

Completed budget targeted for this week

By Brock Weir

As Aurora awaits a final number crunch on the Town's 2017 Budget, the projected residential tax increase stood at 2.8 per cent as the final round of talks started this week.

This projected increase on Aurora's portion of the tax bill was initially floated at 2.9 per cent ? a 1.9 per cent increase plus a further one per cent to boost cash flow into municipal reserves ? but was knocked down by .1 per cent by a number of adjustments since the last Budget session on November 21.

?We have moved a Facilities Supervisor position to the options list, taking that off,? said Dan Elliott, Treasurer for the Town of Aurora, when talks resumed Monday night. ?We have increased the Council Administration Conference Budget up to \$20,000, and we recently became aware that the Run for Southlake will be taking place in Newmarket, so there will not be any requirement for the internal costs of \$7,500.?

Since the last session, he added, there has been no further input received on the budget from members of the public.

Council convened Monday night for the first of two evening meetings intended to go through the final items of the Operating Budget before the overall budget, but operating and capital, which has already been approved, come up for ratification at the next Council meeting.

As The Auroran went to press this week, a number of items that could impact the final figure were still up for discussion, including increased funding for the Town's cultural partners ? the Aurora Cultural Centre, Aurora Museum & Archives, and the Aurora Historical Society ? and potential boosts to the Aurora Sports Hall of Fame and Sport Aurora.

Representatives from the latter two organizations were at Town Hall on Monday night to make their respective cases, including Sport Aurora which requested they be recognized as a ?valued partner? by the Town of Aurora. This, according to Sport Aurora president Stephen Kimmerer, means ?responsible levels of funding be provided that will allow Sport Aurora not only to continue its work, but advance objectives of the Aurora Sport Plan in successive years.?

Earlier this year, Sport Aurora was contracted by the Town for the development and delivery of the municipality's new Sports Plan, work which continues. Recommendations resulting from their work are being prepared and reviewed, and future reports will focus on a three year budget, the creation of a grant program, a volunteer development strategy, the creation of performance metrics for sports delivery, training for cultural diversity, facilitating opportunities for persons with disabilities, and focusing on a tourism strategy.

?We need sustainable funding,? said Mr. Kimmerer. ?We don't want to spend all of our efforts finding sponsorship. We have work to do and we have people we need to pay to make sure things happen.?

Also outlined at Monday's Budget meeting were status updates on several projects in the works including the implementation of a public art policy, which Parks and Recreation Director Al Downey said he hopes to bring forward in 2017, along with the continued implementation of the Cultural and Parks & Rec Master Plans and the three-year plan for the Aurora Museum & Archives.

2017 is also hoped to bring the approval of a budget for the first phase of Aurora's long-planned Wildlife Park, with a construction start targeted for 2018, and a detailed design for Mavrinac Park, which Mr. Downey says they hope to construct in ?early 2017? with a completion in the fall.