

Former Schomberg arena to house parks and rec. department

By Mark Pavilons

The former Schomberg Arena on the fairgrounds will be home to King Township's parks, recreation and culture department. After the Township and potential users of the site failed to come up with an agreement, King has decided to keep the property for itself. It will need roughly \$100,000 in improvements and staff could move in as early as the summer of 2016.

Further, to end a long-standing debate on whether to keep the land, or sell it to pay for the Township's contribution to the Trisan Centre, council voted to pay off the \$1 million it owes, taking the money from the parkland reserve fund.

Back in November 2013, staff began negotiations with Caregiver Omnimedia, now known as Transitional Care Communities Corporation, for a care facility on the site, with the Township retaining ownership of the land. They were unable to come to an agreement and TCCC withdrew their application this past June.

This led staff to consider using the facility for its operational side, since space for personnel and equipment is shrinking. According to a report by Chris Fasciano, director of parks, recreation and culture, this move is necessary considering there are limited options for land acquisition to locate a facility of this size ...?

The site and building, with some alterations, would present a physical space large enough to accommodate their needs.

The minor modifications could allow the facility to be operational by next summer and it would allow staff to evaluate whether this would be a viable long-term option.

An audit done in 2012 indicated it would cost roughly \$1.5 million to convert the building into a warehouse or works yard.

To make the site usable, they will need to install fencing for security of the equipment. Bay doors for equipment access will also have to be built, as well as a restoration of the water system. The bleachers will be taken out and a heating system will be required for the main building.

Staff believe there are several benefits associated with this proposal, including municipal ownership, re-use of the building and assured access to the fairgrounds.

The question of the tennis courts came up and they will remain open for public use. Councillor Bill Cober wanted to know if they can be resurfaced and Fasciano said they can look at that in 2016.

The cost of converting the building will be brought forward as part of the 2016 budget process.

The councillors wanted to know about the potential of unsightly outside storage, but Fasciano assured them there will be minimal impact, with only pickup trucks being parked outside.

Cober stressed that since the Township is both the landlord and the tenant, they must be good neighbours.

Councillor Debbie Schaefer said it's unfortunate the TCCC plan bid didn't come to fruition. She sees the suggested use as a good plan, indicating King is being creative and innovative with this land.