

Schomberg Hall to get a needed face lift

By Mark PavilonsEditor

The Schomberg Community Hall will be getting much needed renovations. King councillors approved the plan to spend \$1.27 million on the work, to meet code requirements and improve accessibility, energy efficiency and overall usability. Hopes are it will be completed by next spring, so the hall can be used for the Schomberg Spring Fair. A 2014 audit showed a number of deficiencies in the building, which included structural challenges. As part of the work, the hall will get a new elevator, thanks to a federal grant. Also on tap will be LED lighting, structural shell and insulation upgrades, improvements to the HVAC system. The interior fixtures, kitchen, washroom and flooring will all be revamped, too. The washrooms will be made accessible from the outside to support community events. Staff is working with the architectural firm to ensure all the details and timelines are met. Of the total, \$1 million will be funded from the Growth and Infrastructure Reserve Fund, and \$100,000 from the federal grant. The project drew support from Schomberg resident Mary Asselstine. She said there is a great opportunity in this renovation to accomplish two additional goals: Design the renovation with the climate emergency in mind. Restore the structure with heritage protection and restoration in mind. With regard to the climate emergency, she said materials being used in the renovation should be considered. There are many products available that are sustainable and some may be sourced locally. In addition the long term use of the building needs to be considered. As we know, it is in the flood plain and as such should be flood protected. But could it be used as a future cooling centre for example? What opportunities are there to assist in climate resilience? And how do we use this building to keep people in Schomberg and be less eager to get in their car and drive somewhere else? Maybe there is a space for office sharing for example. With regard to heritage, people of Schomberg are very proud of their Main Street and the heritage character of the street, she observed. Many renovations have happened to the Community Hall over the years, which have undermined its heritage character. She hopes it's possible to retain the interior/exterior heritage elements and perhaps restore some of the elements that have been lost in the past. There is a great opportunity here to showcase this renovation and make it the standard for renovations in other Township buildings, she said. Resident Susan Beharriell said while there's pressure to have the work done in time for the spring fair, she wanted more time spent on the details. Her penchant for environmental efficiencies led her to ask for a more phased-in approach. She said King has declared a Climate Emergency and these plans do not yet meet King's requirements. Why not phase in the work, pause, and then complete it after the event? she asked. Is there any reason why the hall cannot be used in the 2022 fair as it is now? Is there a safety issue that would prevent this? If so, then what is the required work? If this work is not completed what would happen? She's concerned the renovations won't be close to net zero emissions and work may have to be redone in a few years. She said some of the planned improvements are luxuries that may not be necessary. I maintain that our Climate Emergency is a much higher priority! In this day and age, is there really any need for separate facilities anyway? We need clear discussion and argument about the various alternatives, she said. Beharriell said council has allocated some funds to The Climate Emergency and Climate Change. She asked councillors to consider using some of these funds to cover the costs of some of the energy savings and emission reductions for this heritage building. Please let us all look at the big picture and do this important work, properly, the first time. May the Hall serve us all well into its next 100 years, she said.