



## **Southwold Economic Development Committee**

# **Agenda**

**Thursday, April 23, 2026 at 8:00 am**  
**Township Council Chambers – Municipal Office Fingal**

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1. Call to Order
2. Approval of the Agenda
3. Disclosure of Pecuniary Interests
4. Approval of the March 26, 2026 Minutes
5. Economic Development Plan Update
  - a. Project awarded to McSweeney & Associates
  - b. Project has started – staff are supplying background information and documents to consultant, access to OMAF Analyst Data requested
  - c. Existing Economic Development Plan – Action Items Status Report
6. Elgin County Economic Development and Tourism Updates
7. Development and Infrastructure Updates:
  - a. Fingal Reconstruction
  - b. Shedden/Fingal Sanitary Servicing
  - c. WWTP Updates for Shedden & Talbotville
  - d. Parks and Trails Master Plan Project Update
  - e. Zoning By-law Update Project has started
8. 2026 Cultivating Success Networking Event Updates
9. New and Other Business

10. Next meeting date, time and location

11. Adjourn



## **Southwold Economic Development Committee**

# **Meeting Minutes**

**Thursday, March 26, 2026 at 8:00 am  
Council Chambers/Webex Meeting**

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Present: Deputy Mayor Justin Pennings  
Councillor John Adzija (left at 9 am)  
Steve Bushell  
Barry Harrison

Staff/Resource: Jeff Carswell, CAO/Clerk  
Carolyn Krahn, Manager of Economic Development  
& Strategic Initiatives

Guests: Tanya Buttinger  
Stuart Lackey  
Scott Young

Regrets: Aaron Van Orspronk, Director of Infrastructure & Development  
Tanya Wilson, Elgin Business Resource Centre

### **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 March 26, 2026 meeting.

### **3. Disclosure of Pecuniary Interest**

None

### **4. Approval of the February 5, 2026 Minutes**

The Committee approved the minutes as drafted from the February 5, 2026 meeting.

### **5. Economic Development Plan – Request for Proposals - Interviews**

- a) The Committee reviewed the proposal summary information and prepared for the presentations / interviews.
- b) Presentation / Interview with Townhall Consulting – Rob Adams and Emily Adams attended online to present the Townhall Consulting proposal. They provided background on the company, previous experience, approach and project deliverables. They highlighted items such as the Implementation Tool they provide to track KPI's. Following the presentation, the Committee asked several questions to clarify the proposal.
- c) Presentation / Interview with McSweeney & Associates – Kevin McPhillips attended in person and presented the McSweeney & Associates proposal. He provided background on the company, previous similar projects and their approach to this project. He also highlighted that Economic Development Plans are their core business and area of expertise. He also highlighted the company's recent work on the Elgin County Economic Development and Tourism Plan. Following the presentation, the Committee asked several questions to clarify the proposal and ensure the Plan will be unique and tailored to Southwold.
- d) Consultant Selection

Following the presentations and interviews the Committee discussed the proposals, including the strengths and weaknesses of each one. Both proposals met the RFP requirements. Following review, the committee's consensus solidified around McSweeney & Associates. There was also a desire to include the post project Health Check that was proposed by Town Hall Consulting. Staff were instructed to determine if something similar could be incorporated into the McSweeney & Associates Proposal. At the February 9, 2026 meeting, Council authorized the Southwold Economic Development Committee to engage a consultant to complete the Economic

Development Plan Project.

**Engage McSweeney & Associates**

That the Southwold Economic Development Committee accepts the proposal from McSweeney & Associates dated March 4, 2026 for delivery of an Economic Development Plan. **CARRIED.**

**6. New and Other Business**

**New Members – Recommendation to Council**

The Southwold Economic Development Committee recommends to Council that Scott Young, Stuart Lackey and Tanya Buttinger be appointed to the Committee.

**2026 Cultivating Success Networking Event**

Steve Bushel and Carolyn Krahn provided an update on the 2026 Cultivating Success Networking Event. There will be one event in 2026. It will be held on Tuesday, June 16th, 2026 at Nature’s Oasis Retreat. The guest speaker will be Peter Katz.

**7. Next Meeting date, time and location**

The next meeting was scheduled for April 23, 2026 at 8:00 am.

**8. Adjourn**

The meeting adjourned at 9:40 am.

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Chairperson, Justin Pennings

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Staff Resource, Jeff Carswell

## Southwold Community Economic Development Plan - Action Items

Updated: 2026-04-20

*Red, Bold, Italics indicates an update since the last review.*

Goal 1	Community Engagement				
Objective	Leverage resident and business volunteer efforts to implement Southwold's economic development plan				
	Actions	Time Frame	Priority	Level of Difficulty	Notes on activity and action to date. Identification of a current priority.
1.1	Recruit additional economic development committee members	Immediate	High		Attempted earlier in 2020. Posted to website and social media. Reached out to several possible candidates. No applications submitted. Will review applications on an ongoing basis if any come forward. Committee members will continue speaking with prospective members. 2020-10-19 Graydon Laing appointed to Committee by Council 2021-02-22 Hiba Arabi appointed to Committee by Council - brings membership to 7 2023-08-02 Michelle Hoffsuemmer appointed 2025-03-31 Discussion at last meeting about potential additional members 2025-12 3 additional members interested and attending, one member resigned. <b>2026-04-13 - 3 new members appointed by Council</b>
1.2	Establish 2 to 3 priority economic development projects per year	Short	Medium		2023-10-05 - Report on Priorities on Agenda <b>2026-04-20 updated Economic Development Plan in progress</b>
1.3	Develop a Southwold business retention and expansion program	Immediate	High	High	Possible EBRC Assistance Does this warrant a EDC sub-committee - 2023-10-05 - Elgin forming a committee EDC members have met with local businesses to gather feedback
1.4	Establish a volunteer event committee to host clean up days, a community picnic and/or night market	Medium	Medium		2023-08-02 Farmers Market identified as possible initiative - additional background information provided to Committee 2023-10-05 - Draft marketing post card circulated to committee for soliciting community input <b>2026-04-20 Communities in Bloom Committee hosts cleanup days coinciding with Earth Day (April 18/19, 2026)</b>
1.5	Establish a committee to host a special event	Medium	Medium		Evaluate further post COVID-19
1.6	Create a welcome committee for new residents and businesses info on local businesses	Long	Nice to do		
1.7	Encourage the hosting of community events in the four corners area	Medium	Medium		Evaluate further post COVID-19

**Southwold Community Economic Development Plan - Action Items**

Updated: 2026-04-20

1.8	Host small business networking events	Medium	Medium		<p>Possible EBRC Assistance</p> <p>2020-09-24 EBRC connected marketing/social media person with Brian Masschaele, Director of Community and Cultural Services (Library) to ensure updates for EBRC programming are available throughout libraries.</p> <p><b>two events held in 2025 - highly successful planning for 1 larger event in 2026 underway</b></p>
1.9	Ensure the library has small business resources and workshops	Short	High	Low	<p>Possible EBRC Assistance</p> <p>2020-09-24 EBRC connected marketing/social media person with Brian Masschaele, Director of Community and Cultural Services (Library) to ensure updates for EBRC programming are available throughout libraries.</p>
1.10	Open one of the vacant buildings in Shedden's four corners for pop-up business or shared offices	Long	Medium	Med	<p>Possible EBRC Assistance</p> <p>Committee indicated interest in touring the facility at some point. An outdoor opportunity at the location may also be possible.</p> <p>2020-08-18 - Peter, Justin, Steve, Ken &amp; Corey to view building and parking area - report back to September 22 meeting</p> <p>2020-10-15 staff to track down additional information from Library Committee and determine whether there is potential for a 2nd unit - determine access to hallway/washroom</p> <p>2023-08-02 - identified for further review - report for 2023-09-07 meeting - 2023-10-05 - Inspector Report on Committee Agenda</p>

## Southwold Community Economic Development Plan - Action Items

Updated: 2026-04-20

Goal 2	Investment Readiness				
Objective	Provide the required elements to facilitate investment				
	Actions	Time Frame	Priority	Level of Difficulty	Notes on activity and action to date. Identification of a current priority.
2.1	Compile economic development data to share on the Southwold website and with Elgin County's Economic Development Department	Medium	High		
2.2	Create a small one-page lure brochure with links to the Southwold and Elgin County economic development website	Medium	High	Med	Complete after Branding Exercise 2021-02-12 Updated Economic Development Information will be included on the website update
2.3	Compile data on the former Ford lands including status, environmental conditions, servicing, brownfield programs and potential funding programs	Medium	High		Ford Land information is up to date. The site was submitted to the Provincial Job Site Challenge. If one of three sites selected, it would be marketed world-wide by the Province. The County and Township continue to pursue all leads and potential development opportunities for the site.
2.4	Prepare a database of commercial and industrial land and buildings in Southwold	Medium	High		Feature properties information on County Progressive By Nature Site <a href="https://www.progressivebynature.com/FeatureProperties">https://www.progressivebynature.com/FeatureProperties</a> The County is hoping to complete a thorough inventory when staff are no longer needed for the County COVID-19 Response 2023-10-05 - Southwold database under construction and presented at previous meeting.
2.5	Use local business ambassadors to help make the case for investment.	Long	Medium		Possible EBRC Assistance

## Southwold Community Economic Development Plan - Action Items

Updated: 2026-04-20

Goal 3	Branding/Marketing				
Objective	Establish professional branding, marketing tools and messages to share Southwold's value proposition for residents and businesses				
	Actions	Time Frame	Priority	Level of Difficulty	Notes on activity and action to date. Identification of a current priority.
3.1	Update Southwold's branding to reflect the changing economy and future opportunities	Medium	High	Med	<p>Funding options to be provided, determine exact scope of work, direction to prepare an RFP</p> <p>2020-08-18 Recommendation to Council to proceed with RFP for Township Branding Exercise</p> <p>2020-09-14 Council adopted recommendation, draft RFP submitted to EDC for 2020-09-22 meeting for review</p> <p>2020-10-15 Branding and Marketing RFPs due date - 12 RFPs submitted</p> <p>2020-10-20 EDC deferred reviewing Branding and Marketing RFPs to November 17 meeting</p> <p>2020-12-08 EDC Recommends Cinnamon Toast</p> <p>2020-12-14 Cinnamon Toast engaged by Council</p> <p>2021-02-12 In Progress - Interviews, survey completed, summary report for EDC</p> <p>2021-03-22 Presentation to Council</p> <p>2021-04-26 In progress - 2nd Presentation to Council</p> <p>2021-05-10 - Brand concept approved by Council</p> <p>2021-06-14 - Brand tag lines approved by Council</p> <p>2021-08-06 - Launch coordinated with new website for August 17, 2021</p> <p>2023-06-19 - Signage with new Brand being developed. Park and Community/Township signs would be the initial priority</p>
3.2	Establish consistent, key messages targeting prospective and existing residents, and prospective and existing businesses	Medium	High	Low	<p>Home Occupation brochure being developed.</p> <p>2020-08-20 Updated with comments from Committee. Printed and Published Complete</p>
3.3	Build on the strengths and opportunities in the community (safe, affordable, family, friendly, open spaces, proximity to larger centres, available property)	Long	Medium		
3.4	Compile Southwold's community profile data (demographics, business profile, servicing, resources)	Short	High		<p>Some information currently available from County Progressive by Nature Site</p> <p><a href="https://www.progressivebynature.com/ComparativeStats">https://www.progressivebynature.com/ComparativeStats</a></p>

**Southwold Community Economic Development Plan - Action Items**

Updated: 2026-04-20

3.5	Update the Southwold Township website to include resident and business attraction info with links to Elgin County	Short	High	Med	Southwold.ca website update included in 2020 budget Possible EBRC Assistance 2020-11-09 Council approved updating website with eSolutions Group - timing will tie into branding update project - likely launch Q2 2021 2021-02-12 Website project well under way, staff training complete, updated pages being created - on target for Q2 launch 2021-08-06 - Launched August 2021
3.6	Establish an inventory of Southwold businesses (include home-based and small businesses)	Immediate	High	Low	In progress. Obtaining information from County Business Database. Possible EBRC Assistance 2020-08-21 Draft based on Township listing and County Listing sent to staff for review/update. 2020-09-24 EBRC provided contact info for interactions over last 5 years to cross reference with Township Business Listing
3.7	Develop a shop local program featuring home-based and small businesses	Long	Medium		Possible EBRC Assistance
3.8	Profile success stories on the Southwold website	Long	Medium		Possible EBRC Assistance
3.9	Celebrate a local business leader of the year.	Long	Nice to do		

## Southwold Community Economic Development Plan - Action Items

Updated: 2026-04-20

Goal 4	Business Development				
Objective	Bring increased commercial and community activity to Fingal and Shedden. Attract and support a diversified business base. Expand Southwold's tourism product offering.				
	Actions	Time Frame	Priority	Level of Difficulty	Notes on activity and action to date. Identification of a current priority.
4.1	Establish a downtown development taskforce to: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Identify required improvements, e.g. Sidewalks, roads, planters, signage, street furniture</li> <li>Host special events to increase traffic</li> <li>Organize farmers' markets, night markets, food truck events and/or entertainment</li> </ul>	Medium	Medium		2023-10-05 - Committee reviewing report from Director Re: Streetscape in Fingal
4.2	Establish regular business visits (BR&E) trouble-shoot, provide info on funding, business supports	Short	High	Low	Committee Members have committed to conduct business visits. Possible EBRC Assistance Township business listing updated - can be used to track visits and information gathered 2020-09-22 County business questions to be modified for Township use - staff will revise and also develop online form to complete questionnaire, in addition to hard copy 2023-10-05 Elgin County Ec Dev developing a leadership team
4.3	Bring additional activity to Shedden's four corners: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Short-term rental for November/December</li> <li>Scouts/4H to sell Christmas trees, cider, gift wrapping service</li> <li>Food trucks</li> <li>Establish a cycling rest or rally spot with parking, picnic tables, repair centre, bike rack, maps</li> </ul>	Medium	Medium	Med	Possible EBRC Assistance Ongoing discussion about options for Former Library Building <b>2026-04-20 Former Firehall sold to Evelyn's (Heather Harris) - Redeveloped and open</b>
4.4	Update and share market threshold analysis data	Long	Medium		
4.5	Target existing businesses located elsewhere to open a branch in Southwold	Long	Nice to do		
4.6	Profile available properties on Southwold and Elgin County websites <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Prepare sales sheets for available properties (for website and realtors)</li> <li>Develop window décor (with high school, elementary school students), provide contact info</li> <li>Wi-Fi in library to extend to downtown</li> </ul>	Long	Medium		2023-10-05 - Key Investment Ready sheets on agenda
4.7	Host a workshop for alternative accommodation with Elgin County and SWOTC	Medium	Medium		Elgin County Alternative Accommodation policy delayed due to COVID-19; Recommend to be hosted following successful adoption of Official Plan Amendment and Re-Zoning

## Southwold Community Economic Development Plan - Action Items

Updated: 2026-04-20

Goal 5	Enhanced Infrastructure				
Objective	Support business and residential infrastructure needs				
	Actions	Time Frame	Priority	Level of Difficulty	Notes on activity and action to date
5.1	Work with broadband providers to expand offering in Southwold	Medium	High	High	<p>2020-07-21 Recommendation to Council That Council support funding of the “final mile” for internet connectivity for as many households and businesses as possible in Southwold.</p> <p>2020-08-10 Adopted by Council Justin Pennings has applied to be on the County Connectivity Committee</p> <p>2021-03-19 - SWIFT Funding Announced for Elgin - includes some area in Southwold - information on 2021-03-23 EDC Meeting Agenda</p> <p>2021-04-23 - Staff Discussions on expanding broadband taking place</p> <p>2025 - many locations in the Township getting broadband through latest provincial initiative</p>
5.2	Support the Southwestern Integrated Fibre Technology (SWIFT) initiatives	Ongoing	Medium	High	<p>2020-07-21 Recommendation to Council That Council support funding of the “final mile” for internet connectivity for as many households and businesses as possible in Southwold.</p> <p>2020-08-10 Adopted by Council Justin Pennings has applied to be on the County Connectivity Committee</p> <p>2021-03-19 - SWIFT Funding Announced for Elgin - includes some area in Southwold - information on 2021-03-23 EDC Meeting Agenda</p> <p>2021-04-23 - Staff Discussions on expanding broadband taking place</p> <p>2023-06-19 - Eh!Tel completing fiber project in northwest corner of the Township, Shared Tower is adding Fibre north of Port Stanley</p>
5.3	<p>Develop an infrastructure investment strategy:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Identify priority areas for infrastructure enhancements</li> <li>• Prepare preliminary estimates and funding application info to be incorporated into future funding programs</li> <li>• Assemble business testimonials on the potential for Southwold with infrastructure enhancements</li> <li>• Share infrastructure requirement information with local MPP, MPs</li> </ul>	Medium	High	High	
5.4	Research private/public partnership examples for future infrastructure investment	Long	Medium	Med	

**Southwold Community Economic Development Plan - Action Items**

Updated: 2026-04-20

Goal 6	Other projects, activities and initiatives identified by EDC				
Objective	Projects, activities and initiatives that support Economic Development and may not be specifically listed as actions above				
	Actions	Time Frame	Priority	Level of Difficulty	Notes on activity and action to date
	Alternative Accomodation Policies			Med	<p>in progress with County - Delayed due to COVID,                      2020-10-15 waiting for draft policies for public consultation, Planner and/or consultant to attend meeting to review policies with committee when ready                      2020-11-13 Planner was scheduled to attend November 17 meeting, but Draft OP not released yet                      2021-02-12 recommendations made to Council - will be considered during OP review currently taking place                      2021-03-19 - EDC recommendations have been submitted to Council, Township Planner, County Planner - all area aware of EDC recommendations, EDC to continue to advocate for desired policies, actively take part in Official Plan Reviews, especially the County - County OP review as started - <a href="https://www.elgincounty.ca/planning/officialplanreview/">https://www.elgincounty.ca/planning/officialplanreview/</a>                      2021-08-06 County OP ongoing                      2023-06-19 County OP should be nearing completion, staff following up to determine if Township requests will be addressed in final plan                      2023-09-07 - Recommendation for OP Amendment 2023-10-05 Committee reviewing draft text  <b>2026-04-20 Zoning By-law update underway</b></p>

**Southwold Community Economic Development Plan - Action Items**

Updated: 2026-04-20

					<p>in progress with OP Update Consultant                  2020-10-15 waiting for draft policies for public consultation, Planner and/or consultant to attend meeting to review policies with committee when ready                  2020-11-13 Planner was scheduled to attend November 17 meeting, but Draft OP not released yet                  2021-02-12 recommendations made to Council - will be considered during OP review currently taking place                  2021-03-19 - EDC recommendations have been submitted to Council, Township Planner, County Planner - all area aware of EDC recommendations, EDC to continue to advocate for desired policies, actively take part in Official Plan Reviews, especially the County - County OP review as started - <a href="https://www.elgincounty.ca/planning/officialplanreview/">https://www.elgincounty.ca/planning/officialplanreview/</a>                  2021-08-06 County OP ongoing                  2025 - working with County to update zoning to be more permissive and modern, simplify processes such site plans, especially for minor things</p>
	Industrial/Residential OP and Zoning			Med	<p><b>2026-04-20 Zoning By-law update underway</b></p>
	Updated Business Listing				<p>created , on 2020-09-22 agenda for review                  can be used by members to track business visits                  2020-10-15 Business listing to be maintained and updated as required by staff</p>
	Business Questionnaire - create based on County - online and hardcopy				<p>2020-10-15 - in progress</p>