

King opts to build brand new municipal office

By Mark Pavilons

King has taken a bold and "exciting" step by opting for a brand new municipal office and totally demolishing the existing structure on King Road.

Council agreed with recommendations from staff and consultants to build from new, instead of repurposing the aging structure, which was the former Holy Name Elementary School.

Although estimated budgets for the three different options were close, council decided the demolition/new building option was the one with the most upside and fewest risks.

"Demolishing the old building and starting from scratch was estimated to only cost 3.7 per cent more than the next lowest-cost option," said King Mayor Steve Pellegrini. "While we're always looking to contain costs, the potential benefits from a new building make more sense than trying to work with the older building."

Deepu Balaraman, of Colliers, noted they made the recommendation when they discovered the cost difference for the new build were "much smaller" than originally thought. He said the difference would likely amount to roughly \$405,000 and the benefits of a new build are design flexibility, more certainty and a much longer lifespan. New estimates put the cost at roughly \$11.33 million. Not included in the estimate are "soft costs" such as consulting and legal fees, studies, permits and various fees. It was mentioned that the project could top out at \$15 million.

Council was presented with three options by the Project MOVE steering group and management team. The first two options included renovating and adding to the former school building. The third called for a complete demolition and construction of a new building.

Other benefits include improved accessibility, a larger public-use gymnasium and a more tailor-made space.

Renovating the existing building would lead to less cost certainty due to the risk of unknowns and more complex routing of services and duct work.

"As much as we would have liked to have been able to repurpose the existing building, after we looked at it closely it became apparent the best course of action would be to start from scratch," said King Township CAO Susan Plamondon. "A new building will result in much more cost certainty and also align well with our sustainability plan, particularly around the environmental, social-cultural and financial parts of the plan."

The preliminary plan calls for a 43,500-square-foot building at an estimated cost of \$11.33 million, just slightly more than the \$10.98 million for the next-lowest cost option of repurposing the existing building.

A key element of the project is the opportunity to provide other community services. These include a full-size public-use gymnasium and a York Regional Police substation.

"A huge component of the new building will be enhanced customer service. Although our staff do the best they can with what they have, our current office space causes many challenges in delivering excellent customer service," said Plamondon.

Those challenges include cramped waiting areas, lack of counter space in the planning and building department and multiple customer entrances.

"We know our people want to provide an exceptional customer experience. That can be challenging with the space and layout limitations of our current offices," said Mayor Pellegrini. "We want the new building to not only address those concerns but also be

something the community will be proud of. I'm especially pleased that we will be able to provide additional community benefits with the gym and the York Regional Police substation.?

Demolition work is scheduled to start this summer with construction of the new building starting this fall. Occupancy of the new building is slated for fall of 2017.

Resident Susan Beharriell urged councillors and staff to look into innovative 'green' building standards, such as those used by York Region.

Councillor Bill Cober agreed it was best to start from scratch, but he did say he was a bit worried that costs will grow beyond the estimates. Nevertheless, 'it's the sensible thing to do.?'

Cober said the large gymnasium, offering seven-day-a-week access will benefit the public.

'It will be a facility the public can take pride in,' he said. 'It's very important for the future of our municipality.?'

Councillor Cleve Mortelliti noted some Development Charges can be applied to the new building and he's looking forward to the repurposing of the current strip mall.

The costs will be offset by the sale of the current strip mall that houses the municipal offices. Cober wanted to know the time frame in 'cashing in on this building.?'

Plamondon said staff is currently reviewing a rezoning of the property and then they will begin looking to sell as soon as possible. The net proceeds from the sale will provide financial certainty.

The Township still have a very aggressive time frame to meet the goal of moving in next year.