

## Middlesex County Council Meeting Highlights – March 26, 2024

Council Highlights is an informal summary of selected actions taken by Middlesex County Council or Committee of the Whole at business meetings. The Council Highlights are not an official record of County Council proceedings. To view official agendas and minutes, please visit [Council Meetings and Minutes](#).

### ► 2024 Middlesex County Budget Adopted

County Council passed by-law #7268 to adopt the 2024 Middlesex County Budget. The 2024 Budget reflects the County's dedication to providing essential services to its residents while navigating the challenges posed by increasing costs of living influenced by provincial and federal policy decisions. With a tax rate increase of 2.93%, the budget demonstrates a balance between meeting the needs of the community and the financial burdens faced by taxpayers. Through strategic partnerships and a commitment to legislated and people-oriented services, the County maintains one of the lowest upper-tier tax rates in Southwestern Ontario. For more information, see the approved [2024 Middlesex County Budget](#) and the [2024 Middlesex County Budget Highlights](#).

### ► Proposed Middlesex County Governance and Administration Centre moving forward

The Committee of the Whole received a delegation from Matter Architectural Studio, who was retained to provide architectural design services for the design of the new governance and administration centre for the County of Middlesex. Matter Architectural provided a high-level overview of the main design features of the proposed new facility. The designs feature a modern and progressive work environment to support positive governance and the administration of community outcomes. County Council directed staff to proceed with detailed design and tendering for the Middlesex County Governance & Administration Centre at 1035 Adelaide Street South, London, Ontario. For more information, see the [Proposed New Governance and Administration Centre](#) presentation.

### ► Middlesex County Connect Update: Connecting People, Places, and Experiences

Staff provided an update on the ongoing initiatives and successes of Middlesex County Connect, including a detailed overview of the new Route 3, which is set to launch on Monday, April 8, 2024, and will connect Dorchester, London and St. Thomas. Since its launch during the COVID-19 pandemic in September 2020, Middlesex County Connect has continuously evolved to better serve residents. In 2023, significant enhancements were introduced in response to rider demands. These included the implementation of new routes, replacing existing ones, and the introduction of a transit app allowing riders to book trips, pay fare, track buses, and receive service alerts conveniently. Additionally, initiatives such as the discounted 30-day student pass and the Library Bus Pass Loan Program were introduced. As a result of these efforts, Middlesex County Connect saw a ridership increase of 169% in 2023 compared to 2022. Looking ahead, staff will be focusing on securing funding to evaluate the Middlesex County Connect transit system further. Staff will also continue communication and marketing efforts, promote advertising and sponsorship

opportunities, collaborate with regional partners, and advocate for the extension of the Community Transportation Grant Program. For more information, see the [Middlesex County Connect](#) presentation and check out the [Middlesex County Connect](#) webpage to stay up to date on transit in Middlesex County.

### ► **Middlesex Economic Development Corporation Strategy under review**

The Committee of the Whole received a comprehensive report on the Middlesex Economic Development Corporation (EDC) Strategy, delving into the County's economic landscape, challenges, and proposed solutions. Middlesex County currently offers economic development services through its Department of Economic Development, collaborating with lower-tier municipalities and various stakeholders. Despite recent industrial growth in Ontario, Middlesex County faces challenges, including a lack of industrial tax assessment. To address these challenges, Middlesex County is considering reformulating and refocusing the Middlesex EDC to capitalize on current economic priorities. A staff-level working group has been established to evaluate the establishment of an arm's length EDC, assessing advantages, and disadvantages. The group aims to engage with stakeholders, analyze existing EDCs, and explore funding models and partnerships. Plans include sector landscape analysis, corporate structuring, delineation of regional and local service levels, and branding strategies. For more information, see the [Middlesex EDC Strategy Report](#).

### ► **Social Services Update – March 2024**

The Committee of the Whole heard from staff on the ongoing efforts of the Social Services department in the critical service areas of Ontario Works, Children's Services, Early Years, and Homelessness Prevention. The County of Middlesex plays a pivotal role in service delivery, collaborating with the City of London to ensure seamless provision of essential services to residents. Staff highlighted changes to the province's renewed operating model for social assistance, which include centralized intake, electronic document management, and employment services transformation. Children's Services continues to experience an evolving landscape, marked by increased funding and operational adjustments. The Canada-Wide Early Learning and Child Care program has led to policy shifts, creating new licensed child care spaces and reducing fees for families. With a growing demand for services, Homelessness Prevention Programs have intensified efforts to address housing insecurity. Funding initiatives and collaborative ventures aim to enhance access to shelter, outreach, and housing assistance services. For more information on what's new in Social Services, see the [Social Services Update – March 2024](#).

*Recommendations made by the Committee of the Whole at the March 26, 2024, meeting will be considered by County Council at its next regular meeting April 9, 2024. The Legislative Services Department maintains the official record for all County government proceedings.*

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