



Keeping Track

City of St. Thomas Council Highlights

July 14, 2026 | Issue 47



ICE ALLOCATION POLICY REVIEW

Council approved retaining Healthy Placemaking Solutions to review and modernize the City's Ice Allocation Policy. Dr. Glover has extensive experience conducting research and advising municipalities on recreation policy and access to public recreation resources. The review will include stakeholder engagement, best practice research, and recommendations to ensure future ice allocations are fair, transparent, equitable, and responsive to growing community demand beginning with the 2027-2028 season. The cost of the review will be split between the 2026 and 2027 budget years.

A LOOK INSIDE THIS ISSUE:

1. Tender Award - Piano Enclosure Westlake Evans Park
2. Hepburn Parkette Revitalization - Build Communities Strong Fund Application
3. Major Line Rail Corridor Infrastructure Crossing Agreements
4. Heritage Property Tax Relief
5. Housing Accelerator Fund Affordable Housing Grant Program - Recommended Recipients



HOUSING ACCELERATOR FUND AFFORDABLE HOUSING GRANT PROGRAM - RECOMMENDED RECIPIENTS

Council approved the following recipients for the Housing Accelerator Fund Affordable Housing Grant Program.

- YWCA St. Thomas-Elgin - Stream 1 \$25,000, Stream 2 \$350,000 and New Funding \$350,000
- Eastwood Housing Corporation - Stream 1 \$25,000 and Stream 2 \$50,000
- Trustees of the Central Congregation of the United Church - Stream 1 \$25,000

The YWCA St. Thomas-Elgin will receive \$2.7 million total (2026-2028) for their new Hiawatha Affordable Homes project. This project will provide inclusive and supportive living with units mainly dedicated to low-income seniors, women, youth at risk, with 20% of units fully accessible and barrier-free.



HERITAGE PROPERTY TAX RELIEF



Council received the report related to Heritage Property Tax Relief Program. Staff discovered a program that is in effect through the Community Improvement Plan. This program provides an annual grant equal to a 40% reduction in the City portion of the post restoration property taxes for five years on projects that have been successfully completed. Staff will take the opportunity to review the program for improvements and further opportunities.



TENDER AWARD - PIANO ENCLOSURE WESTLAKE EVANS PARK

Through a significant donation from the Estate of Donna Vera Evans Bushell, Westlake Evans Park has become a downtown community hub. The park has become a space for recreation, learning, social and community engagement and now will be home of a piano enclosure to host musical performances. This enclosure will allow performances to happen during lunch hours, on weekends, during community events and much more. City Staff have been working with ROA Studio to create the design that complements the downtown area and Westlake Evans Park. The construction of the enclosure is set to start in August with a target completion date for November 2026. Accuratus Design & Build Inc. has been awarded the tender for the project. The Westlake Evans Park project total budget is \$2.1 million.

HEPBURN PARKETTE REVITALIZATION - BUILD COMMUNITIES STRONG FUND APPLICATION

Council has approved the request to submit an application to the Build Communities Strong Fund for the Hepburn Parkette Revitalization Project. This funding opportunity prioritizes projects that build, expand or improve community infrastructure, strengthen community vitality and enhance quality of life. Hepburn Parkette aligns with these objectives as it has cultural, recreational and economic potential. The Project will transform an underutilized site into an inclusive and accessible space. It will include upgraded landscaping, pathways, seating, lighting, a new water feature, vendor kiosk and performance space. The Project has secured private fundraising and has strong community support already.





2026 DOWNTOWN OKTOBERFEST - ROAD CLOSURE REQUEST

Known as the “second-best Oktoberfest in Canada”, Council approved the request for road closures for the Annual Downtown Oktoberfest event. The event includes free train rides, Bavarian dancing, soft pretzels, family friendly activations, bratwurst, beer and the Jim Cuddy Band. Oktoberfest will take place on Saturday September 19th from 2pm-9:30pm. As the event continues to grow, it has been relocated to the corner of Talbot Street and Ross Street. Temporary road closures will begin Saturday September 19th at 8am until 11pm.

- Talbot Street from Ross Street to Horton Street
- Ross Street from Talbot Street to Centre Street

City Staff will set up and take down all required road closure and traffic signs. A temporary transit detour will be implemented during these road closures.

MAJOR LINE RAIL CORRIDOR INFRASTRUCTURE CROSSING AGREEMENTS

Council received report ES-44-26. This report stated development in the Northwest Area 1 requires a second point of water supply from the Secondary Water System to support housing and increased density. City Staff have been in discussions with Canadian National Railway since 2023 to obtain the approval of the infrastructure crossings. In 2025, CN requested additional information and studies. The City provided the requested studies and construction plans to CN Rail. CN Rail has accepted the documents and now have provided the agreements for these infrastructure crossings. The City will undertake the responsibility for the maintenance and future replacement of this infrastructure once commissioned and assumed.





2026 MID-YEAR BUDGET MONITORING

Council received report TR-18-26 with information related to the City's 2026 financial position. The current forecast for the City's operating budget is a deficit of approximately \$500,000. This amount includes higher than budgeted winter control expenditures, fuel-related cost pressures impacting the City's transit and waste collection contracts, and increased fire services overtime due to staffing vacancies and firefighters on leaves of absence. Staff are recommending the planned issuance of \$7.4 million in long-term debt for affordable housing initiatives to restore the Infrastructure Reserve and strengthen the City's short-term financial position.



UPCOMING FLAG RAISINGS & PROCLAMATIONS



20
JUL

Drowning Prevention
Month

🕒 10:00AM 📍 CITY HALL

20
JUL

Elgin County Pride
Week 2026

🕒 11:00AM 📍 CITY HALL

JUMBO MONUMENT LIGHTING

July 19-25

Drowning
Prevention
Week



Blue



Make your mark in the community with a proclamation, flag-raising, or by lighting up the iconic Jumbo monument! The Proclamation, Flag-Raising, and Jumbo Lighting Request Form can be found on the City's website or is available at the City Clerk's office in City Hall. Requests should be submitted as far in advance as possible to ensure they can be placed on a Council agenda. Request forms can be submitted in electronic or hard copy format.



FUTURE MEETINGS

- Monday, August 10, 2026 at 5 p.m.
- Tuesday, September 8, 2026 at 5 p.m.
- Monday, September 14, 2026 at 5 p.m.

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