

Cober frustrated with Church Street reconstruction project delay

By Angela Gismondi

The Church Street reconstruction project in Schomberg has been deferred again and local Councillor Bill Cober is angry. Cober expressed his frustration at the committee of the whole meeting Monday. A report from the Township's engineering and public works department recommended the contract for the road improvements not be awarded to bidders and that the bid be cancelled and re-tendered in December due to the higher than expected cost of the project. That did not sit well with the local councillor.

‘I can't begin to express to you the frustration, anger and the fear that I'm getting in feedback from the constituents on this,’ said Cober, adding he is constantly being approached by residents asking when the road is going to be fixed. ‘They are so furious about this and so am I? I can't explain this away.’

Cober noted residents have been very patient waiting for Church Street to be fixed and they understood that reconstruction project had to be put off until the two condo buildings on the road were completed.

‘This road project was supposed to be done last year and now you're telling us it's a three- or four-year deal?’ asked Cober. ‘This is very difficult to digest. When I first got wind of this, I did not sleep. We had the public information session and told residents it would be done. I need some kind of assurance that this is going to happen because you can just imagine what people are saying about us up here.’

Andrzej Drzewiecki, director of engineering, public works and building for the Township explained King's 2014 capital budget provided funding for the project in the amount of \$2,800,000. The amount was based on a preliminary estimate provided by the Township's consultant in December 2013.

The project was divided into two parts. Part A included reconstruction of road, urbanization and upsizing storm sewer on Church Street; reconstruction and installation of a watermain on Edwards Mill Lane; storm sewer installation and road reconstruction on Rebellion Way; upsizing the storm sewer, installation of oil/grit separator and trench restoration on Main Street and a provisional item to install a twin watermain on Church Street. Part B, which was provisional, involved the reconstruction of road and storm sewer improvements on Western Avenue at Castlewood Avenue and Elmwood Avenue.

During the detailed design process in 2014, the scope of the project was modified. Major additions included upsizing the existing storm sewer on Church Street and Main Street; replacing an AC watermain with a larger PVC watermain on Edward Mill Lane; the need to acquire several properties to widen the Church Street right-of-way in order to install a sidewalk; relocating some hydro poles to accommodate sidewalk installation; storm sewer improvements and road reconstruction on Western Avenue, Castlewood Avenue and Elmwood Avenue.

The cost estimate for the revised scope of project was obtained in October 2014 and amounted to \$5,252,222.61, including 13 per cent HST, plus \$128,160 for provisional works. Redesign was completed in early April and a public information centre (PIC) was held to inform residents of the changes. The project was tendered and closed at the end of May, with two contracting firms submitting bids. Both tender prices exceeded the amount allocated in the budget by more than 100 per cent. Due to insufficient funds available from the budget to finance the project, staff recommended that the project be deferred to early 2016.

‘We get our budget out early so we can get out to tender and get that work done,’ said Cober. ‘(By delaying the project) we are costing ourselves money. Time is money. Our roads are our biggest needs and the biggest ask of our taxpayers.’

He added the condition of the road is a safety concern.

Drzewiecki said the decision to defer the project was not taken lightly.

‘I can feel the frustration of the residents and the frustration of Councillor Cober,’ said Drzewiecki. ‘My job is to make sure that the residents of Schomberg and King Township get the best value for the dollar. I believe in the end the residents will be happy.’

Deferring the project allows staff to redefine the scope of the project, re-examine the proposed scope of work to identify possible modifications and revise the tender documents.

A new detailed cost estimate would be prepared by November 2015 to determine the amount of funding which needs to be added to the base budget amount of \$2,800,000 available from the 2015 capital budget. The project would then be re-tendered in December 2015. According to Drzewiecki, it is expected that the tender prices will be more competitive if the tender is issued in December. Construction would commence in the spring of 2016 and be completed by October 2016, with the placement of the top layer of asphalt to follow in the summer of 2017.

The Township is also expected host another public information centre on the matter.

"I am prepared to face the music at the next public information centre and to explain why the project has not materialized once again," said Drzewiecki. "If this does not happen next year, I would not like to be in my shoes."

"You can wear mine," responded Cober, adding residents have put off home repairs and renovations waiting for the project to be completed. "This project is going to need extra attention because the people are not happy."

Cober asked when the PIC will be held. Drzewiecki said it would be best to wait until the details for the project are finalized.

"When the scope of the project is redefined, probably in November," said Drzewiecki, adding some information can be put on the Town's website in the meantime. "We would like to have answers to the questions that the residents will have."

"All I would like to say at this point is this project will be a top priority," he concluded.

Council adopted the staff recommendation to not award the contract, cancel the bid, revise the tender documents and cost estimate and to re-tender the project before December 15.