

Council approves library/seniors facility

By Mark Pavilons

King council has given the green light to the new King City Library and Seniors Centre.

Council decided to award the \$8.4 million contract to JR Certus Construction Co. Ltd. and cap the budget for the facility at \$10.76 million.

This was the second time the tender went out for the project. In November of 2017, six submissions were received, but all were significantly higher than anticipated.

Staff reported the architect revisited the design to reduce construction costs and a second tender was issued. This time, 12 submissions were received.

Although the construction costs continue to exceed the preliminary budget, having taken the project to the market on two occasions, staff believes that it is highly unlikely further delay will result in better pricing and the project should move forward. Staff has identified an additional source of revenue to assist with the financing of the project.

The preliminary project budget previously approved by council was for \$9 million.

The project received the full support of the King Township Library Board. Chair Sylvia Pal made a passionate plea for the new facility.

She noted what's lost on some is this is for two buildings. The municipality is growing and the population is aging, important factors that make this new facility needed.

Libraries, she stressed, are not dead, as evidenced by nearby municipalities such as Richmond Hill and Vaughan who have modern, brand new facilities.

Libraries have changed significantly in what they offer and the lineup now includes everything from robotics, art and photography to 3-D printing and musical instruments. A librarian can help to navigate the Internet and for those who don't have access to such databases, all you need is a library card.

The Library Board has been intimately involved in the process and discussions with Township staff.

They cut as much as they could from the preliminary design to lower costs. She said you can't focus on costs, because they will only rise if the project is delayed.

We have to look beyond the bottom line and take into consideration the broader issue of community.

This isn't just about a building, it is about what we value as a community and how we choose to use our public space. Public space is precious. And what we do with it speaks volumes about what is important to us as a community.

You are building a new community with every decision you make, she told the councillors.

Seize the opportunity to give King a new and attractive public building that can all be proud of, Pal concluded.

Councillor Cleve Mortelliti admitted it's been a roller coaster ride and he lauded the efforts of board members. He said he's now comfortable that development charges will pay a great deal of the freight of this project.

Councillor Debbie Schaefer also wants to seize the moment, stressing if they don't move on it now, this price won't come again. It will be a new, modern library and seniors' centre to be proud of.

Mayor Steve Pellegrini noted today's libraries are changing and seniors are living longer. King City, too, is changing for the better and we've all tried to make it better.

Facilities like this will add to that. It will be a magnificent gateway to King City.

The mayor also praised the great working relationship with the Library Board, King's chief librarian Rona O'Banion and staff.

On a related matter, council approved the purchase of a .45-acre parcel of land from the York Region District School Board, to be added to the library property. The purchase will cost King \$475,000 and it made sense, considering the expansion plans. The cost will be covered through the Township's land acquisition reserve and its parkland contribution reserve.

The acquisition of this property is considered appropriate given the Township effectively maintains it and the resulting larger parcel of land would support any future Township development or redevelopment of the site, staff reported.