

Township's 'MOVE' is about vision

By Mark Pavilons

Moving King's municipal offices to the former Holy Name school site on King Road is not just a physical relocation. It's an entire philosophy, a 'vision' of looking to the future.

King councillors cemented their plans recently by officially approving the 'MOVE' (Municipal Office Vision for Everyone) and the creation of a steering group to oversee the project. Council will also be kept up to date as this process progresses.

King will retain Project Management Services to provide their expertise on specific aspects of the new digs, located on a 9.5-acre parcel at 2585 King Road, just west of Keele.

Since King purchased the property in 2013 for just over \$3 million, staff have been getting acquainted with the building, and water division staff have already relocated to the building to be better able to respond to local issues. Their relocation, according to CAO Susan Plamondon, has alleviated some of the stress on the works yard due to space constraints.

Only 3.3 acres of the site is developable and the building, which was constructed in two phases, consists of some 32,990 of 'usable' square feet.

The need for more space has been apparent for some time. Plamondon noted revamping the current offices (14,000 square feet) in the strip plaza in King City are severely limited.

'Simply put, we are cramped and crowded with no room left to maneuver,' she said. 'More importantly, staff's ability to provide excellent customer service to those visiting the building, despite everyone's best efforts, is significantly constrained.'

+VG Architects were hired to conduct a space needs assessment for the municipality and preliminary findings indicate King needs some 35,700 square feet to serve them over the next couple of decades.

The complete study is expected to come the Aug. 24 committee of the whole meeting.

While the new building meets the size requirements, it does require 'significant retrofit and upgrading.' Virtually all of the mechanical systems need to be replaced and one elevator will be installed.

The Township wants to be a leader by creating an environmentally and financially sustainable building.

Plamondon is anxious to get the ball rolling. She noted Magna's 'Project Infinity' - their new corporate offices at King and Jane - is slated to open in 2017-2018. This would 'dovetail very nicely' with the Township's project, estimated to take roughly one year from the start of construction. A 2017 opening would also allow King to celebrate with Canada's 150th birthday.

This building is considered a community asset and the working group is also available to the citizens. It's suggested that two members of the public be recruited by staff with experience related to this type of project.

All of this won't come cheap, however.

Preliminary estimates by +VG put the total renovation at between \$7 and \$9 million, without unforeseen costs. Plamondon said council should be prepared to consider a total budget of \$11 to \$13 million.

'Needless to say, it will be very important to manage everyone's expectations very carefully to bring the project in at the lower end of the range,' Plamondon said. She feels the role of the steering group will be very important in this regard.

While it's a substantial amount of money, the Township is counting on the sale of the existing strip mall property at 2075 King Road. Staff is looking at putting the property on the market well before occupancy of the new location, to generate accessible funds. As well, potential buyers may want to redevelop that parcel, in keeping with local guidelines and so the planning department has been asked to look into the process of redevelopment, and report back to council.

Plamondon noted there are other sources of revenue - Gas Tax, Green Municipal Fund, internal borrowing, debentures, etc. The Township does have the financial resources to finance the project internally in the short-term.

'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.'