

Laskay Hall moved to new location

By Mark Pavilons

With precision and a surprising amount of grace, the historic Laskay Hall was moved last week, to its new home at the King Heritage and Cultural Centre (museum).

The entire process took some four hours to complete, as the building made its way, at a snail's pace of 5 km/h up Weston Road and along King Road.

Rick Hampton, with King's Parks, Recreation and Culture department, spent four months planning the logistics. There were a lot of moving parts, including hydro and Bell crews removing or raising lines and York Regional Police providing traffic control.

A crowd of residents gathered to watch the hall leave the lot at 10 a.m. Aug. 30.

Laurie McCulloch Building Moving from Whitby handled the move itself using a Mac truck (that used to be used for logging in Quebec) and a steel beam trailer with a set of wheels steered separately by an operator walking at the rear of the trailer. The building was 27 feet high, 32 feet wide and weighed 62 tonnes.

It was eased off the road and it's currently sitting up on jacks and other pilings. The next steps will be moving it over the already poured foundation and building it up to the bottom of the hall.

"We're extremely pleased with how well everything went," said Jason Ballantyne, King's communications officer.

The move to the museum grounds will rejuvenate under-used structure.

"Moving Laskay Hall will rejuvenate an under-used, aging structure," said Mayor Steve Pellegrini. "Given its current state, lack of adequate parking and other factors, this move will be a win for all the residents of King. It protects the past while planning for the future."

The decision came after extensive consultation with a number of community groups and organizations, including the King Township Heritage Advisory Committee, Arts Society King (ASK), the King Township Historical Society, the Community Museum Board, the Nobleton Children's Theatre Company and the Laskay Hall Board. The overall consensus was positive, and the Laskay Hall Board unanimously supported the move.

"The recommendation and its endorsement were based on a long consultation process that included many heart-felt conversations with board members, residents and the community groups who had the strongest connection to the hall," said David Boyd, Ward 2 Councillor. "The difficult decision to relocate the hall is a forward-thinking vision that will allow the hall's legacy as a treasured community gathering spot to continue and benefit our residents for generations to come."

Some of the major factors impacting Laskay Hall today are parking, traffic and lack of community use. The inefficiency of the existing services (water, hydro, sanitary) also impact opportunities for expanded use on the current site. Due to these issues, usage has dropped over the last several years from around 600 hours a year to less than 100.

The move will result in several benefits including additional cultural programming (dance, music, arts, theatre); alternative exhibit space that allows for rental of the gallery spaces at the site; performing arts space, and an ongoing venue for Laskay and other community events.

A basement is also planned for the new location to be used as overflow storage for the museum and ASK and to construct the appropriate utility services (furnace, duct work, electrical upgrades).

Susan Plamondon, Chief Administrative Officer for King, said the move will accomplish several things, all of them benefiting the Township.

"We recognize how important King's heritage is, both natural and cultural. That's why we took so much time in consulting with the community about the move," Plamondon said. "Moving the hall to the grounds of the Heritage and Cultural Centre will enhance the existing heritage campus that includes several other significant heritage buildings."

The King Heritage and Cultural Centre site at 2920 King Road in King City currently consists of the original Kinghorn School SS#23, originally built in 1861, that houses the museum and the majority of its collections

Also on the grounds are the original railway station building of Springhill (now King City), built in 1852 and the King Christian Church, built in 1851.

The church was moved from its original location at Kettleby Road and Jane Street to the museum grounds in 1982. The railway station was moved to the grounds in 1989.