

Agricultural and Planning Advisory Committee (APAC)

Terms of Reference

Adopted: October 14, 2026

Background

The Agricultural Planning Advisory Committee (APAC) was originally established in the late 1990s as an Agricultural Advisory Committee to serve as a County-wide resource for addressing complaints under the Nutrient Management Act. In the mid-2000s, the Committee's mandate and membership were broadened to allow County Council to canvass it for input on a wider range of agricultural matters.

In July 2016, the Committee's mandate and membership were further expanded to enable County Council to seek its input on a broader range of planning matters, in response to the requirements of Bill 73 – Smart Growth for Our Communities Act, which mandated that upper-tier municipalities establish a Planning Advisory Committee (PAC). Since that time, the Committee's composition and mandate have remained largely unchanged.

Purpose and Mandate

The APAC will primarily function as an advisory body to the County on agricultural and other select land use planning related matters. Those matters on which the Committee's input will be solicited will be determined by County Council and facilitated by a Council resolution outlining the nature and timing of the input being requested. This resolution may be general in nature, allowing County Planning Staff to determine the specifics of the consultation with the APAC (e.g. a new Official Plan), or it may be topic-specific (e.g. Agricultural Impact Assessments), clearly outlining the particular matter for which input is being requested.

Membership

Composition

The Committee shall consist of a maximum of fifteen (15) voting members (includes all Council-appointed and organizational representative members).

Council shall appoint:

- Two (2) County Councillors, with at least one from a Township;
- Two (2) representatives from either the agriculture, agribusiness, agri-food, or agritourism industries;
- One (1) public member who is not directly involved in the agricultural or agri-food industry but may have working knowledge, experience, expertise, or background with respect to land use planning or environmental related matters.

Membership may also include one representative from each of the following organizations:

1. Beef Farmers of Ontario (Oxford Association) or the Oxford County Cattleman's Association;
2. Dairy Farmers of Ontario (Oxford County);

3. Grain Farmers of Ontario (District 7);
4. National Farmers Union – Ontario (Local 301);
5. Ontario Christian Farmers Federation (Oxford County);
6. Ontario Pork (Zone 4);
7. Ontario Soil & Crop Improvement Association (Oxford);
8. Oxford County Federation of Agriculture;
9. Oxford County Junior Farmers; and
10. Any other recognized agricultural commodity organization representing primary agricultural producers, as determined appropriate by County staff in consultation with the Committee.

Recognizing that not all organizations may be able to provide representation during every term, vacancies among the organizations listed above shall not prevent the Committee from meeting its membership requirements.

Note: The overall Committee membership above is also intended to ensure the Committee maintains the membership requirements necessary to fulfill its responsibilities under the Nutrient Management Act, which requires at least:

- One (1) County Councillor;
- One (1) public member;
- Three (3) representatives from agricultural commodity organizations with knowledge of nutrient management issues.

Qualifications & Competencies

Matters considered in evaluating candidates for the Agricultural and Planning Advisory Committee shall include, but are not limited to:

- Commitment to equitable access, diversity, and inclusiveness;
- Ability to seek and listen to input from all stakeholders and approach people and problems with an open mind;
- Ability to actively participate in discussion and deliberation, and to attain positive outcomes;
- Leadership experience;
- Time and energy to devote to the work of the Committee; and,
- Working knowledge of agricultural, agri-food, rural, and other land use planning considerations in Oxford County.

Term

The Council and public members of the Committee shall be appointed by County Council for a four (4) year term coinciding with the term of Council. The public members shall remain on until successors are appointed. Members are eligible for re-appointment.

Vacancies

Vacancies on the Committee shall be filled in accordance with the County of Oxford Procedural By-law and applicable Council policies.

Selection of Chair and Vice Chair

At the first meeting of each year, the Committee shall select a Chair and Vice Chair by a majority vote for the purpose of chairing meetings and overseeing the operation of the Committee.

Roles and Responsibilities

The Chair

- Preside over all meetings;
- Ensure adherence to the Council approved Terms of Reference;
- Consult with Committee Secretary on matters for inclusion on Committee agendas; and
- Provide leadership to facilitate the effective conduct of Committee business.

Committee Members

In fulfilling its advisory role, County Council may seek advice and recommendations from the APAC on matters including, but not limited to:

- Agricultural policies and programs affecting Oxford County
- Land use planning matters affecting the agricultural system within Oxford County
- Rural economic development opportunities, including agricultural business and tourism
- Provincial legislation impacting the agricultural sector as it relates to land use planning
- To facilitate County consideration of matters and concerns regarding nutrient management within the County
- Initiatives that support the long-term viability and sustainability of agriculture within Oxford County
- Other key/emerging issues affecting land use planning and/or agriculture, as may be identified by the County.

County Staff

Planning and technical and administrative advice and support for the Agricultural and Planning Advisory Committee will be provided by County Community Planning Office staff, specifically

Planning Staff Liaison and Committee Secretary. The County will also be responsible for providing support services to the Committee, such as photocopying and postage.

Planning Staff Liaison

The Community Planning Office will assign a Planning Staff Liaison to the Committee to provide administrative support, coordinate communication between the Committee and County staff, and facilitate the Committee's work in accordance with County policies and procedures.

Committee Secretary

An employee of the Community Planning Office will serve as Recording Secretary for the Committee and shall:

- Prepare and distribute meeting agendas in accordance with the County's Procedure By-Law;
- Record and maintain meeting minutes and Committee records;
- Post approved minutes on the County website;
- Prepare draft minutes for consideration at the next Committee meeting.

Meetings

Meeting Frequency

The Agricultural and Planning Advisory Committee typically meets twice per year, but no more than four times annually, or at the call of the Chair.

All meetings of the AAC shall be open to the public, except for those portions of a meeting held in closed session in accordance with applicable legislation.

Meeting Location

Meetings will be held in person at the Oxford County Administration Building and can be held electronically.

Rules of Procedure

The Committee shall generally conduct its meetings in accordance with the County of Oxford Procedural By-law. However, in performance of its responsibilities under the Nutrient Management Act, the Committee's rules and procedures shall also be consistent with Part XII, Local Advisory Committees of Ontario Regulation 267/03, under the Nutrient Management Act, as amended from time to time.

Quorum

In order to meet, the Committee must have quorum. A quorum shall consist of a minimum of seven (7) voting members.

Agendas and Minutes

Meeting agendas shall be distributed to Committee members and posted on the County of Oxford's website in accordance with the County of Oxford Procedural By-law. Once adopted by the Committee, meeting minutes shall be posted on the County's website.

The order of procedure for meetings of the Committee shall generally be as follows:

- Call to Order
- Approval of Agenda
- Disclosure of Pecuniary Interest and the General Nature Thereof
- Adoption of Minutes
- Delegations/Presentations
- Reports from Departments (including presentations)
- Other Business
- New Business
- Next Meeting
- Adjournment

Compensation and Expenses

Committee members are volunteer appointments and receive no remuneration.

Education

The APAC may, from time to time, provide an educational forum that increases awareness of agricultural, agri-food, rural and/or other land use planning matters as determined by County Council. Alternatively, a training seminar may be held periodically for APAC members pertaining to land use related policies and other matters deemed appropriate by the County. The format and content of any educational forum or training seminar will be determined by County staff in consultation with the APAC.

Reporting and Review

The Committee serves in an advisory capacity and does not have the decision-making authority of Council. All Committee decisions shall be made in the form of recommendations to Council, unless otherwise authorized by Council through resolution or by-law. Recommendations shall be forwarded by the Committee Secretary to the Clerk for inclusion on the agenda of the next Council meeting.

The Committee shall review its Terms of Reference during each Council term and submit any proposed revisions to Council for adoption prior to the appointment of a new Committee.

At the conclusion of each Council term, the Committee shall submit a report to the Clerk summarizing its activities and accomplishments during the term.

Relevant Policies and Procedures

- Council's Code of Conduct Policy
- County Procedural By-law
- Nutrient Management Act
- Planning Act
- Provincial Planning Statement, 2024
- County Official Plan
- Local Advisory Committees of Ontario Regulation 267/03
- *Municipal Conflict of Interest Act (MCIA)*
- *Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act (MFIPPA)*