

New Aurora fire station to be CYFS headquarters

By Brock Weir

A new fire station serving both Aurora and Newmarket, scheduled to be completed by 2019, will become the new headquarters for the Central York Fire Services.

Set to be constructed on Earl Stewart Drive just south of its intersection with St. John's Sideroad, across from the Real Canadian Superstore, the new fire station is planned to include administration and training facilities for the Central York Fire Services strategically located to improve response times in both communities.

And, since the new station is located in Aurora, Aurora will be taking the lead on the construction, with its share of the costs for land and design currently pegged at \$520,000 ? for an estimated final bill of \$3.66 million.

Council is set to sign off on the design and budget for the new fire station this week.

According to the report by Town Treasurer Dan Elliott, Aurora will cover 40.4 per cent of the costs, some of which will be covered by debt until development charges related to fire roll into Aurora and Newmarket's respective coffers.

?Aurora's share of the funding [is] to be funded from Development Charges (Fire Services Component),? said Mr. Elliott. ?In addition to the construction, the Fire Services DC will also be required to fund Aurora's share of the new fire apparatus and bunker gear for the new crew to be located at this hall for a combined estimate of an additional \$300,000.

?Development Charges on hand are insufficient for the project. Following the purchase of the land, the Town's fire DC balance is \$505,700 as at October 31, 2016. If all funding was required for this project immediately, the DC reserve would be overdrawn in the amount of \$3,400,900. Fire DCs amount to \$590 per single and semi-detached residential unit today and accordingly amounts to approximately 6,000 units. It will take more than 10 years of future development to fully pay for this new facility.

?Given the relatively small amount of funding required for Aurora's share, and the transaction costs of debt financing, it is recommended that external debt not be used, but rather internal financing be implemented, similar to that used for the overbuild of the library building. Debt repayments, including interest costs would be fully funded from future development charge collections over time. There would be no impact to the tax rate budget from this financing approach.

?Newmarket will fund their proportionate share of the project on an as required basis to meet the needed cash flow of the project.? Construction of the new fire hall still needs formal approval by the Joint Council Committee (JCC), the group comprised of Councillors from Aurora and Newmarket to oversee the operations of the Central York Fire Services.

The new fire hall will see administration moved to Aurora from the station on Gorham Street in Newmarket. According to Chief Ian Laing, the space freed up at Gorham Street by the move will allow for growth of the fire prevention unit and a cost-savings for both communities.

?Our proposal was to remove the chief officers from [Gorham],? he says. ?We're moving from a Four Station to a Five Station model, and we're going to move the training division from the former operations yard in Newmarket and the chief, two deputies, and front office staff to this new facility. [Gorham] is currently at the max for space. What we're trying to do is keep the fire prevention staff here but renovate this building so they can expand into the space the two deputies and I, and the platoon chief use. Right now we don't even have a kitchen where you can go in, have your lunch, and sit down.

?The original master fire plan had us building a new facility that would provide fire prevention. What we have done is we have revisited that to cost avoid probably about \$700,000 or \$750,000 in construction by not allocating that much floor space to the new building. When we're finished moving people around, it will only have one fire suppression crew on duty at any one time. It is a pretty big facility to have that many people. It could be up to three quarters of a million savings just to renovate this one. The renovation would be solely done with Newmarket money because it is a Newmarket facility.?