

Development Charges will pay off Joint Operations Centre, Fire Hall in 13 years

By Brock Weir

Development Charges will pay off existing debt on Aurora's new Joint Operations Centre, and the upcoming new fire station at Bayview and St. John's Sideroad in little over 13 years, according to a new municipal forecast.

The forecast from Aurora Treasurer Dan Elliott is due to be approved by Council this week following a tentative green light at last week's General Committee meeting. It is set to be one of the final pieces in the puzzle leading to the final execution of the design and construction process that will result in the new headquarters for the Central York Fire Services.

Mr. Elliott's forecast is a result of questions raised around the Council table this past winter on how DC revenue might fluctuate and impact current and future projects as Aurora reaches build out.

DCs are charges developers pay to a municipality to account for future growth resulting from their builds, whether they are the flourishing housing construction market in east Aurora's 2C lands or employment and business builds in the Leslie Street corridor. As these projects march along, Council members said they were concerned on the flow of this money into municipal coffers once these large-scale builds are completed and the impacts the cash flow will have down the line.

According to the report, between this year and 2017, Aurora can expect to collect development charges from 1,350 new single and semi-detached housing units, 200 new townhouse units, 650 apartments, and from 1.3 million square feet of non-residential builds. From 2022 to 2026, the forecast for non-residential builds holds steady, clocking in at 1.5 million square feet, but residential units take a steep drop. Units of singles and semis are forecast at 600, while townhouses and apartments are at 200 units and 550 units respectively.

Future development charges to fund the JOC financing needs are estimated to be recovered within 13.3 years, Mr. Elliott concludes. Future DCs to fund the fire hall needs are expected to be recovered within 12.8 years. Staff from the Planning and Building Department are currently preparing a detailed long-range development forecast for the Town, upon which all departments will rely for preparing budget forecasts, activity level plans and long-range financial plans. Although that work in detail has not been completed at this time, staff have identified the expected development activities for the next two five-year planning horizons.

For comparison reference, the Town overbuilt the SARC (Stronach Aurora Recreation Complex) to accommodate future growth and funded debt financing with future DC collections of the Recreation DC component. The debt was issued over a total of 20 years. Accordingly, today, DC collections from current growth are, in part, funding the SARC project in a similar fashion to how future DC collections will fund these two current growth-related construction projects.

Meanwhile, the costs and funding of Aurora's Joint Operations Centre is expected to come into focus on April 4 as Mr. Elliott presents a detailed financial summary of costs and work to date. In his new report to Council, he pegs the JOC coming in \$103,027 further over budget which will continue to be funded through DCs.

The report also outlines lessons learned through the whole contentious process, recommending for the future standardization of the Town's internal project management framework, improved internal financing reporting and project management financial skills; that larger projects should have a financial analyst assigned to assist in the monitoring of project expenses; greater clarification of the roles of any steering or monitoring committee; improved clarity of project scope, inclusions and exclusions from the beginning with clarity for Council as well; improved understanding of the evolution of initial concept estimates through to final construction tender budgets; and clear separation of pre-construction costs and budgets (space needs, concept plans, location and site selection, and acquisition costs) from detailed design, construction and commissioning costs and budget.