



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

March 26, 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, Caitlynn Back
Member - McGuire-Blais, Katie
Member - Verbeek, Kim

Absent: Member - Atkinson, Nicole
Member - Hellinga, Chris
Member - Knapp, Derek

Also Present: 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 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 March 26, 2026

Moved by Katie McGuire-Blais

Seconded by Richard Tapping

That the published agenda for the March 26, 2026, Essex Festival Committee Meeting be adopted as presented / amended.

5. Adoption of Minutes

5.1 Essex Festival Committee Minutes for February 18, 2026

Moved by Kim Verbeek

Seconded by Rich Tapping

That the minutes of the Essex Festival Committee meeting held February 18, 2026, be adopted as circulated.

6. Financials

7. New Business

Joe Garon mentions the need to discuss committee positions and responsibilities, including assignments for various areas like parade, car show, and food vendors. Assigning Richard Tapping to handle the parade, with help from friends and volunteers, Chris Hellinga and Katie McGuire-Blais are assigned to the car show, while Chris Hellinga will also monitor the front gates. Kim Verbeek is tasked with handling food vendors in Central Park, with help from Nicole Atkinson and Derek Knapp, also, Caitlynn Back is to handle volunteers, with himself and Jake managing the Midway rides and operations.

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

8.1.2 Set-up and Take Down

8.1.3 Perimeter Fencing

Discussion on fencing and perimeter setup, with a need for security on Wednesday and the need for volunteers to help with various tasks, including fence checks and garbage runs.

Mention made for Jake Morassut to talk to the Festival to set up on Tuesday as Wednesday is a holiday.

8.1.4 Signage

8.1.5 Gates & Admissions

Need to touch base with TipTap to get them ordered at least a month in advance.

8.1.6 Park Hours

Joe Garon discusses the need to avoid work on Canada Day, suggesting vendors be in place by Monday and Tuesday.

Park hours on Sunday will be 11am-5pm with the rides going until 11pm every night and not midnight

8.1.7 Parking

8.1.8 Off-Site Parking

Unsure of where the off-site parking is located, need to review.

8.1.9 Shuttle Transportation

8.1.10 Family Tent

Placement will be in Central Park

8.2 Marketing, Social Media and Advertising

Richard Tapping mentions that we don't have any ads running currently. We are about 33 away from having 3000 followers on Facebook and as we find out who our concert players are, then we're really pushing that. Website is up and running and it's updated. So, if anybody sees anything that's outdated or wrong or incorrect, just send Richard a message to let him know. Video is being worked on right now for promotions.

8.3 Sponsorship

Richard Tapping review Sponsorships- \$41,000 committed so far. We are looking at more new sponsors and re-allocating the car dealerships. Looking for a major sponsor.

Discussion was made about refurbishing invites and calling stores to give them a heads up about the event.

Joe Garon suggests having Schinkels do the food again, recalling their previous barbecue and smoked Oreos.

8.4 Volunteers

Caitlynn Back presents data on volunteer demographics, highlighting the need for better incentives. Discussion regarding the effectiveness of current incentives, including ride passes, food vouchers, and the merits of different incentives, including the possibility of a \$25 ride pass.

Emphasis is added to the importance of recognizing volunteers and ensuring they have meaningful tasks.

Joe Garon discusses the need for front gate monitoring and the addition of main stage gates on Friday and Saturday nights.

8.5 Vendors

8.5.1 Vendor Rates

8.5.2 Food and Beverage Vendors

Joe Garon reports on the 42 vendor applications received, with 14 spots available (3 consisting of the Rib Booths). Mention was made of specific vendors, including a Mexican food vendor and various food trucks, and the need for further discussions with some applicants.

8.5.3 Non-Food/Craft Vendors

Non-food vendors are discussed, with a focus on ensuring a mix of promotional and sales-oriented booths.

A suggestion was made that Trim light should light up Central Park instead of the Beer tent.

Essex Yellow Jackets' request to run a dunk tank, and Joe Garon confirms the necessary information, liability coverage, and the logistics of the dunk tank, including the need for daily emptying and refilling.

8.6 Attractions

8.6.1 Youth Talent Show

Joe Garon discusses the youth talent show and the potential delay in stage delivery due to the Canada holiday and the potential need for a

makeshift stage for the youth talent show if the main stage isn't ready in time. Kim Verbeek mentions the arena as a backup for the youth talent show.

Joe Garon confirms the importance of having a quiet area for the talent show to avoid distractions.

8.6.2 Central Park

Joe Garon plans to send an email to Nicole Atkinson and Kim Verbeek about the Central Park area for further discussion.

Joe Garon discusses the need for a secondary stage with the potential for a makeshift stage in Central Park, the booking of fireworks and the possibility of having multiple bingo sessions in Central Park.

Joe Garon plans to buy extra items like neon balloons and bubbles for the kids' experience.

8.6.3 Parade

8.6.4 Thrill Show/Event

Mention is made regarding starting advertising for the parade and the thrill show event, which will include wrestling and other activities.

8.6.5 Car Show

8.6.6 Watermelon Contest

8.6.7 Fireworks

8.6.8 Bingo

Discussion took place regarding if we need to invest in equipment and a shade tent?

8.6.9 Midway & Amusement Rides

Joe Garon discusses the booking of Midway amusement rides and the challenges with wineries like Viewpoint.

8.7 Sip 'N Shop Wine Mixer

8.7.1 Decor/Decorations

8.7.2 Non-Profit Beneficiary

8.7.3 Wineries

5 wineries are committed, Oxley has been approved

8.7.4 Caterer/Food Vendors

8.7.5 BIA Vendors

8.7.6 Hours of Operation

8.7.7 Admission Fees

Joe Garon plans to schedule a meeting with the committee to discuss ticket pricing and other logistics.

8.7.8 Entertainment

Joe Garon mentions the use of LED video walls to promote sponsors on the main stage and the challenges of booking bigger acts for the main stage, including higher costs and specific requirements from the entertainment.

Joe Garon confirms the booking of the Band for Friday night and the challenges of securing other acts, the budget for entertainment, (which is \$115,000,) and the need to spend more to meet grant requirements.

No daytime programming will be scheduled.

8.7.9 Raffle

8.7.10 Ticket Pricing

8.7.11 Parking

8.7.12 Layout

Joe Garon talks about the need to allocate spaces for vendors, emphasizing the importance of a true market experience.

Suggestion was made that the Yellow Jackets work the parking lot for fundraising, and Joe Garon agrees, noting the potential for more money without investing in product.

8.8 Beer Tent

8.8.1 Hours of Operation

8.8.2 Admission

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

Joe Garon discusses the setup of the beer tent and the involvement of Tony's Joint as a sponsor.

8.9 Main Stage

8.9.1 Entertainment

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 & Admissions

8.10 FEO Conference Report

Nicole Adkinson could not attend this meeting therefore, the FEO Report will be brought forward at the next meeting.

9. Adjournment

That the meeting be adjourned at 7:30pm.

10. Future Meetings

- April 23, 2026 – Barnett Board Room @ 6pm (Essex Centre Sports Complex)
- May 21, 2026 - Barnett Board Room @ 6pm (Essex Centre Sports Complex)

Chair

Recording Secretary