

First components of Town Square project to open 'in a few weeks' following delays

The first phase of Aurora's Town Square project - a new Yonge Street entrance for the Aurora Public Library - is expected to open 'in a few weeks.'

The Aurora Public Library's (APL) new ground floor, designed to maximize accessibility from its Yonge Street frontage, was expected to open in April, but delays on multiple fronts have pushed the grand opening to 'a few weeks' from now.

Members of the Town's Financial Advisory Committee (FAC) - Mayor Tom Mrakas and Councillors Harold Kim and Michael Thompson - received an update on Town Square and other capital projects at a meeting last week.

According to the report prepared for FAC by Town staff, March and April were busy months for Town Square construction with work continuing on the new APL reading garden, the third floor of the Aurora Cultural Centre/Church Street School expansion being poured, and engineers have been brought on to 'undertake an independent structural investigation of the existing school house in response to preliminary results of crack monitoring testing.'

The report notes that 124 change orders on the Town Square construction have been approved to date, with a value of \$1.586 million, including nearly \$20,000 for exterior signage, additional ceiling demolition at the APL (\$92,439), and \$39,600 for parapet details.

'Colliers continues to note the Budget status as 'Yellow' in this reporting period (March and April) indicating a moderate risk to the project outcome,' said the report. 'This is based on the approved/pending forecasted Change Orders accumulating at a quicker pace than base construction works. Colliers anticipates that the progression of changes should slow as the construction works progress, however current market conditions continue to create volatile material and labour pricing.'

At the FAC meeting, Town Treasurer Rachel Wainwright-Van Kessel said it was the intention to have the Library turned over at the end of April, but factors in the delay included material sourcing due to the global pandemic.

'We're waiting for an updated schedule and expecting the Library to turn over in the next few weeks,' she said. 'There are some challenges. There is the carpenter's strike that is happening, so we're monitoring that closely to see if that is going to have any impacts on the overall project as well. This time, substantial completion is forecast for the Winter of 2023 and completion in Spring of 2023.'

On the subject of the Budget being in 'Yellow' status, Ms. Wainwright-Van Kessel said the report does not indicate it is going to go over-budget 'at this time, but we are saying there are some risks.'

'The biggest risk is material shortages and changes resulting from COVID-19,' she said. 'It's a bit of a challenge, particularly in the construction industry at this time, so we're managing it closely and we're also making sure we manage the contingency appropriately to hopefully stay within the budget on this project.' Mayor Mrakas noted it was hoped the first components of the revamped Library would be open to the public 'at the end of May.'

Additional updates to the Town's ongoing capital projects included an updated timeline on when the new Central York Fire Services station and headquarters on Earl Stewart Drive, in the southwest quadrant of Bayview Avenue and St. John's Sideroad, could be largely completed by this Tuesday, May 24.

'The work on the fire hall is progressing nicely,' said Ms. Wainwright-Van Kessel. 'It is definitely starting to take shape and I believe the boards (around the fencing) should be down sometime soon. We're looking for when that happens. The project schedule is showing that we're expecting completion for occupancy on May 24, substantial performance at the end of the month, and total

completion by June 18. That should not delay anything from Fire's perspective of being able to do their hiring and take control of the facility.

?At this time, we are still expecting to stay within the budget and that's where we're at right now.?

By Brock WeirEditorLocal Journalism Initiative Reporter