

Capital Budget moves forward to December 17

By Brock Weir

Aurora's 2014 Capital Budget hit a snag this week after some Councillors objected to what they saw as a too speedy approval.

Several items were due for approval on Monday evening, after an all-day session the previous week had Councillors go through each item in the Capital Budget and vote on them one by one. The problem with that, for some Councillors, was ongoing court proceedings in Newmarket stemming from Councillor Evelyn Buck's lawsuit against two sitting Councillors ? Wendy Gaertner and John Gallo ? among others, kept the three away from budget talks.

?I am not suggesting that anyone in any way would accommodate anything for what any of us are going through as a result of certain things that are happening, and I am not suggesting that any accommodation be made,? said Councillor John Gallo, noting his ongoing concern with taking a closer look at this year's budget after Council increased the threshold in which staff can move forward with projects from \$50,000 to \$100,000 earlier this year.

Councillor Gallo said he had given notice to staff as soon as he knew timing was going to be an issue, but was comfortable in the belief Monday's meeting was going to be a General Committee. That meeting was changed Thursday, however, to a Special Council meeting at which the bulk of the Capital Project could have been approved.

?If you stuck to the schedule, you wouldn't have had a problem with me tonight,? he concluded.

This viewpoint was shared by Councillor Wendy Gaertner who raised a number of items for concern before debate turned to delay, including road reconstruction in Aurora's downtown northeast quadrant, sidewalks on Industrial Parkway, and park infrastructure.

?A budget is one of our most important job functions and Councillor Buck hasn't been a part of this budget at all,? she said.

Some members of Council, on the other hand, remained unmoved, after the majority took a day off of work last week to plow through the agenda.

?It's great that we came out on the Monday and did all this work and what I am hearing is a little pat on the back,? said Councillor Abel. ?I am really appalled that [a delay] is what we are going to do.?

Added Mayor Geoffrey Dawe: ?There are members here who gave up their day job to sit here for the day. How is that respectful of their time? We managed to work through, we had a great discussion on items, and so, if we finished it all, what would have been the plan? What do you say to people who took the day off work? ?Job well done, but your day was just wasted"? That is what I just heard.?

Discussions were eventually delayed until a Special Council meeting on December 17 where many of the projects will come forward for a final airing.

These include several examples of road reconstruction ? including Steeplechase Avenue, Tyler Street, George Street, and Industrial Parkway South ? as well as improvements on John West Way, some reconfiguration work inside and outside the Aurora Community Centre, improved signage for the Aurora Trails System, sewer work, playground replacement and upgrades, the replacement of several vehicles in the Town's fleet, and overhauling Aurora's streetlights to more energy efficient LED lighting.