



The Corporation of the Township of Norwich
Council Meeting Minutes
Thursday February 26, 2026
Council Meeting – Operating Budget

In Attendance:

Council:

Mayor Jim Palmer
Councillor Toews
Councillor DePlancke
Councillor Gear
Councillor Couwenberg

Staff:

Matt Smith, Chief Administrative Officer
James Johnson, Treasurer/Deputy CAO
Kimberley Armstrong, Director of Corporate Services/Clerk
Derek Van Patee, Director of Fire and Protective Services
Ken Farkas, Director of Operations
Jason Simpson, Director of Building Services/Chief Building Official
James Schaafsma, Manager, Parks and Facilities
A.J. Wells, Manager of Medical Services
Sean McCoy, Deputy Clerk/Planning Coordinator

1. Call to Order

The regular session 2022-2026 Council of the Township of Norwich was held in the Council Chambers, Norwich, commencing at 9:00 a.m. with Mayor Palmer presiding.

2. Approval of Agenda

Resolution #1

Moved by Karl Toews, seconded by Lynne DePlancke:

That the Agenda be accepted as presented.

Carried

3. Disclosure of Pecuniary Interest

No disclosures were reported.

4. Introduction

4.1 2024 Draft Operating Budget Introduction

Mr. Johnson provided an overview of the budget process explaining the overall budget impacts and advising that the 2025 actuals presented in the budget are unaudited since the 2025 year-end is not yet complete. Mr. Johnson further advised that this year's operating budget contains budget enhancements, some one-time projects and some that represent a change to the base budget going forward.

Mr. Johnson explained that, before the inclusion of any budget enhancements, the overall net levy impact to tax payers is 2.14%, after assessment growth, for the Township portion of the levy which includes both the capital and operating budgets.

In response to questions from Council, Mr. Johnson provided a brief explanation of the tax sale process and how tax arrears interest is reflected as a revenue for budget purposes, however, has not yet been collected.

5. Operating Budget

5.1 2026 Draft Operating Budget

Mr. Johnson re-stated the overall local levy impact, providing a general overview of: budgeted operating expenditures, revenues and changes to some of the cost centres which combine some interdepartmental expenses into a single cost centre, such as legal fees and post-employment benefits. In response to questions from Council, Mr. Johnson advised that total OMPF funding for 2026 is \$1,318,200.

General Government

Mr. Johnson provided an overview of the General Government operating budget, including legal fees, post-employment benefits, municipal insurance, audit fees, and bank interest earned.

There was Council discussion and questions regarding: municipal insurance costs, potential for pooled self-insurance between municipalities in Oxford County, office equipment rentals, costs for converting to electronic timesheets, Microsoft staff training, contracted snow clearing for Township building parking lots, and that the 2025 actuals are unaudited and still missing some year-end entries.

Protective Services

Chief Van Pagee provided an overview of operating expenses, including: equipment, supplies, peer support application for mental health, shared services staff, fire training expenses, DZ licence training and revenues.

Councillor Toews exited the meeting at 9:59 a.m.

Councillor Toews returned to the meeting at 10:02 a.m.

There were Council questions and discussion regarding Tillsonburg providing an effective emergency dispatch service, costs for using GovDeals and revenues realized for fire training provided by Norwich Township.

Councillor DePlancke exited the meeting at 10:09 a.m.
Councillor DePlancke returned to the meeting at 10:11 a.m.

Chief Van Pagee provide an overview of By-Law Services. There was Council discussion and questions regarding the shared by-law enforcement officer and potentially increasing the number of days they are serving in Norwich, enforcement of half loads under the Highway Traffic Act, and the kennel service on retainer for canine control.

Mr. Johnson provided an overview of Policing Services expenses. He explained that there was an 11% cap to increases for basic police services and no cap for the enhancement officer. To stabilize levy impacts, reserves have also been used to offset some of the cost increases. Mr. Johnson advised that the impact in future years could be greater if there is no cap. He also explained that Enhancement Officer position is currently vacant and while the Township is still paying for the service, a credit will be applied to future costs after the OPP does a reconciliation.

There was Council discussion and questions regarding the enhancement officer's role, general officer visibility in the community, policing cost comparisons between the OPP and municipal police, speeding concerns within the Township and traffic calming measures.

Council recessed at 10:47 a.m.
Council resumed at 11:00 a.m.

Mr. Simpson provided an overview of Building Services, including reallocations of some budget lines, and the increased training and education budget. There was Council discussion and questions regarding the planned staff training to enhance service to the public and internal overhead budgeting for the building department.

Transportation

Mr. Farkas provided an overview of expenses, including; road patrol, road and roadside maintenance, sidewalk maintenance, vehicle upkeep, winter control, sign replacement, and streetlights.

There was Council discussion and questions regarding brushing and ditching, including processes for ditching, costs of contracting compared to in-house, and changing allocations to reduce the brushing budget and increase ditching budget.

In response to questions from Council, Mr. Farkas explained that brushing is often the result of emergency situations from weather events, however much of the increase to the brushing budget was primarily driven by the emerald ash borer.

Resolution #2

Moved by Adrian Couwenberg, seconded by Shawn Gear:

Mr. Johnson provided an overview of expenses for Planning Services, economic development, the Municipal Heritage committee, the BIA and the Canada Day Committee.

Mr. Johnson explained the overall estimated taxpayer impacts and the overall levy including the municipal, county, and education amounts. There was Council discussion with respect to the impacts of the County budget on the levy.

5.2 Budget Enhancements

Staff Benefits Enhancement

Mr. Smith provided an overview of the proposed benefits enhancements. In response to questions from Council, Mr. Smith further explained that 5/12 of the savings to EI premiums from the new Short Term Disability Policy are required to be returned to staff.

Resolution #3

Moved by Lynne DePlancke, seconded by Karl Toews:

That the Staff Benefits Enhancement in the amount of \$38,900 be approved and included in the 2026 Operating Budget.

Carried

Public Works Summer Student

Mr. Farkas provided an overview of the proposed summer student position. In response to questions from Council, Mr. Farkas explained that there is not an opportunity for public works and parks to share the existing summer students, since those students already have a full workload. He also advised that some of the cost would be off-set by contracting some of the student's time to the BIA for maintenance of downtown hanging baskets.

Resolution #4

Moved by Karl Toews, seconded by Lynne DePlancke:

That the Public Works Summer Student in the amount of \$16,000 be approved and included in the 2026 Operating Budget.

Carried

Medical Centre Full-Time Staff

Mr. Johnson and Mr. Wells provided an overview of the proposed Medical Centre staffing status change for the two Medical Receptionists and two Medical Assistants to full-time from part-time to better reflect actual working hours. There was Council discussion and questions regarding pay equity and benefits coverage for staff.

Resolution #5

Moved by Shawn Gear, seconded by Adrian Couwenberg:

That the Medical Centre Full-time Staff Enhancement in the amount of \$40,000 be approved and included in the 2026 Operating Budget.

Carried

Job Evaluation

Mr. Smith provide an overview of the proposed job evaluation project. Mr. Smith advised that costs for this project would be funded from the Modernization Reserve and would not impact the levy. There was Council discussion regarding the benefits of hiring an external consultant for this project, the difference between job evaluations and organizational structure, and potentially having the consultant to include staff cost of living increases in their analysis.

Resolution #6

Moved by Adrian Couwenberg, seconded by Shawn Gear

That the Job Evaluation Project in the amount of \$25,000 be approved and included in the 2026 Operating Budget.

Carried

Permit Fee Study

Mr. Simpson provided an overview of the proposed permit fee study project. Mr. Simpson advised that the costs for this project would be funded from the Building Reserve and would not impact the levy. There was Council discussion and questions regarding the benefits of hiring an external consultant, the scope of the project, the consultant's role, why the Building Reserve is the appropriate reserve to fund the project, appropriate methods for determining permit fees, and various costs and indirect costs associated with the Building Services Department.

Councillor DePlancke exited the meeting at 2:47 p.m.

Councillor DePlancke returned to the meeting at 2:48 p.m.

Resolution #7

Moved by Shawn Gear, seconded by Adrian Couwenberg:

That the Permit Fee Study in the amount of \$60,000 be approved and included in the 2026 Operating Budget.

Carried

Council recessed at 3:01 p.m.

Council resumed at 3:10 p.m.

Traffic Calming

Mr. Smith provided an overview of the proposed traffic calming project, as per Council direction to hold Traffic Safety and Speeding Open Houses and to implement pilot projects based on feedback from those open houses. There was Council discussion and questions regarding impacts of funding budget items from reserves and funding budget items from the levy, as well as County and Township responsibilities for roads and intersections.

Resolution #8

Moved by Lynne DePlancke, seconded by Karl Toews:

That the Traffic Calming Operating Project in the amount of \$50,000 be approved and included in the 2026 Operating budget and funded from the Contingency Reserve.

Carried

There was Council discussion with respect to the amount the municipality currently holds in reserves and Oxford County Council approving eighty-seven million dollars from reserves to offset budget increases. Staff provided some clarification with respect to the County use of reserves for planned capital projects and commented that using reserves to reduce budget increases defers costs to the following year.

Council members expressed their gratitude to staff for all their hard work preparing a responsible budget.

Resolution #9

Moved by Karl Toews, seconded by Lynne DePlancke:

That the 2026 Township of Norwich Operating Budget be adopted as amended.

Carried

7. By-Laws

No. 14-2026

To Confirm All Actions and Proceedings of Council

7.1 First and Second Reading of the Following By-law

Resolution #10

Moved by Lynne DePlancke, seconded by Karl Toews:

That the following By-law as listed, be introduced and taken as read a first and second time:

No. 14-2026

To Confirm All Actions and Proceedings of Council.

Carried

7.2 Third Reading of the Following By-law

Resolution #11

Moved by Adrian Couwenberg, seconded by Shawn Gear:

That By-law 14-2026 be taken as read a third and final time and passed and signed by the Mayor and Clerk and the Corporate Seal be affixed thereto.

Carried

8. Adjournment – 3:30 pm

Resolution #12

Moved by Adrian Couwenberg, seconded by Shawn Gear:

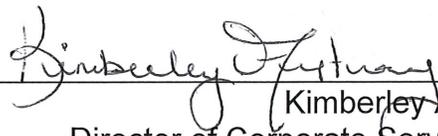
That this Council do now adjourn.

Carried

These minutes adopted by way of Resolution No. 2 as approved by Council at its meeting on the 10th day of March, 2026.



Jim Palmer
Mayor



Kimberley Armstrong
Director of Corporate Services/Clerk