



Southwold Economic Development Committee

Meeting Minutes

**Thursday, February 5, 2026 at 8:00 am
Council Chambers/Webex Meeting**

Present: Deputy Mayor Justin Pennings
Councillor John Adzija
Steve Bushell

Staff/Resource: Aaron VanOorspronk, Director of Infrastructure and Development
Jeff Carswell, CAO/Clerk
Carolyn Krahn, Manager of Economic Development
& Strategic Initiatives

Guests: Tanya Buttinger
Stuart Lackey

Regrets: Barry Harrison
Tanya Wilson, Elgin Business Resource Centre
Scott Young

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 5, 2026 meeting.

3. Disclosure of Pecuniary Interest

None

4. Approval of the November 6, 2025 Minutes

The Committee approved the minutes as drafted from the November 6, 2025 meeting.

5. Economic Development Plan Update

The Committee reviewed information related to development of an updated Economic Development Plan with funding from the ROD Program. A draft timeline illustrating the various steps required to complete the updated plan was reviewed. Steps included drafting an RFP for consulting services, selection of a consultant, project kick-off, community consultation, development of the plan and action items, and final approval by Council.

In order to move the project forward in an efficient manner, the Committee discussed acting as the Project Steering Committee and seeking approval from Council to decide on matters such as selection of the consultant, development of the work plan with the consultant and recommendations to Council on key decisions and approvals. The following recommendation will be made to Council:

“That the Southwold Economic Development Committee be authorized to oversee and direct all aspects of the Economic Development Plan update project, including issuing an RFP for consulting services, engaging a consultant to develop the plan, acting as the project steering committee, keeping Council apprised of the project activity and recommending adoption of an updated plan.”

6. Elgin County Economic Development Update

Anne Kleinsteuber, Business Enterprise Facilitator, provided updates on the following matters:

- The Pitch
- The Ed Co Conference
- 2026 Visitors Guide, which includes a new Itinerary Section
- National Women’s Lifestyle Show
- Recent Trade Shows
- Twas the Night Before Christmas in Elgin County featuring 58 local businesses
- Elgin Holiday Gift Guide
- New Economic Development Website
- New Economic Development and Tourism Plan (copy attached to agenda)

- 2026 Performance Plan (copy attached to agenda)

7. Development and Infrastructure Updates

Director of Infrastructure and Development Services, Aaron VanOorspronk reported on the following matters:

- a. Fingal Reconstruction – Construction is well underway. The County is organizing a meeting with the Elgin Federation of Agriculture to review updates to the road design. The committee encouraged that a date be established as soon as possible.
- b. Shedden/Fingal Sanitary Servicing – The contractor is completing work to remedy any infiltration and complete commissioning of the sewer in Union Road, Shedden. The road will remain as base asphalt over the winter.
- c. WWTP Updates for Shedden & Talbotville – The Shedden WWTP construction has started. Staff are working with the Ministry of Infrastructure to finalize the revised plans for improvements to the Talbotville Wastewater system.
- d. Parks and Trails Master Plan Project – The consultant is finalizing the report for presentation to Council.
- e. Staff and County Planning will be starting the Zoning By-law update project. Items identified by the Economic Development Committee will be included for consideration, as well as being further consulted through the update process.

8. New and Other Business

The Committee requested that appointments of additional members be added to the next agenda.

9. Next Meeting date, time and location

The next meeting was scheduled for March 26, 2026 at 8:00 am.

10. Adjourn

The meeting adjourned at 9:16 am.

Chairperson, Justin Pennings

Staff Resource, Jeff Carswell