

City-County Meeting and Networking Event

Minutes of Meeting
Tuesday, September 17, 2019
Southwold Keystone Complex
3:00 p.m. – 5:00p.m.

Attendees:

Co-Chairs:

Mayor Joe Preston, City of St. Thomas
Warden Duncan McPhail, County of Elgin

City of St. Thomas:

Lori Baldwin-Sands, Councillor, Linda Stevenson, Councillor, Joan Rymal, Councillor, Gary Clarke, Councillor, Mark Tinlin, Councillor, Jim Herbert, Councillor, Jeff Kohler, Councillor; Steve Peters, Councillor; Wendell Graves, City Manager, Maria Konefal, City Clerk, Justin Lawrence, Director of Environmental Services & City Engineer; Graham Dart, Director of Human Resources, Elizabeth Sebestyen, Director of Social Services, Sean Dyke, St. Thomas Economic Development Corporation, Chris Herridge, Chief, St. Thomas Police Service

Municipality of Bayham:

Ed Ketchabaw, Mayor; Valerie Donnell, Councillor

Township of Malahide:

Dominique Giguère, Deputy Mayor; Chester Glinski, Councillor; Michelle Casavecchia-Somers, CAO; Rob Johnson, Director of Physical Services

Town of Aylmer:

Mary French, Mayor; Tom Charlton, Councillor; Arthur Oslach, Councillor; Jamie Chapman, Councillor; Jennifer Reynaert, CAO; Josh Brick, Director of Legislative Services/Clerk

Municipality of Central Elgin:

Sally Martyn, Mayor; Tom Marks, Deputy Mayor; Bill Fehr, Councillor, Dennis Crevits, Councillor, Karen Cook, Councillor, Don Leitch, CAO, Lloyd Perrin, Director of Asset Management and Development; Geoff Brooks, Director of Physical Services; Chris McDonough, Director of Fire Services/Fire Chief

Township of Southwold:

Grant Jones, Mayor; Robert Monteith, Deputy Mayor; Sarah Emons, Councillor; Peter North, Councillor; Justin Pennings, Councillor; Lisa Higgs, CAO; Jeff Carswell, Treasurer

Municipality of Dutton/Dunwich: Bob Purcell, Mayor; Mike Hentz, Deputy Mayor; Ken Loveland, Councillor; Heather Bouw, Clerk

Municipality of West Elgin:

Richard Leatham, Deputy Mayor; Taraesa Tellier, Councillor, Bonnie Rowe, Councillor; Genevieve Scharback, CAO

County of Elgin:

Julie Gonyou, CAO; Stephen Gibson, County Solicitor; Brian Lima, Director of Engineering Services; Brian Masschaele, Director of Community and Cultural Services; Michele Harris, Director of Homes and Seniors Services; Alan Smith, Manager of Economic Development; Amy Thomson, Director of Human Resources; Jenna Fentie, Legislative Services Coordinator

1. Welcome & Introductions

Mayor Preston and Warden McPhail welcomed Councillors and staff.

2. Regional Transportation

Mayor Preston noted that plans are underway at the City of St. Thomas for an improved transit system. Mayor Preston also shared his conceptual plans for regional transportation which would include a bus service from St. Thomas to London as well as St. Thomas to Port Stanley. Mayor Martyn requested that consideration be given to a bus stop at the County's new Provincial Offences Administration building.

Discussions have occurred with the Minister of Transportation and the City intends to request provincial support for a two (2) year pilot project. Mayor Preston noted that a regional transportation service would provide residents of the City and County with more job opportunities and he reinforced the importance of inter-municipal support. Mayor Preston clarified that the City intends to request full provincial funding for the pilot project. Mayor Jones said he is looking forward to more discussion.

3. Economic Development (St. Thomas Municipal Airport)

Airport

Mayor Preston noted that the St. Thomas Municipal Airport is a fully functional municipal airport with many possibilities, including partnerships between airports, industries, and municipalities. The Mayor shared his vision for a joint industrial hub between neighbouring municipalities that would benefit everyone.

Deputy Mayor Monteith (Southwold) asked Mayor Preston to share what the City's interest in Southwold's industrial land is. Mayor Preston stressed the importance of working together to eliminate barriers in order to benefit both the County and municipalities to create more jobs and attract more residents.

Joint Economic Development and Tourism Corporation

For the purposes of discussion, Warden McPhail asked if there is interest in forming a joint City-County Economic Development and Tourism strategy. There was general consensus that a

committee with representatives from the City and County, with staff and Council membership, be established to research, discuss and report on any findings to the broader network.

4. Provincial Funding Changes

a. Social Services, Employment, Childcare

Elizabeth Sebestyen, Director of Social Services, provided a brief background of the Social Services Department and provided an overview of anticipated changes to programs and funding as a result of recent provincial announcements.

b. Conservation Authorities

Mayor Martyn shared her concerns with respect to funding changes impacting Conservation Authorities (CA). Mayor Jones noted that some programs are revenue generating and suggested that all Councils have an open mind when CAs request funding to support discretionary programs. Councillor Chapman (Aylmer) asked if it is possible to lobby the government not to cancel non-mandated programs as they do not provide funding for the services anyways. Councillor Peters asked if the four conservation authorities are effectively communicating with each other to determine whether four conservation authorities are needed. Mayor Martyn clarified that they are communicating and all CAs work closely together for all education programs. Mayor Purcell noted that the recent letter from the Government did not say that programs must be cut, rather to start examining because they will not be funded in the future. Warden McPhail said that deputations will likely be coming to Councils explaining the Conservation Authorities' shortfall and seeking assistance; if a conservation authority is cut funding, the ability to levy should not be left in place.

Councillor Fehr asked if a joint project was possible for shorelines to address high water levels. Mayor Jones stated that the costs are too high for a regional/municipal solution.

c. Health Units/Ontario Health Teams

Councillor Peters noted that the new Ontario Health Team structure is similar to a school board structure – “ELMO” (Elgin-London-Middlesex-Oxford). The Ministry has classified the Elgin-St. Thomas OHT application as “in development”, meaning more information must be received prior to being selected to complete a “full application”. Councillor Stevenson (St. Thomas) expressed concerns regarding the scope of the potential Ontario Health Team as the LHIN was too large. It was also suggested that partners contribute 0.1% of Long-Term Care budgets to support the application development. Mayor Preston remarked that once we are contributing, it will be difficult to get out.

d. Tourism and Culture

Councillor Peters would like to see the City supporting and working with Elgin County Museum, Archives and Libraries.

There was general consensus that a committee be established to discuss potential opportunities.

Councillor Peters asked for the County and City administration to examine changes since the 1997 restructuring, noting that the municipalities may be forced to amalgamate in the future.

5. Affordable Housing

Mayor Preston informed local Councils that an announcement should be coming soon regarding a shelter in St. Thomas. The housing situation needs to be looked at from top to bottom; many conversations are being had with builders regarding market rent units in the City and across Elgin. Mayor French noted that the Town of Aylmer hopes to have a shelter in operation by December (citizen-led initiative). Mayor Martyn commended Dutton/Dunwich for the two housing units for Seniors in the municipality; Central Elgin is working on getting policies in place for something similar.

6. Phragmites

Warden McPhail noted that the County is developing a strategy to deal with Phragmites. Councillor Rowe (West Elgin) thanked the County for developing the strategy as many municipalities have been working on it independently. Councillor Rowe encouraged the County and the City to lobby for a provincial strategy. Warden McPhail clarified that this process has already started. The City of St. Thomas is in year six (6) of their Phragmites program. Central Elgin also has a successful program.

7. Green Lane Landfill and Waste Management Planning

The Township of Southwold has an agreement with Green Lane as the “host” municipality (expires February 28, 2029 – guaranteed space until then), with Dutton, Southwold, Central Elgin, West Elgin, Malahide and St. Thomas dumping at the landfill. Mayor Jones noted that an expansion has not been applied for yet; once applied for, it will take approximately ten (10) years for the expansion to occur.

Warden McPhail and Mayor Preston thanked everyone for attending. Another joint meeting will be scheduled in six (6) months.

The meeting adjourned at 4:48 p.m.