

Care facility moves forward in Schomberg

By Mark Pavilons

The old Schomberg arena will be home to a transitional care complex.

Mayor Steve Pellegrini and Councillor Bill Cober provided an update to the public at the third informal meet and greet session last Wednesday night at the Schomberg Library.

The Township of King and Transitional Care Communities Corporation are currently working on the details in a memorandum of understanding (MOU) that will see the Township retain ownership of the land, giving TCCC a 20-year lease for their innovative facility.

The current building will be demolished, according to Mayor Steve Pellegrini, to pave the way for the new building. The parking lot will remain as it sits in the floodplain. The tennis courts will go, and Township staff is already looking for a new home. They've spoken with staff at the Trisan Centre and there may be a suitable location on their property.

The new facility, King Institute of Home and Community Care Complex, is transitional housing and will consist of a main building surrounded by some 32 small units or "cabins" that range between 700 and 800 square feet.

According to Don Fenn of TCCC, the transitional care community will not be a nursing home or long-term care facility. "Our mandate is that this be built for the community, by the community."

The residents will be in transition from hospital to home, or from home or hospital to long-term care. Many will no doubt be seniors, but the facility can serve people of any age.

The plans are very preliminary at this stage and the details will be ironed out through the MOU process.

The mayor called the project "extremely innovative," noting Southlake Regional Health Centre in Newmarket is already on board and excited about a remote physician project.

Instead of selling the property outright, council decided it would be in the best interests of the Township to retain ownership and rent out the land. They will still receive tax revenue and other fees associated with the project.

There's a debt on the building and the mayor said the Township would like its money within a "reasonable period."

Councillor Cober said this will be a unique and mutually beneficial private-municipal partnership.

Henry Verbruggen, a director with the Schomberg Agricultural Society, played a bit of devil's advocate, asking whether the Township has a bit of a conflict "being both landowner and approval agency. He also stressed the society needs access to the property since the fairgrounds are landlocked. That, he said, has to be part of the equation.

The mayor noted every application goes through the same rigorous and transparent process.

One resident wanted to know whether the new facility could house a place for seniors to meet. Cober said he hopes community space will be available in the complex. As well, the Trisan Centre can be leveraged to meet the needs, too.

The Township may benefit from some ancillary improvements.

Several residents at the meeting called for sidewalks on Western Ave. to Main Street.

Unfortunately, that's not high on the Township's list of priorities.

"It's a matter of priorities," Mayor Pellegrini said. "We need to deal with road repairs before (we consider) any new sidewalks."

Some residents believed the Township and TCCC could work something out during the site plan stage to everyone's benefit.