



Southwold Economic Development Committee

Agenda

Thursday, April 3rd, 2025 at 8:00 am
Township Council Chambers – Municipal Office Fingal

1. Call to Order
2. Approval of the Agenda
3. Approval of the February 13, 2025 Minutes
4. Development and Infrastructure Updates:
 - a. Planning – Township has engaged the County of Elgin Planning Department to provide Township Planning Services – transition will be taking place in coming weeks
 - b. Shedden Property Sales - Commercial Plaza and Former Firehall
 - c. Shedden Streetscape
 - d. Shedden/Fingal Sanitary Servicing
 - e. WWTP Updates for Shedden & Talbotville
 - f. Parks and Trails Master Plan Project
5. Elgin County Economic Development and Tourism Update
6. Business Networking Events - Update
7. Southwold 175 Update – <https://www.southwold.ca/en/recreation-and-culture/southwold-175.aspx>
8. New and Other Business:
9. Next meeting date, time and location
10. Adjourn



Southwold Economic Development Committee

Meeting Minutes

**Thursday, February 13th, 2025 at 8:00 a.m.
Council Chambers/Webex Meeting**

Present: Deputy Mayor Justin Pennings
Councillor John Adzija
Steve Bushell
Michelle Hoffsuemmer

Regrets: Barry Harrison

Staff/Resource: Aaron VanOorspronk, Director of Infrastructure and Development
Jeff Carswell, CAO/Clerk
Carolyn Krahn, Manager of Economic Development and Strategic Initiatives
Tanya Wilson, Elgin Business Resource Centre

1. Call to Order

Deputy Mayor Pennings called the meeting to order at 8:05 am.

2. Approval of Agenda

The Committee approved the agenda for the February 13th, 2025 meeting.

3. Approval of the December 12th, 2024 Minutes

The Committee approved the minutes as drafted from the December 12th, 2024 meeting.

4. Development and Infrastructure Updates

Director of Infrastructure and Development Services, Aaron VanOorspronk

reported on the following matters:

- Shedden Commercial Plaza sale and proposed development
- Former Shedden Firehall – potential sale

With the pending redevelopment of properties in the Shedden downtown, the committee discussed options for streetscape and safety improvements. With funds being available from the property sale, there may be merit to reinvesting the funds back into the downtown area. The committee was supportive of improvements. The committee would also encourage improvements in pedestrian safety, such as traffic lights at the main intersection. Development of renderings of what the downtown could look like would be helpful. Staff will reach out to obtain additional quotes for streetscape renderings.

- Shedden/Fingal Sanitary Servicing Projects
- Wastewater Treatment Plant updates for Shedden

Updates the tenders, construction timing and logistics of getting the sanitary sewer system into operation were highlighted. There will be a Public Information Centre on Wednesday, February 19 to share the project details with the community and gather feedback from property owners. It was also highlighted that Sanitary Sewer Systems are user pay systems and do not utilize tax dollars.

- Talbotville Wastewater Treatment Plant Project

An update was provided on the Talbotville WWTP Market Sounding and RFP work being completed by Colliers.

6. Elgin County Economic Development Update

Carolyn Krahn, Manager of Economic Development and Strategic Initiatives provided updates on the following matters:

- Evelyn's Sausage Kitchen was approved for a Tax Increment Equivalent Grant
- The County completed a survey on Elgin incentives and more information will be coming forward for program updates
- The People in Elgin Series videos are starting to be released. There will be 21 videos highlighting businesses across the County. Hoffsuemmer Grains is one of the videos released.
- There are currently funds in the County Economic Development budget to be more proactive in targeting industries and generating leads for employment lands

Aaron VanOrspronk shared thoughts permitting diversification for on-farm business and streamlining site plan applications through a "3 silo" process. Simple

and minor changes would be reviewed and approved quickly by staff, medium changes would require some elements of the site plan process, and larger developments would continue through the full site plan application process.

5. Business Networking Events

Steve Bushell provided an update on the Business Networking Events subcommittee and plans for future events. The committee is planning two events for 2025 in conjunction with Dutton-Dunwich and West Elgin. The Committee is looking for funding for the events and would be interested in another member from Southwold for the committee. The next meeting is March 3rd, 8 – 9 am. Members will relay this to people that may be interested in assisting.

The Southwold Economic Development Committee committed \$500 per event, to be funded from the Sign Sale proceeds.

8. Southwold 175 Update

The Southwold 175 Launch event was held on January 25, 2025 and was well attended. The Committee continues to develop plans for the event on August 9, 2025.

9. New and Other Business

- St. Thomas Chamber of Commerce Tariff Survey – for information

10. Next Meeting date, time and location

The next meeting was scheduled for April 3rd, 2025 at 8:00 am.

11. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 9:40 am.

Chairperson, Justin Pennings

Staff Resource, Jeff Carswell

Report to Economic Development Committee

MEETING DATE: April 3, 2025

PREPARED BY: Carolyn Krahn, Manager of Economic Development and Strategic Initiatives, County of Elgin

Lindsey Duncan, Tourism Officer, County of Elgin

SUBJECT MATTER: Elgin County Economic Development and Tourism Update

Introduction:

Elgin County's Economic Development and Tourism department has been actively working on several key initiatives to enhance local tourism, support businesses, and promote economic development. This report provides an update on recent projects, including the launch of our new tourism website, the 2025 tourism season, and upcoming economic development strategies and campaigns.

Discussion:

Tourism

- **New Website Launch:** Elgin County's new tourism website, **elgintourism.ca**, launched on March 27, 2025, with an updated look and feel that highlights the county's rural quality of life. The new site emphasizes:
 - A domain change from elgintourist.com to elgintourism.ca for better alignment with our branding.
 - High-quality, visually engaging imagery showcasing Elgin County's unique tourism experiences and events.
 - Comprehensive listings of tourism operators and festivals/events, linking directly to their websites and featuring professional photography.
 - Enhanced opportunities to highlight and promote specific operators and events on the homepage and landing pages.
- **Visitor and Taste Guides:**
 - The **2025 Visitor Guide** has been finalized and is ready for distribution. Copies will be shared with committee members.
 - The **2025 Taste Guide** has been approved, with upcoming initiatives focused on promoting farm-to-table experiences. Additional details will be provided in future updates.

- **Summer Student Hires:**

- Two summer students have been hired: one for the Port Stanley Visitor Centre and another as a Marketing and Communications Intern.
- The intern will attend local events and visit businesses to capture photos and videos for real-time social media promotion.

Economic Development

- **New Economic Development and Tourism Strategy:**

- A Request for Proposal (RFP) has been issued to develop a new **five-year Economic Development and Tourism Strategy**, which will engage local economic development committees to establish priorities.

- **Elgincentives Review:**

- Staff have reviewed the Elgincentives Review report, and a draft will be shared with local municipalities for feedback before being presented to County Council. This process is expected to take place in the next two weeks. *(BR+E Recommendation)*

- **Business Development and Building Permit Process Review:**

- Staff are reviewing a draft report aimed at creating resources to assist small and medium-sized businesses in navigating the development and building permit process. The finalized version will be shared with the committee upon completion. *(BR+E Recommendation)*

- **Networking Events:**

- Planning is underway for two business networking events in 2025.
- Steve Bushell is the Southwold EDC's representative on the sub-committee organizing the events and will provide further updates. *(BR+E Recommendation)*

- **Business Guide Development:**

- The County's Business Enterprise Facilitator is working with local support agencies, including the Small Business Enterprise Centre, Elgin Business Resource Centre, and local EDCs, to create a **business guide**.
- This guide will include the **development and building process map**, as well as resources to help businesses access available support and funding.
- Southwold representatives have been invited to participate in this initiative. *(BR+E Recommendation)*

Love Local Campaign:

- Launching on **April 8, 2025**, this **eight-week campaign** will encourage local shopping and support in response to the proposed 25% US-Canada trade tariff increase.

- The campaign will highlight local businesses, restaurants, and experiences under themes such as **ShopElgin, ExploreElgin, SavourElgin, ElginGrown, MadeInElgin, and CelebrateElgin.**
- A social media strategy will include weekly business features and councillor engagement.
- Promotional efforts will include video content, social media graphics, and a community call to action to support local businesses.

Conclusion:

The Economic Development and Tourism team continues to work on these key initiatives and will provide updates on progress at future committee meetings. Feedback and questions from the committee are welcomed.

Respectfully Submitted by:

Carolyn Krahn
Manager of Economic Development & Strategic Initiatives, County of Elgin

Lindsey Duncan
Tourism Officer, County of Elgin