

## Budget includes boosts for Cultural Centre, Historical Society

**By Brock Weir**

Council might have been full of enthusiasm for the Town's new streamlined budget process this past year, but one bone of contention was a financial boost to local cultural institutions, particularly the Aurora Cultural Centre and the Aurora Historical Society.

Both organizations were granted infusions in their budget to account for inflation, but the Aurora Cultural Centre received an added \$10,000 for operational expenses to address shortfalls the Centre says arose out of not being able to rent out the Aurora Room for events hosted at the Church Street School.

The Aurora Room, the smaller of two public rooms on the second floor of the building, was allocated last year as the new home of the re-established Aurora Museum and Archives. Not being able to offer this room resulted in a significant cash shortfall, argued the Centre, prompting some Councillors to question whether the museum could be better housed elsewhere.

While this train of thought spurred backlash from local heritage advocates before it even left the station, Councillors voted for this one-time boost while recommending the Centre's budget come up for review at the Town's Finance Committee in order to chart a long-term financial plan.

This decision was ratified at December's Council meeting.

‘One thing Council needs to be aware of is this is a services contract,’ said Mayor Geoff Dawe on the Centre's agreement with the municipality to provide Cultural Services to the Town of Aurora. ‘I will vote for it, but I am not in favour of the way it was done because, to me, this is stepping outside the terms of our contract and, in my opinion, there is absolutely no need for us to do it.’

‘I will support it because I think we need to find a better way to do this. We have talked about referring it to the Finance Advisory Committee, so I look forward to seeing it there and seeing how we can better handle this request.’

Mayor Dawe wasn't the only one looking forward to making full use of the Finance Advisory Committee to further fine-tune the budget process. Councillor Michael Thompson too said there were more benefits to be had.

‘The public may very well be interested to know that even though we are approving the budget tonight, we will continue to work on the budget as well from a departmental perspective,’ he said. ‘As part of the overall budget process, we said let's try to do a lot of the work throughout the course of the year [at Committee] so when it does come to Council, some of that pre-work will enable us to be more efficient and move through it more quickly.’

‘Going forward, we will start working on the departments to do a line by line examination to ensure that as we stay with the accountability framework, we're doing the right things and we're doing them in the right way. The work will continue. While we didn't get into the weeds, the Finance Committee will. I look forward to the next step and doing so.’