line in the festival budget (investigate the \$6,000 figure and adjust projected costs if needed) and report recommended changes for the budget.
- Obtain a quote from the bike-valet provider (confirm cost and service scope) and provide the quote so it can be included in the festival budget.
- Provide the LEGO-company activation quote and follow up with festival organizers (share details with Katie, Kim, and Nicole) for potential Central Park activation.
- Mention was made explaining the budget for various expenses, including salaries, convention fees, materials, and security services, the budget for entertainment, including main stage, beer tent, and other areas.

7. New Business

- Joe Garon, Chair, discusses a letter about the code of conduct, emphasizing professional conduct and respect.
- Code of Conduct was read by Jake Morassut, Director, Community Services in which Jake mentions he will email the Town Code of Conduct to all board members, confirming whether the letter can be circulated, and determine if an official complaint form is required for conduct issues.
- The group discusses the need for a formal complaint process for violations of the code of conduct.

8. Unfinished Business

That the verbal updates listed in Agenda Item 6 be received.

8.1 Operations and Site Management

8.1.1 Festival Grounds Layout

Joe Garon, Chair, presents the overall layout of the festival, including changes in vendor locations and accessibility, the placement of non-food vendors, food vendors, and the food court area.

Mention was made of the placement of the main stage, beer tent, and other areas, including vendor parking and the addition of a VIP area with the need for a tent for checking people with parking passes.

8.1.2 Set-up and Take Down

8.1.3 Perimeter Fencing

8.1.4 Signage

8.1.5 Gates and Admissions

8.1.6 Park Hours

- The operating partner does not want to be open past 11:00 p.m.
- Thursday is now a full, required operational day for vendors.

8.1.7 Parking

8.1.8 Off-Site Parking

8.1.9 Shuttle Transportation

8.1.10 Family Tent

8.2 Marketing, Social Media and Advertising

- Richard Tapping, ViceChair, introduces the revamped website, designed for mobile use and featuring a search bar, schedule, and my events page.
- Joe Garon, Chair, discusses the use of Google Forms for food awards and the auto-tallying of results.

8.3 Sponsorship

- Sponsorship is also tied to perks/incentives, such as:
 - Discounted ride passes from the ride company for sponsors and volunteers.
 - Potential VIP experiences (e.g., the VIP area near the main stage).

8.4 Volunteers

- Joe Garon, Chair, discusses the agreement with the ride company for discounted passes for sponsors and volunteers with the possibility of offering food vouchers as incentives for volunteers.
- A suggestion was made to create a form for volunteers to report issues, similar to the one for attendees.

8.5 Vendors

8.5.1 Vendor Rates

Joe Garon, Chair, confirms no changes in vendor fees for food and non-food vendors.

8.5.2 Food and Beverage Vendors

8.5.3 Non-Food/Craft Vendors

8.6 Attractions

8.6.1 Youth Talent Show

8.6.2 Central Park

- Joe Garon, Chair, presents a quote from Rob Great for a Lego-themed activation in Central Park, the different options for the Lego activation, including the size and cost.
- Mention was made to use the Central Park area for an open-concept family fun zone with picnic tables, umbrellas, interactive activities and the possibility of adding a smaller inflatable or maze for younger children.
- Kim Verbeek and Joe Garon, Chair, discuss the need for a roof or cover for the kids' zone to prevent overheating, and misting/cooling tents. cornhole
- Joe Garon, Chair, suggests Nicole review the Grand River catalog for additional ideas, emphasizing the need for toddler-friendly attractions.
- The group considers using local rental companies that are TSA certified for equipment rentals and the importance of having TSA-certified workers for municipal events.

8.6.3 Parade

- A parade is planned as part of the festival where \$5,000 has been allocated to cover the costs.

8.6.4 Thrill Show/Event

8.6.5 Car Show

- Car/showcase vehicles will be concentrated in specific “showcase” areas (likely in or near Central Park), rather than scattered along the original entrance roads.

8.6.6 Watermelon Contest

8.6.7 Fireworks

- Fireworks budgeted at \$15,000 for a major display.

8.6.8 Bingo

- A suggestion was made about running bingo games in the Central Park area, with prizes donated by vendors.

8.6.9 Midway & Amusement Rides

- Same amusement ride setup as last year (numbers and revenue line are carried over in the budget).
- Agreement in place with the ride company, including discounted passes especially for sponsors and volunteers.
- Wrestling attraction budgeted at \$3,750 as a specific draw.

8.7 Sip 'N Shop Wine Mixer

8.7.1 Decor/Decorations

8.7.2 Non-Profit Beneficiary

8.7.3 Wineries

8.7.4 Caterer/Food Vendors

- Hosting a rib & chicken cook-off:
 - Categories like Best Sauce, Best Rib, Best Beverage, Best Dessert/Soda, Best Overall.
 - Voting will be done through the festival app/website on attendees' phones.

8.7.5 BIA Vendors

8.7.6 Hours of Operation

8.7.7 Gates and Admissions

8.7.8 Entertainment

8.7.9 Raffle

8.7.10 Ticket Pricing

8.7.11 Parking

8.7.12 Layout

8.8 Beer Tent

8.8.1 Hours of Operation

8.8.2 Gates and Admissions

8.8.3 Product and Pricing

8.8.4 Bar Management

8.8.5 Security and Crowd Control

8.8.6 Entertainment

8.8.7 Parking

8.8.8 Power

8.8.9 Layout

8.9 Main Stage

8.9.1 Entertainment

- Joe Garon, Chair, mentions the goal of securing \$70,000 in sponsorships, with some sponsors already confirmed.
- Discussion regarding the booking of acts for the main stage, including Killer Hooks and DJ Rye with the possibility of hiring local entertainment.
- Joe Garon, Chair, mentions there was no need for a secondary stage with the possibility of having performers walk around the festival and mentions the availability of the production company for main stage, video wall, and beer tent sound and lighting.

8.9.2 Stage Rental

8.9.3 Production

- 8.9.4 Bar Management
- 8.9.5 Security and Crowd Control
- 8.9.6 Parking
- 8.9.7 Power
- 8.9.8 Other Rentals and Operation
- 8.9.9 Layout
- 8.9.10 Gates and Admissions

9. Adjournment

Moved By Caitlynn Back
Seconded By Derek Knapp

That the meeting be adjourned at 7:30pm.

Carried

10. Future Meetings

Fun Fest Meeting:

March 26th, 2026,

April 23rd

May 21st @ Barnett Room 6pm-8pm

Chair

Recording Secretary