

A Message from the Warden



I would like to take this opportunity to introduce you to Elgin County Council members.

Serving their inaugural terms are: Jack Couckuyt, Mayor of Aylmer; Paul Ens, Mayor of Bayham; Jim Jenkins, Deputy Mayor of Malahide; Cameron McWilliam, Mayor of Dutton/Dunwich; and Bernie Wiehle, Mayor of West Elgin.

Returning to County Council are: Dave Marr, Deputy Mayor of Central Elgin; Jim McIntyre, Mayor of Southwold Township; and Central Elgin Mayor Bill Walters, who served as a member a number of years ago.

I, too, returned, now as Mayor of Malahide. As Warden, I find this combination of experienced and

new councillors is proving to be dynamic and productive.

Immediately after the election for Warden in December, council and county staff went into budget preparation, a challenging task. As you will read from the budget report included in this newsletter, we were able to hold the line without cutting services.

We also participated in a visioning exercise, establishing our key priorities. A ten-year business plan was undertaken, a great asset that bodes well for a progressive future.

Elected officials and staff from both the county and the City of St. Thomas have met and we are working cooperatively together on joint initiatives, a very good partnership for us both.

At this time of the year, we start to enjoy spring and anticipate the summer. What a summer it shall be! There are many attractions to be enjoyed in Elgin for residents and visitors. To find out all there is to do, please call 519-631-1460 extension 168 to obtain your own copy of 'Experience Elgin County & St. Thomas 2011 Visitor's Guide' or visit: www.elgintourist.com.

Dave Mennill



Pat Vandevenne, A Legacy of Service, 1992-2011

Pat Vandevenne, the County's long-serving Director of Senior Services at Elgin Manor, retires this month, completing an outstanding career with the County of Elgin spanning nearly twenty years.

Pat began her service to the County in March 1992, as Director of Nursing at Elgin Manor and Terrace Lodge. In August, 2004 she became Director of Senior Services/Manager of Resident Care at Bobier Villa. In May, 2008 Pat took on additional responsibilities, as Director of Senior Services at Bobier Villa and Elgin Manor. Since June, 2009 she has served as Part-time Director of Senior Services at Elgin Manor.

Elgin County Chief Administrative Officer Mark McDonald worked with Pat throughout her career and

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County Newsletter Goes Paperless

This issue introduces a change in the distribution model for the County Newsletter. To achieve cost savings and honour the County's commitment to paperless operations where feasible, Elgin County Matters will now be exclusively available in electronic form. To view or download your copy, go online to <http://www.elgin.ca/ElginCounty/CulturalServices/newsletter.php>.

Elgin County Council Completes Strategic Vision Plan

By Mark McDonald, Chief Administrative Officer

Elgin County Council has completed and approved a Strategic Vision plan for the 2011-2014 Council term. The plan outlines the County's principal goals for 2011 and its top priorities for the term, as well as identifying the County's primary strength, opportunity and challenge to be addressed.

Top 5 Priorities, 2011-2014:

1. Increasing and promoting economic development and tourism
2. Increasing cooperation and joint services with the City of St. Thomas
3. Completing the County Official Plan
4. Investing in the county road infrastructure
5. Continuing to streamline county operations using best practices

Top 4 Goals for 2011:

1. Realizing an affordable tax rate increase by maximizing funding sources and improving efficiency and savings
2. Maintaining services
3. Increasing economic development opportunities
4. Increasing cooperation with the City of St. Thomas

As part of the visioning process, Council identified as the County's primary strength its departmental

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Elgin County Library Celebrates Its 75th Anniversary

By Brian Masschaele, Director of Community & Cultural Services

The Elgin County Library system was originally formed in 1936 as the Elgin County Library Association representing existing libraries in Bayham, Rodney, Shedden, Sparta and West Lorne. Since that time, the system has evolved to comprise today's ten branches under the administration of the County.

A series of events will be taking place throughout 2011 in honour of the library's 75th anniversary, including an open house at the Port Stanley Library on April 27th. Other events include:

- "What's your Elgin County Library Story", a contest where patrons can tell their story of what the library means to them.
- "Continuing Story", where participants describe the adventures of the library's official mascot, "Larry the Library Card."
- "Challenge 75", a contest where participants must complete 75 library related activities.

2011 will be a year to celebrate and take pride in the Elgin County Library. We hope you can join us!



Original Bookmobile ca. 1949



County Holds Line on Budget

By Jim Bundschuh, Director of Financial Services

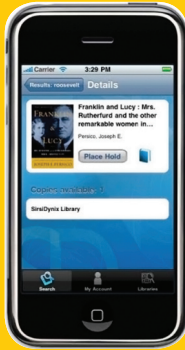
On March 22nd Elgin County Council approved a budget that faces head on challenges presented by the loss of tax income from St. Thomas Ford Assembly Plant and a cut in Ontario government funding.

The \$59.9 million budget has a tax rate reduction of 0.8 per cent and a levy increase of 2.4 per cent. The average household with no change in assessment will receive a \$10 reduction in taxes. Taxes on a household with an average assessment growth will increase by \$48 this year, or 4.0 per cent.

In order to hold the levy to the rate of inflation, the County has budgeted for a net income loss of \$3.9 million. The income losses resulting from Ford and the Ontario Municipal Partnership Fund total \$1.6 million and the Ford appeal on prior tax years

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Library Services Now Available on Apple Devices



By Sandi Loponen,
Library Co-Ordinator

Elgin County Library is the first member of the Ontario Library Consortium to offer a free way for iPad and iPhone users to search for books, place holds and check the status of their library accounts on-the-go with a new app called BookMyne.

Available free from iTunes, the BookMyne app automatically searches for participating public libraries within a 25km radius of your location. Library branch addresses, phone numbers and hours of operation are also available through the app.

Patrons can search for a book, movie, or CD, place a hold on the item, choose a pickup location and be contacted once the item is available. Our popular renewal service is also available; patrons can extend the due date on select materials using BookMyne when there is no waiting list.

The newest version of the app also includes a barcode scanning feature. Books in a bookstore or at a friend's house can be scanned to check for availability at your local library branch.

"This is an important addition to the mobile services we offer and is especially convenient for County residents who are on-the-go, or do not reside near one of our branches," says Brian Masschaele,

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Pat Vandevenne, A Legacy of Service, 1992-2011

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describes her aptly as "a champion of long-term care, a genuinely compassionate individual and a woman of strong moral conviction," adding "Pat would always bring the human element to a discussion or debate - she kept management grounded. Elgin County was blessed with her presence, and she will be missed by everyone who knew her."

Effective May 2, 2011, Rhonda Roberts becomes Director of Senior Services overseeing all three County long-term care facilities, with direct responsibility as Administrator at Terrace Lodge. Michele Harris becomes Administrator at Elgin Manor and Bobier Villa, reporting to Rhonda Roberts.

New History of Alma College

By Stephen Francom, Manager, Elgin County Archives

The Elgin County Archives is collaborating with the Alma College International Alumnae Association to commission, publish and distribute a new history of Alma College, the international private girls' school that operated in St. Thomas from 1877 to 1989 and was tragically destroyed by fire in May, 2008. The Alumnae Association – largely through member donations – and the Archives – using funds donated by the Alumnae Association over the years and held in reserve - are directly funding this project and will share in revenues generated by sales of the book. Design, layout and printing work have been contracted to the Aylmer Express Fine Printing Division.

The author commissioned for this

project is Susan Butlin, whose previous book, *The Practice of Her Profession: Florence Carlyle, Canadian Painter in the Age of Impressionism* (McGill-Queen's University Press, 2009), won the Ontario Historical Society's 2010 Alison Prentice Award for the best book on women's history published in the past three years. The book, entitled *All The Girls Have Gone: Alma College, The Latter Years*, will be published in May, 2011 and available for purchase at the Archives, the Elgin County Museum and the Elgin County Library's office at the County Administration Building. Watch the Archives' website, www.elgin.ca, for more information concerning the book's formal launch event.

County Holds Line on Budget

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could cost an additional \$0.8 million. In 2010 the County received \$3.1 million more in Road Infrastructure grants which it will not receive in 2011.

Council is drawing on reserves to lessen the impact on rate payers. Council took bold moves to cushion the blow. By planning ahead and putting money away, the county is drawing on its reserves to avoid a double digit rate increase.

The budget includes the Dexter Line Environmental Assessment (\$265,000); Social Services contribution (\$3.3 million); rehabilitation of Talbot Line (\$600,000); purchases of books for the county's libraries (\$233,000); Furnival Road reconstruction (\$960,000); renovations to Rodney Library (\$35,000); IV training for ambulance emergency service staff (\$60,000); Imperial Road resurfacing (\$366,000); grants to community groups (\$55,000); development of an art trail for tourism (\$38,000); and, an increase in the hours of operation at Bayham Library (\$31,000).

The County developed a ten year plan to address the financial pressures resulting from the loss of provincial and Ford revenue. A combination of efficiencies and tax increases will be required throughout this ten year period to overcome these challenges. As part of the 2011 Budget, the County committed to \$400,000 in efficiencies to help offset some of these negative impacts, and in fact, will continue to explore opportunities for efficiencies in operations for future years.

"I am pleased that county staff were able to come up with increased efficiencies," said Warden Dave Mennill.

Elgin County Council Completes Strategic Vision Plan

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administrative structure and the leadership and commitment to the efficient and effective delivery of services demonstrated by its people. The County's key opportunities in the near future will be to effectively exploit its potential for economic development by promoting its tourism assets, building its agricultural base and enlarging its skilled labour force. The County's chief challenge will be to avoid stifling its economic development by failing to invest in its future growth and prosperity.

In these first weeks of its new term, Council has begun to implement this strategic vision by adopting a ten-year financial plan that includes a provision to use existing reserves to mitigate the extent of necessary increases to the county tax levy, by making a significant investment in the county road system, and by proposing a deepening of its existing partnership with the City of St. Thomas to promote shared tourism resources.

Library Services Now Available on Apple Devices

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Director of Community & Cultural Services. "It is quickly becoming popular with patrons and staff."

Elgin County Councillor Jack Couckuyt is another regular user of the app. "I love the way BookMyne makes it so easy to log in and search and put on hold and renew," Couckuyt explains. "It is even faster

than the website itself!"

The BookMyne app was created by SirsiDynix, the library database company that provides software for all libraries in Elgin. The app is currently available for the iPhone, iPod touch, and iPad with versions in development for the Blackberry and Android.

3rd Annual Warden's Charity Golf Tournament - Proceeds Support United Way

- Kettle Creek Golf & Country Club, 320 Carlow Rd., Port Stanley • Wednesday, June 15, 2011
- Registration 9 - 10:30am • 10:30am Shotgun Start • Cost \$90 (before May 6) \$100 (after May 6)
- Fee Includes: 18 holes of golf, power cart, continental breakfast, lunch and steak dinner, participation gifts, opportunity to win \$10,000, Golf Unleashed Show (pro demo by Bob Martin's)

To register please contact the Elgin County United Way Special Events Committee at 519-631-1460 x456 or ecuwsec@elgin-county.on.ca