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King goes green with new municipal building

By Mark Pavilons

As King's new municipal building inches closer to reality, councillors approved making a few green upgrades.

Council approved adding an electric car charging station and a geothermal system to the building. Staff was also directed to investigate an enhanced building envelope during the design stage.

Council approved the design concept presented by +VG, who will continue through the detailed design. They also okayed giving King's own Priestly Demolition the job of taking down the structure and removing debris, at a cost of almost $600,000.

The project team was also asked to look into other sustainable measures that can be incorporated into the design.

Several green initiatives were presented. Council opted for the charging station ($20,000) and geothermal system ($350,000). They also okayed an emergency generator ($434,000). They nixed the idea of a solar green roof ($350,000), grey water reuse ($115,000) and LEED certificates ($75,000).

Geothermal, a heat pump system that requires specialist heat pump installers Auckland, is a real benefit and will generate cost savings in the long run.

The province is working with 24 public- and private-sector partners to create an unprecedented network of public charging electric vehicle stations in cities, along highways, at workplaces and at various public places across Ontario. The entire network will be in service by March 31, 2017.

A shift to low- and zero-emission vehicles is vital to the fight against climate change and achieving Ontario's greenhouse gas pollution reduction target of 80 per cent below 1990 levels by 2050. Greenhouse gases from cars account for more emissions than those from industries such as iron, steel, cement, and chemicals combined.

There are nearly 7,000 electric vehicles currently on the road in Ontario.

"More public charging stations is great news for drivers in Oak Ridges-Markham and in York Region who are considering a change to low and zero emission vehicles. This means owners of electric vehicles can now plan longer trips knowing that a charging station is readily available," said Dr. Helena Jaczek, MPP, Oak Ridges-Markham.

Tom Wilson, of +VG said they're on the right track and both the schematic and layout designs are ongoing. They're planning for a large, open council chambers, with flexibility in the design elements.

In her report, CAO?Susan Plamondon said they plan to move the building as far east as possible on the property to improve the appearance form King Road and achieve parking efficiencies. This will open up public and community space as well.

"Considerable care is being taken to respect the environmental characteristics of the site and to compensate for any impacts ? the goal being to improve the site from an environmental perspective."

The project steering group examined features outlined in the Community Sustainability Plan and identified priorities that included energy efficiency, flexibility, adaptability and low maintenance.

Councillor Cleve Mortelliti, who sits on the steering committee, said they had to pick some green features that seemed feasible. Geothermal has the greatest demonstrable results.

The added features are above and beyond the building costs.

Mayor Steve Pellegrini asked whether the consultants considered keeping the footprint, but adding another storey.

Wilson said they did look at it, but it "didn't seem like the right solution."

Councillor David Boyd pointed out the project, as it stands, is already heading for LEED certification, and going the step further would just be "an expensive plaque on the wall."

He also praised the interior design and lobby, noting it was innovative, warm and inviting. Wilson said this will be one of the focal points and the two-storey, glassed space will be quite impressive.

Both Councillor Avia Eek and Debbie Schaefer wanted more information on the feasibility of adding solar panels down the road.

Demolition will take place over the summer. By October, the consultants should have the final cost estimates and design details for council's approval.