



Information Memo

To: Budget Committee Meeting
Date: January 21, 2026
Division: Corporate Services
Department: Finance
Ward: Multiple Wards
Subject: Additional Information on Business Improvement Areas

Recommendation(s):

That the Information Memo regarding Additional Information on Business Improvement Areas be received as information.

Background

In October, Norfolk County Council approved a motion requesting more information on Business Improvement Areas (BIAs), specifically:

- 1. What is the cost if Norfolk County was to add a special levy / community improvement fee to the landowners inside the BIA for garbage pickup per unit (commercial and residential)*
- 2. What is the cost if the BIA levied this directly.*
- 3. Letters x2 year from bylaw or finance to landlords.*
- 4. Cost of effective cameras downtown for By-law to identify dumping culprits and fine them.*
- 5. Does the municipal act allow Norfolk County to influence the BIA levy?*
- 6. How do Norfolk County / can Norfolk County add special levy to this area or community improvement fee.*
- 7. Investigate a joint partnership on municipal blue box pick up & commercial area pick up to reduce costs.*

The full motion from the October 16th, 2025 Budget Committee is attached as **Appendix 1** for reference. The purpose of this information memo is to provide more information on these requests for Councillors as the Draft 2026 Levy Operating Budget is considered. Each of the seven items will be discussed in detail below.

Discussion:

1. Cost of Norfolk County Collection

The County currently levies a charge to raise the required amounts for operating the BIA to commercial properties within its boundaries. The Simcoe BIA includes 176

properties. With a BIA levy of \$180,000, this results in an average cost per property of approximately \$1,023 annually, in addition to commercial property taxes which includes standard waste collection services.

Adding one additional weekly curbside garbage collection for the Simcoe BIA is estimated to cost approximately \$75,000 annually, with actual costs varying based on the tonnage collected during the additional pickup. This would equate to an average cost per property of approximately \$426 annually if it were BIA levied or special levied to commercial properties within the BIA boundary. Implementing this service would require an amendment to the existing waste collection contract, as it is not included in the current scope. In addition, the approval of the new curbside waste collection contract specifically eliminated previous specialized collection programs in specific areas of Norfolk in order to provide a consistent level of service across the County.

Alternatively, and/or additionally, if a weekly cleanup collection is required to address illegally dumped material, staff estimate up to 3 hours of service per week would be needed, in addition to haulage and disposal costs for the tonnage collected. The estimated annual cost for this service could be up to \$35,000. This would equate to an average cost per property of approximately \$199 annually if it were BIA levied or special levied to commercial properties within the BIA boundary.

2. Cost of BIA Collection

Norfolk County has not estimated costs for the Simcoe BIA procuring private arrangements. However, the Simcoe BIA has identified \$20,000 in its Approved 2026 Budget for garbage collection, which is assumed to be the cost required to deliver the additional services desired by the BIA if it were to procure them rather than the County.

Currently, although it is in the Approved 2026 Simcoe BIA budget, it would be anticipated to have an average cost per property of \$0 for 2026 because it is being offset by a transfer from the Simcoe BIA Reserve Fund, however if it was integrated in the BIA's levy requirement in future years or the cost was special levied to commercial properties within the BIA boundary, the \$20,000 cost for garbage would result in an average cost per property of approximately \$114 annually.

3. Cost of Letters to Property Owners or Tax Bill Inserts

As discussed in Report EIS-24-080 Simcoe BIA Public Space Garbage Container Collection, presented at the October 9th, 2024 Council-in-Committee meeting, advertising campaigns for appropriate set-out dates and times has been undertaken using letters to owners and landlords, and using door hangers for tenants.

The Draft 2026 Levy Operating Budget includes an allocation of \$24,500 for the printing of Finance and By-Law Services. The cost of continued tax inserts for 176 properties within the Simcoe BIA can be accommodated within this budget.

4. Cost of Cameras

The idea of using the BIA's cameras to help identify people committing by-law infringements in order to lay charges and/or deter infringements has been considered previously. Per Report EIS-24-004 Waste Collection in the Simcoe BIA, presented at the February 13th, 2024 Council-in-Committee meeting, there were logistical challenges with using the BIA's cameras. A low chance of success was estimated and as a result, it was determined it would likely be uneconomical for County staff to attempt to recover fines that are limited to \$145 for littering or \$100 for early waste set-out.

To elaborate on some of those challenges, the chances of effectiveness of this type of program are low because;

- For court purposes, a BIA member would have to be supplied as a witness to describe how the camera system works, how they identified a subject, how the video was copied, and when and whom they gave the video. They would also have to save and secure the original footage until it is produced in court.
- Cameras mounted high, to deter vandalism, typically result in frames that capture the top of people's heads which would not suitably identify a person
- Most dumping is suspected to take place at night to avoid detection, which causes a negative effect on video clarity.
- If a subject is captured on video, it is unclear how By-law staff will identify them. Observing someone coming or going from a building does not make them a resident of that building nor the building's owner liable. Certain downtown buildings are locked with no access to intercom or a manager on site. Furthermore, it would be uneconomical for By-law staff to go door-knocking, canvassing for someone who appears to be on video. Even if this were successful, it is unclear how strong the testimony of a witness identifying the subject of a video image alone would be considered at trial.

The County could pursue an internal program, installing cameras managed by County staff in the downtown core, like ones that exist at some current County facilities. Staff estimate approximately 36 cameras would be required to provide adequate coverage over a four-block section of the downtown core. However, most of the challenges listed above would still be present, and additional factors below would also arise;

- Cameras would need to be mounted on poles, which have a cost in addition to the cameras, or mounted on private buildings. If the preference is buildings, staff would have to work with the building owners to obtain permission, and there would be associated agreements required regarding liability and likely utility-sharing as the cameras require energy.
- Before municipalities install video surveillance, they must be conscious of privacy concerns and act in accordance with the *Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, 1990*, and only install when there is a real, substantial, and pressing problem. A document on the [Guidelines for the Use of Video Surveillance issued by the Information and Privacy Commissioner of Ontario](#) suggests "a minor offence such as littering would, in general, not be considered a

substantial or pressing problem. It would, therefore, not meet the required criteria to justify the use of video surveillance”.

- Per incident, staff estimate six hours of staff time could be required to review the video, communicate with the BIA, identify the subject, lay a charge, and attend court, with many instances not resulting in a charge being laid and many instances also not resulting in a charge being upheld at trial. The salaries and benefits for six hours for a By-law Enforcement Officer cost approximately \$225.
- The cost of cameras is approximately \$2,000 one-time for the equipment and installation, plus \$175 for annual licensing, \$500 for annual data (unless cheaper wi-fi or ethernet options are available), and annual allocations for utilities to power the cameras. The County’s current security cameras are licensed for 10 years, and the equipment should be replaced at the 10-year mark as well (i.e., it creates an annual lifecycle cost of \$200). For a program with 36 cameras, this would result in one-time costs of \$72,000 and annual costs of at least \$24,300, with \$7,200 being an appropriate allocation for lifecycle costing in addition to that.
- Based on the cost of cameras and the rate of fines, it would take between 215-315 littering and/or early waste set-out charges in a year to recover the costs of the cameras alone. However, as previously covered, pursuing a single charge is more costly than the revenue generated from a charge, meaning another \$48,000+ of staff time would be dedicated to the program. By comparison, staff estimate less than three charges per year would be likely. Even if the cost-neutral level of charges was possible, pursuing that level of charges would also take up to 60% of the capacity of a By-law Enforcement Officer, resulting in sacrifices to other services being provided by By-law, or additional FTEs to be considered.
 - Staff recognize municipal issues such as security and by-law infringements are important, and they have qualitative merits and should never solely be considered based on their financial feasibility alone. However, with respect to the quantitative analysis provided above, it is highly unlikely a program like this would ever recover its costs, or even a material portion of its costs.

Overall, using the BIA’s existing cameras has poor operational feasibility. The County could consider an internal program; however, it would likely share a low volume of success and also have high costs unable to be recovered by any charges laid.

5. Relationship between Council and BIA Levying

The motion requested information on what ability Norfolk County Council has to influence the budget of a BIA. Relevant sections of legislation have been analyzed below to provide more information:

- Under Section 205(1) of the *Municipal Act, 2001*, a BIA’s “*Board of Management shall prepare a proposed budget for each fiscal year by the date and in the form required by the municipality, and shall hold one or more meetings of the members of the BIA for discussion*”.

- To this effect, Norfolk County Council can influence the timeline and layout / degree of information included within a BIA's budget. For 2026, the Simcoe BIA met to discuss their budget, provided their budget to Norfolk County in advance of budget deliberations, and have provided a document consistent with previous years, meeting these requirements in staff's opinion.
- Under Section 205(2), *"the municipality may approve it in whole or in part but may not add expenditures to it"*.
 - To this effect, Norfolk County Council can wholly influence the budget by approving anywhere between \$0 and the full requested budget; however, Norfolk County Council cannot influence it by determining more costs / services should be undertaken than what is requested by the BIA.
- Under Section 205(3), the BIA *"shall not spend any money unless it is included in the budget approved by the municipality or in a reserve fund"*, and *"shall not incur any indebtedness"*.
 - To this effect, Norfolk County Council influences the budget because the BIA is not permitted to undertake spending or borrowing activities without Norfolk County Council's approval.
- Under Section 206, the BIA *"shall submit its annual report...and shall include audited financial statements"*, and *"the municipal auditor is the auditor of each board of management"*.
 - To this effect, Norfolk County Council influences the budget because it implements internal controls to ensure BIAs comply with the budgetary legislation they are bound by.

To summarize, Norfolk County Council can influence BIA budgets by requesting as much information from a BIA as it warrants to make approval decisions, and then approve as much or as little of the requested costs / services. However, it does not appear that Council could change or add to the scope of requests.

6. Special Levies / Local Improvements

The motion requested information on how Norfolk County can raise funds from a BIA. Staff have identified four main ways, and expanded on them below:

1. Under Section 208(1) of the *Municipal Act, 2001*, Norfolk *"shall annually raise the amount required for the purposes of a [BIA]"*, and Under Section 208(2), Norfolk *"may establish a special charge for the amount referred to in subsection (1), by levy upon rateable property in the [BIA]"*.
 - Therefore, under BIA legislation, Norfolk must collect the approved amount, and generally does this by levying the properties within the BIA. There is further legislation that permits levying the properties within a BIA equally or by using different percentages of assessment for separately assessed properties / classes if it is equitable in Council's opinion based on the benefit those properties receive from being in the BIA. Minimum or maximum per-property amounts can also be established. Staff would recommend continuing this

practice because there are established processes in place to achieve the desired outcome.

2. Under Section 326, Norfolk may “*identify a special service*”, “*determine which of the costs...are related to that special service*”, “*designate the area of the municipality in which residents and property owners receive or will receive an additional benefit from the special service*”, and “*levy a special local municipality levy under section 312 on the rateable property*”.
 - Therefore, under special levy legislation, Norfolk could establish an additional service for this area and develop a method to allocate the costs of that service to just the area. Commercial properties in the area would incur the same level of taxation under Options 1 or 2. As a result, staff would not recommend this because it accomplishes a substantially similar result to that of the BIA levy but it would require additional administration to establish another tax rate, boundary, By-law, and Financial Information Reporting schedule, and manage those items on an ongoing basis.
3. Under *O.Reg. 586/06 Local Improvement Charges – Priority Lien Status*, municipalities “*may undertake the work as a local improvement*”, “*raise the cost of undertaking a work as a local improvement by imposing special charges*”, and “*shall specially charge the owners’ share of the cost by imposing an equal special charge per metre of frontage on the lots that abut directly on the work*”. However, a “work” is defined as “*a capital work. For greater certainty, the definition of “work”...includes... constructing a highway, constructing any works for the collection, production, treatment, storage, supply, distribution, or conservation of water or for the collection, transmission, treatment, or disposal of sewage*”, etc.
 - Therefore, under Local Improvement legislation, Norfolk could impose local improvement charges on this area, but garbage collection does not appear to be an eligible service to do so. As a result, staff do not recommend this.
4. Norfolk could also provide additional service to this area and collect the costs through the general levy as outlined in Part VIII of the *Municipal Act, 2001*, like any other services that are subsidized through the net levy requirement.
 - As discussed throughout curbside collection reports over the past 18 months, staff would not recommend this as it is more costly and less equitable.

Overall, requirements of BIA levying and special levying are different, but if the underlying cost of service is the same, then creating a special levy with the same boundary and class of the BIA would result in the same average taxation of properties. There would be no difference or savings to properties from using one or the other.

7. Blue Box Transition

Report PW-25-017 Update on Non-Eligible Source Recycling Collection, presented at the October 15th, 2025 Council-in-Committee meeting, outlined options for recycling collection from non-eligible sources after January 1st, 2026. Council directed that recycling collection be limited to Norfolk County facilities only. As a result, private businesses would be responsible for arranging their own recycling collection services. The Simcoe BIA, in collaboration with local businesses, could explore the feasibility of a

shared private recycling contract to determine whether participation by multiple businesses could result in efficiencies and cost savings.

Finance Comments:

There are no direct financial implications as a result of this report, and most pertinent financial information was integrated into the body of the report.

The Approved 2026 Simcoe BIA Budget is included on Page 267 of the Draft 2026 Levy Operating Budget and includes a levy of \$180,000. \$20,000 is also proposed to complete weekly garbage collection, to be funded by the Simcoe BIA's reserve fund.

The Draft 2026 Levy Operating Budget also includes an allocation for bi-weekly garbage collection (which includes all properties located within the BIAs), an allocation of \$24,500 for Finance and By-Law printing, no allocation for the installation of cameras within the BIA area, and no allocation for the collection of blue box material as this is no longer a municipal responsibility. If Council would like to amend the proposed plan for undertaking or funding any of the issues discussed in the body of the information memo, it would need to approve a motion to do so, which would then be subject to the veto and override of veto provisions under Part VI.1 of the *Municipal Act, 2001* (i.e., the Strong Mayor Powers legislation).

Interdepartmental Implication(s):

The Director of Fleet & Facilities Services, Manager of By-law Services, and Supervisor of Waste Management were consulted in the preparation of this report.

Attachment(s):

- Appendix 1 – October 16, 2025 Motion

Approval:

Approved By:

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Reviewed By:

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