

Council considers Town Square delays

Originally slated to be largely complete by the end of next August, residents might have to wait until November of 2022 to fully enjoy Aurora's complete Town Square redevelopment.

The \$60+ million project, which will include a public gathering space, a substantial new addition to the Church Street School, a bridge to the Aurora Public Library, and significant changes within the Library itself, has seen a number of minor setbacks since construction began.

In addition to unanticipated work to improve the rubble foundation of the historic former Church Street School building, additional challenges have included the remediation of contaminated soil on the 22 Church Street site, and change orders to work being carried out at the Library.

November of 2022 is now set as the new date for 'substantial performance' of the new Cultural Centre addition, with renovations at the Library scheduled to be complete by December of this year. The bridge connecting the Library to the new Cultural Centre building is scheduled to be in place by June of 2022 with the gathering space below it by July of that year.

'Although the 22 Church Street completion date has been pushed to November 2022, we anticipate the bulk of the overall project work to be complete before this date,' said Project Manager Phil Rose in a report to Council. 'From the general public's point of view, the project will appear as though it is complete by late September or early October 2022, and we should be able to retract most of the hoarding by then, making most of the site usable for a public ceremony and public access.'

But questions have been raised by both the Town Square Governance Committee and Council itself if any work can be done to get the project back on track to its original completion date.

The Governance Committee, for instance, was told that they do not believe it can be brought back on track 'much beyond two to three weeks.'

'Our approach is to continue to stay on them (Chandos Construction) to meet the completion dates they have issued on their latest schedule for the Library, bridge, square, and heritage school house,' said Rose. 'The risk of slippage will also diminish once we are completely above ground and steel erection begins on the new addition.'

Posed with the question whether there was opportunity in other areas to speed up the build, November still seemed 'the most likely scenario.'

'Chandos will need to work with their trades to identify ways to improve the schedule. To date, conversations with the subtrades have not led to any schedule improvements. Chandos is open to working outside normal hours to make up time where possible, however this is at a premium. Colliers has made it clear any proposed overtime will need to be requested on a per occurrence basis and will only be considered if an improvement to the schedule can be guaranteed.'

These questions were highlighted by Council at last week's General Committee meeting.

Building on any potential opportunities to make up the lost time, Councillor Rachel Gilliland questioned on whether staff were indeed considering the premium.

'There have been many discussions about the timeline related to the project with the various parties,' said CAO Doug Nadorozny. 'One of the things we have put on the table is since our contingency is still relatively healthy and we're through a lot of the risk in terms of the soils and everything, we have suggested that we could consider additional charges for weekend work and to expedite this kind of project if it brought direct benefit to the timeline. We said we would not take it as a general consideration, that we would

want very specifically? if we paid extra for this to happen, this would be the impact on the schedule. We put that out there a couple of times and to date there hasn't been any opportunities because of the nature of stage they're at with the project.?

Councillor Gilliland responded that Council wants to ?make the best decisions that are going to be the most cost-effective solution.?

?If it is going to take an extra couple of weeks, I am sure that saving a couple of extra dollars here and there is something we would like to see,? she said.

Similarly, Councillor John Gallo said he was ?not interested in finishing? Town Square early ?just to eat up some contingency to be able to open the doors quicker.?

?To me, that makes no sense whatsoever,? he said. ?If there's value added, we're going to generate income, whatever the reason is, I am okay with that. Just because we have a contingency there doesn't mean we're going to spend it all, unless it is for very good reasons and finishing it quicker than necessary, to me, is not bringing value to and we shouldn't be spending contingency on that ? unless, again, there is a solid reason for it.?

Added Councillor Wendy Gaertner: ?When we did the SARC (Stronach Aurora Recreation Complex) we were rushing to open it and that ended up in a couple of lawsuits. I think we need to be very careful with what we do if we move up the timeline.?

By Brock Weir Editor Local Journalism Initiative Reporter