



Southwold Economic Development Committee

Meeting Minutes

**Thursday February 8th, 2024 at 8:00 a.m.
Council Chambers/Webex Meeting**

Voting Members

Present: Deputy Mayor Justin Pennings
Councillor John Adzija
Steve Bushell
Michelle Hoffsuemmer
Barry Harrison
Grayden Laing

Regrets: Rod Rattray, Elgin Business Resource Centre

Staff/Resource: Aaron Van Oorspronk, Director of Infrastructure and Development
Carolyn Krahn, Manager of Economic Development and Strategic Initiatives
Lisa Higgs CAO/Clerk

1. Call to Order

Deputy Mayor Pennings called the meeting to order at 8:02 am.

2. Approval of Agenda

The Committee approved the agenda for the February 8th meeting.

3. Approval of the January 4th Minutes

The Committee approved the minutes as drafted from the January 4th, 2024 meeting.

4. Development and Infrastructure Updates

Director of Infrastructure and Development Aaron VanOorspronk spoke to the development initiatives currently underway in the municipality, including the recently approved and submitted draft plans of subdivision in Talbotville and North Port Stanley. Mr. VanOorspronk spoke briefly about the decision by Council to service Shedden and Fingal independent of Central Elgin and to the challenges in bringing on a new WWTP system, explaining the requirement to have minimum flows before operating the full system.

CAO/Clerk Lisa Higgs spoke to the efforts being made in Talbotville to engage with land owners of Industrially Zoned lands to move towards more industrial and commercial developments. Ms. Higgs also explained the recent efforts that are being made to advance utility availability in the community.

5. Grant Opportunity for Enabling Housing Infrastructure Fund

CAO/Clerk Lisa Higgs provided an update on a recently-announced municipal grant and the potential for significant funding being made available by the Province. Southwold is convinced that we have a very compelling application and are hopeful that we may be successful in the grant that provides 73 % of funding for the Shedden and Fingal sanitary servicing project.

6. Elgin County Update on Business Retention and Expansion Program

Elgin Manager of Economic Development Carolyn Krahn provided an update on the BR & E program that is conducting interviews until the end of February. Ms. Krahn indicated that Southwold had a strong participation rate and that County-wide they have conducted over 74 interviews.

7. Rural Equivalent of Chamber of Commerce

The Committee discussed the recent feedback from the BR&E interviews suggesting that rural business owners have indicated a preference for a more rural focused Chamber. There was a discussion on rolling it into the Chamber itself, as a sort of rural subgroup, but that past history has meant that rural events hosted by the Chamber are not as well attended. The committee decided that a good first event may be to have an EDC hosted event for Southwold businesses to serve as a networking event with various information pieces and access to various municipal staff. Carolyn Krahn indicated that Elgin County may be available to help provide a partnership in developing the event. Staff were tasked with initiating preliminary plans for the event and report back at a future meeting.

8. Municipal Auction/Market Planning – Inventory of Possible Items for Sale

The committee reviewed the inventory of items for sale, and agreed that there is not enough to hold a formal auction night. It was suggested that the office furniture be offered for sale (very cheap) at the Rosy Rhubarb festival. The Committee discussed various mechanisms to dispose of the gateway signage and

directed staff to bring a strategy back to the next meeting.

9. Highway 401 Signage Opportunity – Cost Estimates for Rental

CAO/Clerk Higgs updated that the signage rental opportunity along the 401 has been quoted at being \$10,000, which would be available to promote Southwold and many of the new developments in the community. At this time, the only thing required is a wrap to be installed on the billboard, which staff are requesting pricing on. A report will come at the next meeting with more details on costs.

10. 2024 Municipal Budget & Capital Projects Approved

CAO/Clerk Higgs provided a brief presentation of the various municipal capital projects approved as part of the 2024 budget and Director VanOorspronk provided a map with Southwold capital projects.

11. New and Other Business:

Carolyn Krahn indicated that planning for the 2024 Solar Eclipse is ongoing and the County is hosting an information session featuring the Royal Astronomy Society on February 21st at 3:30 pm.

The Committee acknowledged that 2025 will be Southwold’s 175th anniversary and the municipality may wish to start planning for recognizing the history.

12 Next Meeting date, time and location

March 21st, 2024 at 8:00 am in Council Chambers

4. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 9:05 am.

Chairperson, Justin Pennings

Staff Resource, Lisa Higgs