

Full steam ahead for King's office move

By Mark Pavilons

King Township politicians are excited about the planned relocation of its municipal offices.

Councillors voted to move full steam ahead with its planned office move to the former Holy Name school site on King Road.

Councillors approved recommendations at its Aug. 24 meeting to proceed with a partial demolition and addition of the existing site.

Council also agreed to proceed with talks with York Regional Police about including a sub-station in the new municipal complex.

'I'm excited that we will have a proper building for King Township,' said Councillor Cleve Mortelliti. 'I have been a councillor and an employee in this (current) building. It's high time we got moving.'

Mayor Steve Pellegrini wants to get under way 'as soon as possible,' adding the preferred rebuild is fiscally responsible and provides a 'community hub.'

Councillor Bill Cober, known for being frugal, is anxious to get firm cost projections and a funding formula for the new digs. He believes the public wants to know where the money is coming from.

The bulk of the funding will come from the sale of the current municipal office and strip mall. In order to maximize the Township's return, 'we want to sell this place shovel-ready,' the mayor observed. The value will be 'extremely high' if the new buyers can get going immediately after purchase.

The Township is looking at the necessary changes to permit some repurposing of the site with commercial and residential elements. It will bolster village vitality and prosperity by providing a new location (the current municipal office in the strip mall) for additional commercial and housing.

CAO Susan Plamondon noted while the initial cost projects are high, the sale of the existing site, coupled with some DCs and potential 'green' grants, will lessen the blow.

She told Cober that as the project matures, updates and a detailed financing plan will be presented to council.

Both senior staff and +VG consultants recommended going forward with the partial demolition and addition.

This option includes retaining the most functional part of the building 'the two-storey portion. The one-storey section at the front will be demolished and an addition will be built to address the space requirements.

The study by +VG pegs the cost at between \$9 and \$10 million, exclusive of contingency, soft costs, furniture and equipment.

'Project MOVE' as it's been called, incorporates best practices in green building standards. The new offices will allow Township staff to operate more efficiently and effectively in providing services to the community.

'A new administrative/community use facility will not only enable the Township to better serve the community, but can also serve as a landmark and a meaningful symbol of the community's identity,' according to CAO Susan Plamondon.

One of council's objectives is to consider incorporating community uses within the building, making it a community hub.

Plamondon said very preliminary discussions were held with York Regional Police. A YRP presence in King has many advantages, not the least of which are a local presence and a share of the operating costs. Council directed staff to enter into more formal discussions with YRP with the ultimate goal of a sub-station within the building.

Thomas Wilson, of +VG Architects, updated councillors on their work to date. Their space needs assessment included interviews with staff in order to determine department placing and work stations throughout the building.

The site has many positive elements, not the least of which are the views and soccer field. Their preliminary designs took the Township's priorities into consideration 'cost effectiveness, improved access for the public, accommodating community partners and longevity.

The structure, Wilson said, 'has good bones ... much of it is well built.'

The approved option meets all the objectives and 'shows leadership and cost effectiveness.'

Councillor Debbie Schaefer said she wanted to ensure the main foyer allows for ease of access by the public, and also provides flexibility.

Plamondon noted it does boast a centralized customer service area and has been designed to accommodate the bulk (roughly 80%) of common, day-to-day customer transactions. It will really be a one-stop centre.