



Southampton Business Improvement Area
Approved
Board of Directors Meeting

APPROVED
MINUTES

Monday, April 27, , 2026

Location:	Southampton BIA Office, 201 High Street, Southampton
Board Members Present:	Kendall Johnston-Sawyer, Melanie Myers, Amanda Seaman, Amanda Deer, John Divinski
Board Members via Zoom	Sara Porter
Guests:	
Staff Present:	Lisa Mills, Coordinator and minute taker
Regrets:	Gurwinder Singh

#	Description		Lead	Outcome
1	Call to Order	10:04am	Sara Porter	
2	Land Acknowledgement	We want to acknowledge the Territory of the Anishinabek Nation: The People of the Three Fires known as Ojibway, Odawa, and Pottawatomie Nations. And further, to give thanks to the Chippewas of Saugeen and the Chippewas of Nawash, known collectively as the Saugeen Ojibway Nation, as the traditional keepers of this land.	Melanie Myers	
3	Declarations of Pecuniary Interest	None declared	Chair	
4	Additions to Agenda	None		
5	MOTION	<i>That the minutes of the March 26, 2026 Board Meeting be accepted</i>	Moved by Seconded Passed	Amanda Seaman Kendall Johnston-S
6	Chair's Report		Lisa Mills	Report
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Digital Catalogue - Spring/Summer Issue OBIAA Conference Update: St Catharines, April 19-22 Sara and Lisa both attended 		Forthcoming Attached below

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Board Member Qualifications - draft presented to Board for review • OBIAA Board semi annual in-person meeting to be held in Southampton for two June 17 and 18, with approximately 20 Board Members and Staff attending. Meetings at BCMCC (closed, for OBIAA Board only), Wednesday Dinner at Rosina's, Thursday Dinner at RM 797 Day time sessions to include one, possibly two, ministry liaisons (Rural Affairs and Tourism) • OBIAA Profession Development day: September in Burlington Theme: Placemaking and Partnerships • TIAO Membership - special pricing is being offered to BIAs through OBIAA - are we interested? • BIA has been approached to purchase advertising for digital forwarding to website from Quality Inn. We have declined and will offer a QR to our website to local inns, motels and B&B's • Elect Respect Pledge - introduced at OBIAA Conference, link provided to Board to review and advise their desire to adopt or not John and Amanda Seaman have already responded Yes • Delegation to Council - May 11 • BYOB - Province is leaving it up to Municipality to adopt a bylaw allowing people to bring their own beverages to festivals and events • A-frame signage by law: one per business adjacent their premises • Escarpment Magazine - regional lifestyle publication == to feature Southampton with an 8-page fashion spread in their summer issue - featured businesses will be those 		<p>Mayor and Council invited to welcome guests Board members invited to dinners, please advise Sara in advance</p> <p>Sara will send information link</p> <p>Lisa has advised salesman that we are not interested</p> <p>https://electrespe ct.ca/social-media-kit Board to advise by Tuesday via email if they agree</p> <p>Mid year update from Sara Could impact bar revenues - Sara suggests that people could pay a fee to bring in their own beverages if they choose not to use event bar</p> <p>Two businesses on High Street currently not compliant plus Thorncrest Outfitters sign at Town Hall - Lisa to advise that they apply to Town for permit</p> <p>Sara coordinating with Escarpment re: locations, models,</p>
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		<p>who advertise in Escarpment, ie Lac Boutique</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Range Light replica - three faces will house posters for BIA, Southampton Arts and Marine Heritage. The BIA face will have a poster of (mostly) High Street events through year end 		<p>hair and makeup and photographer</p> <p>Currently in place in front of Town Hall</p> <p>Lisa will distribute draft layout of poster to Board prior to ordering</p>
7	Coordinator's Report		Staff	Report
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • OBIAA Conference Re-Cap - Lisa attended sessions each day along with trade show and, as always, came back with a multitude of ideas and inspiration • Lisa to order adhesive sign for BIA office window 	Lisa	Per conference brochure
8	Treasurer's Report		Treasurer	Report
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Spending on track with modest revenue from Wine and Cheese Fest • Anticipating invoices for Street Banners and Bell Building Mural in coming months • Anticipating receipt of invoice for 18 new wreaths 	Melanie	
9	Strategic Planning and	Promotional Events		
9.1	Promo & Events		Sara	Report
	2026 events	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Wine and Cheese Fest - 9 locations, over 200 tastings sold Possibly expand to spirits and small bites for 2027 Premium wine inventory remaining to be billed to BIA and used for prizes and future events like LATL • May 2-4: Saturday May 16 High Street will have its "Grand Re-opening" with a ribbon cutting with Mayor Charbonneau. Minister Lisa Thompson has been invited and we're awaiting her response The afternoon will see activations on many of the new curb extensions with live music, Rotary popcorn and games. We'll also be either supplying businesses with blue and white balloons or creating a couple of arches for festive decor Social posts to be posted upon confirmation of Music Businesses will be encouraged to put out tables or racks to contribute to the festivities • Cruiser Cruise Nights on Thursdays June - Aug Location to change for this year up to Grosvenor St (due to construction at Front) Board is recommending that businesses stay open until 8pm on Thursdays - so far 6 have agreed 		

		<p>HWY 21 Alliance</p> <p>Investigating occasional boat cruise from Kincardine to Southampton</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Southampton Arts festival SBIA to unveil newest mural addition to Bell Building by Kennedy Cameron • Legion holding parking lot dance last weekend of Aug to raise funds for new soccer fields. BIA P&E Committee has chosen not to have Shin Dig in order that we not compete with this event <p>Next Promo & Events meeting next week</p>		<p>Liability mitigation for this once people are docked</p> <p>August long weekend</p>
9.2	Streetscape		Kendall	Report
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Bell Building Mural - Kennedy Cameron has provided concept that will be revised to accommodate square format • GC Huston Student Banner Project - Board reviewed and selected several contenders for re-creation as pole mounted banners - expecting a few more to come in <ul style="list-style-type: none"> -Sara and Lisa investigating ways to display some of the remaining artwork in Alley between 173 and CMR - building owners have agreed -Question for Sara - can we expand the honorariums of \$100 to 8 recipients? • Lisa, Sara and Kendall to determine placement of recycled plastic benches - North and South sides of High St, at CIBC, by Legion, etc • Garbage receptacles - Lisa has contacted Town several times regarding additional receptacles and emptying of existing ones • 18 new lit wreaths with large red plastic bows have been purchased with support from Spruce the Bruce. These new wreaths will be put in the core block and remaining wreaths will extend down to the Front (if lamp standards will accommodate hardware) and ones in really bad shape will be culled <p>Classic Display of Mississauga is the manufacturer and they held 2025 pricing for us and each wreath, including heavy duty bracket, is approx \$879 Lisa will ask if additional plastic bows can be purchased for some of our existing wreaths.</p> 	<p>Kendall</p> <p>Amanda</p>	<p>Upon receipt, Lisa will photograph and distribute to Board to select 8</p> <p>Sara - Yes</p> <p>ASAP so we can advise town placement of blue benches Awaiting answer from Town - garbage pick up changes seasonally shortly and Town does more frequent pick ups but in the meantime, it's a mess</p>
9.3	Membership		Amanda Seaman	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • No report -looking forward to contact information and 		

		projected opening for Kawartha Dairy Store from Sara		
10	Town		John Divinski	
		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> John indicated there was a full house in the gallery at last week's Council Meeting regarding Phase III of the housing/commercial development at Emerald Drive. He pointed out this is not a new initiative, it is being revived. Town will report in the next month. 		
	MOTION	<i>That the Chair, Coordinator, Treasurer and all Committee Reports be accepted as presented.</i>	Moved by: Seconded by: Passed	Amanda Deer Amanda Seaman
11	New Business			
		None		
12	Future Meeting Dates			
	Board Meeting	4th Monday of each month • Next meeting May 25th	10 am	
13	MOTION	<i>That the meeting be adjourned at 11:35 am</i>	Moved by: Seconded by: Passed	Kendall Johnston S Melanie Myers

Item 6, OBIAA Conference Update IN RESPONSE TO JOHN'S REQUEST FOR DETAILED NOTES AND COMMENTARY:

- Excellent conference with over 350 attendees from across Ontario
- The Southampton BIA submitted the project to the OBIAA Awards this year under the *Streetscaping & Public Realm Improvements* category. The submission highlighted the strong collaboration between the Town and the BIA, ensuring that above-grade streetscape upgrades reflected several years of BIA-led planning and broad support from BIA members, as well as the efforts to support businesses through construction. SEE NEWS RELEASE BELOW
- Sara Porter, our Chair and a member of the OBIAA Board moderated the Board Session and sat on several panels, mostly concerned with construction mitigation
- Opening day keynote speaker was Jay Pitter and she spoke to "Designing Main Streets for Public Joy"
- Paul McGrath, Saugeen Shores Economic Development Officer attended the full conference and Amanda Monaghan, Saugeen Shores Community Development Officer attended the Awards Dinner

- Lisa's OBIAA Report:

1. **Member Engagement Strategies:** feet on the street seems to be the best way to inform and engage membership
 - Successful engagement strategies have included: ribbon cutting ceremonies, social media highlights, morning coffee meetings (before 10 am seemed more effective than after hours wine socials, wellness and professional fairs for service providers)
 - Failed engagement attempts included: generic meet and greet events without specific purpose or value, networking events without structured activities, block ambassador programme - great idea but no volunteers, one-way broadcasting without follow up engagement
 - **Tracking and documentation:** use simple excel sheets with colour coding for follow-up - not too many fields to complete or it will become onerous and not done
 - Columns could include: Contact info, date, duration, nature of discussion, follow up needed or results
 - Track all engagement attempts for Board reporting and accountability (see above)

- Programs such as [Monday.com](https://www.monday.com) offer inexpensive (relatively) workflow platforms for team access
 - Quantify efforts: “spoke with 20 businesses, followed up 5x”
 - Communication channels beyond email: WhatsApp groups including Councillors for immediate contact
 - Private Facebook groups for business owners (admin must approve all posts)
 - One-way broadcast channels work well for announcements
 - Instagram chats can also provide quick communication
 - Key implementation tips: Always bring something tangible such as a BIA brochure, with business cards on first visit
 - Target managers/owners directly, employees as last resort
 - Allow off-topic conversations for relationship building when time permits
 - Don't over-commit - only promise what can be delivered
 - New member brochures/packages should clearly state “what we do *for you*” and “what we expect *from you*”
 - Use social media to engage businesses that don't respond to direct contact
 - Smaller events: summer movie nights can be attractive to visitors and locals. No expectation of any spending impact
 - Measurement approach for recurring events: Isolate spending on event days vs typical spending over as many years and the event has occurred; account for other factors that may impact such as weather, other events
 - Prolonged impact measurement: Track other days of the week after event; look for return visits and continued spending patterns
 - Survey data validity discussion: mitigate for survey reliability vs transaction data
 - Strengths: good for consumer sentiment measurement
 - Sentiment drives spending behaviours
 - Determine accepted margin of error in industry
 - Weaknesses: Emotionally fueled responses; unreliable for specific spending predictions ie asking tourists to predict spending amounts in which locations
2. MONERIS presentation: Tourism Data Partnership: Destination Canada, Destination Ontario, RTO's, County, Municipality for tourism spending data Transaction data ie Moneris, provided more accurate measurement than surveys. Moneris accounts for approximately 30% of all transaction management (\$1T annually in Canada with 5B transactions) extrapolating from that is quite accurate
- Background: Moneris processes 800 transaction per second across 325,000+ merchant locations
 - Owned by RBC and BMO which ensures data reliability and trustworthiness
 - Transactions include Visa, MC and debit from ALL issuing banks
 - Because there is a 90-day lag by Stats Can, Moneris data is more current
 - Survey data from Angus Reid (their partner), provides context to spending behaviours
- Retail spending trends: Average transaction size has been declining since 2022 holiday peak
 - Christmas 2025: \$81 per transaction (down from 2022)
 - Current is \$73.39 per transaction, down 1.5% y/y as of March 2026
 - 71% of Canadians reduced non-essential spending in the last 3 months: 56% cut back on restaurant dining, 49% reduced takeout/delivery spending
 - Discretionary spending under pressure as consumers exhaust Pandemic savings
 - Restaurant Industry Challenges: average transaction size \$27.50 (Christmas 2025)
 - Ontario down 5.5% y/y vs 2.3% national decline
 - Restaurant spending down 11% y/y (as of April 1, 2026)
 - Pre-pandemic (2019): \$24.70 up to 2022 peak of \$29.33 (20% increase)
 - Additional pressures beyond menu inflation: Minimum wage increased created cascading wage pressure across all positions (ie: if servers minimum wage increases, so should other positions increase up the line)
 - Diesel prices driving up supply chain costs (Thank you, Donald)
 - Apparel and Grocery Insights: Apparel showing resilience with 7.1% y/y increase
 - Spring and fall seasonal peaks remain consistent
 - Price increases likely driven by transportation costs
 - Grocery spending plateau at \$50 per average transaction - consumers maximized behavioural adjustments (brand substitution, shopping frequency)
 - Now forced to pay higher prices: 5.2% national increase, 7% in Ontario
 - 88% expect grocery prices to continue rising in 2026
 - Tourism and Event Impact: Foreign tourism spending shifts in Q2 2025: US visitors down 4% despite 35% currency

advantage

- Visitors from China down 11%, UK up 7%, France flat
- Domestic tourism analysis by postal code origin: Tourist spending averages 50% higher than locals
- Can track length of stay and spending patterns by origin location
- Event Impact: World Series Games, Taylor Swift Concerts - spending way up
- VALENTINE'S DAY: 48% spending increase vs week prior
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- **Actionable insights for BIAs:** Black Friday remains peak retail day (Boxing Day is the 59th busiest of 60 holiday days)
- Valentine's Day presents a massive opportunity: 48% propensity increase which is largely untapped by non-traditional retailers
- Community events create prolonged impact beyond event dates: in other words, people come for the event but return to shop/dine/explore
- Moneris can provide localized spending data by: origin postal codes, merchant penetration analysis for accurate projections, comparative analysis against other regions for market share context
- **Discuss with Town - this may be a better option than GeoFence data that is skewed by people driving through designated area (ie: Bruce Power workers)

3. Board Recruitment Strategies:

- Election committee with outside BIA help to target prospects
- Non board-members, those on existing committees are a soft touch
- Boots on the ground approach with a one-page expectation sheet (SBIA has this)
- Target specific skill gaps (lawyers, accountants, etc), based on Board needs
- Maintain a running short list of potential candidates from new businesses
- Use social settings such as mixers to highlight Board successes and roles
- Outgoing Board members responsible for recruiting replacements 😊

Managing Board Member Priorities and Engagement:

- Board members often have full-time jobs, BIA is a secondary or tertiary priority
- Create strong strategic plans with action items to keep focus
- Annual full-day retreats to review goals and set new ones (we wish!)
- Clear role definition: Board set vision, staff executes
- Document "Legacy" priorities for continuity between Board terms
- Address single-issue board members who focus only on pet projects

Governance vs Operations Boundaries

- Board should focus on oversight, not day to day operations - that's committee and staff work
- Staff to be protected (supported) when enforcing operational boundaries
- Use strategic planning to prevent Board micromanagement
- Clear expectations: Board sets the vision, Staff and Committees do the work
- Regularly (or even occasional), training on fiduciary responsibilities and BIA-specific roles

Municipal Relationships & Council Representatives WATCH IT, JACK!!!

- Councillors should bring BIA concerns to Council and Council updates to BIA
- Some councillors become too influential or pursue personal agendas
- Document councillor role expectations proactively
- Mayor can remove councillors from BIA boards
- Build relationships with candidates before elections
- MOU with municipality that clarifies responsibilities and time lines

Dealing with toxic Board Members:

- Code of conduct enforcement for attendance and behaviours
- Board can vote to remove members for violations
- Document everything when dealing with problematic members

- d. Don't let fear of public fallout prevent necessary action
- e. Council has final authority on board appointments/removals

Member Communication and Engagement:

- a. BIA touches every municipal department - need clear communication protocols
- b. Weekly meetings during major projects
- c. central portal systems for issue tracking
- d. Direct relationships with frontline municipal staff
- e. Regular treats/lunches/relationship building with Works Department(s)
- f. Link to actual bylaws in communications rather than re-writing

Best Practices from other BIAs

- Tecumseh: 4-50 people at mixers with 10 minute educational sessions (marketing, grants, upcoming webinars)
- Mail-in ballots increase participation vs AGM only elections
- Budget for mixer hosting removes burden from businesses

4. Public Joy Framework Overview (from keynote speak Jay Pitter

Public joy = collective flourishing, not individual happiness. This exists alongside challenging emotions, indicates the health of democracy in everyday civic life, measures safety, belonging and freedom of expression in public spaces

Framework reveals whether communities can thrive together across differences

Our main streets/downtowns are primary sites for collective flourishing

Municipal Relationship Challenges: risk averse municipal culture creates barriers to innovation

“No fund fairies” (risk management), block creative programming

BIAs often become dumping ground for problems beyond their mandate

Recommendation: Assert power rather than wait for empowerment. Tell municipalities (perhaps share might be a better word?), what you're contributing, not asking permission

Frame requests as collaborative contributions to community goals

Board and Membership Engagement Issue: Common problems: boards have big ideas but low execution capacity

Need clearer calls for “doers”, not just volunteers

Recommendation: require opinions to match capacity for action

Associate membership model suggested for businesses outside BIA boundaries

Better communication needed about actual BIA value and scope

Programming and Events Strategy: Events create economic opportunity while building community enthusiasm

Success is measured by crowd engagement and joy levels, not just attendance

Intergenerational programming is important

Daytime vs evening event timing affects different business types

Balance economic goals with community well-being

Policy & Infrastructure Recommendations: Policies should enable joy while maintaining shared standards

- Living documents that can adapt vs rigid restrictions
- Universal design principles for accessibility
- Balance between welcoming spaces and managing “unwanted behaviours”
- Municipal bylaws often restrict creative placemaking initiatives

Next steps and advocacy approach: Map invisibly work to make BIA contributions visible (SBIA pays for flowers, pays for holiday decor, plans and executes events and promotions)

Develop clear messaging about expanded scope and value

Advocate for resources matching actual responsibilities

Frame work as democracy repair and civic infrastructure

Position BIA as essential to community resilience and connection

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- Town of Saugeen Shores
 - 600 Tomlinson Drive
 - Port Elgin, ON
 - 519-832-2008

- **Media Release**

- For Immediate Release
- April 27, 2026

- **High Street Project Recognized by Provincial BIA Association**

- **Saugeen Shores, ON;** The Town of Saugeen Shores and the Southampton Business Improvement Area (BIA) are proud to announce they have received a Certificate of Merit at the Ontario Business Improvement Area Association (OBIAA) Conference Awards Dinner on Monday, April 20, recognizing the success of Phase One of the High Street Reconstruction Project and the efforts that supported local businesses throughout construction.
- The Southampton BIA submitted the project to the OBIAA Awards this year under the *Streetscaping & Public Realm Improvements* category. The submission highlighted the strong collaboration between the Town and the BIA, ensuring that above-grade streetscape upgrades reflected several years of BIA-led planning and broad support from BIA members, as well as the efforts to support businesses through construction.
- “This recognition celebrates the significant investment that we are making on Southampton's High Street” said Luke Charbonneau, Mayor of Saugeen Shores. “In partnership with the BIA and the broader community, we are refreshing our downtown infrastructure, supporting our local businesses, and creating a more vibrant space for the community.”
- A key focus of the submission was the coordinated approach to communication, including regular weekly updates between the Town, the BIA, and High Street businesses. It also highlighted promotions and events hosted throughout the construction period like the Love Local campaign, free giveaways, radio ads and ‘Open for business’ signage.
- “Our goal was to make sure business owners felt supported and that residents continued to shop, dine, and explore downtown Southampton,” said Sara Porter, Chair of the Southampton Business Improvement Area. “This recognition isn’t just about the final streetscape, but the care, communication, and collaboration that went into getting us there. It’s a testament to what can be achieved when the Town and the BIA work side by side.”
- Phase One of the High Street Reconstruction project was a Major Initiative in the Saugeen Shores [2025 Business Plan](#) (pg 54) which included essential underground infrastructure upgrades on High Street from Victoria Street to Grosvenor St, while enhancing the public realm of downtown Southampton.
- Phase Two of the project is now underway, focusing on improving infrastructure and enhancing the streetscape between Grosvenor Street and the Flag. Phase Two is identified as a Major Initiative in the [2026 Business Plan](#) (pg 60).

- **Attached:**

- Photo: Town staff and Southampton BIA Chair pose with Certificate of Merit, received at the Ontario Business Improvement Area Association (OBIAA) Conference Awards Dinner on Monday, April 20.

- *Left to right: Paul McGrath, Saugeen Shores Economic Development Officer; Sara Porter, Southampton BIA Chair; Amanda Monaghan, Saugeen Shores Community Development Officer*

- **For more information:**

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