

New fire hall should mean new agreement for Central York: Council

By Brock Weir

Plans continue for a new fire hall in northeast Aurora, but its completion should mean a new deal on who gets to maintain it, say Councillors.

Central York Fire Services, the fire department shared jointly between the Towns of Aurora and Newmarket, is working on plans for a new fire hall near the border of the two municipalities which will improve response times in both towns.

Set to be constructed near the southwest corner of St. John's Sideroad and Bayview Avenue, land has been secured close to the new Sterne Acura dealership to accommodate not just a fire hall, but a training facility as well.

Under the current agreement struck between Aurora and Newmarket to form the Central York Fire Services (CYFS), cost of land and construction of each new fire hall is shared jointly but maintenance costs are shouldered by the municipality in which it is situated.

That is an agreement worth a second look, according to Councillors last week, poring over minutes from the latest meeting of the Joint Council Committee (JCC), the body comprised of elected officials and staff from both municipalities to oversee the CYFS. 'My understanding of the agreement that currently exists is the asset is owned by the Town and the maintenance costs will be the responsibility of that Town,' said CAO Doug Nadorozny, responding to questions from Councillor Wendy Gaertner on the status of Aurora's two present fire halls on Wellington Street East in the north and Edward Street in the South. 'It would require the opening up of that agreement to change.'

Councillor Tom Mrakas, who sits on the JCC alongside Councillors John Abel and Michael Thompson, said there is movement on the Committee to do just that.

'I think we're looking into opening up the agreement when it comes to the new building and how the percentages will be allocated as far as how much Newmarket pays for repairs compared to Aurora, and whether we pay full costs if it is in our municipality. Another reason we're going to look into the agreement is there is an opportunity [that] we might, down the road, end up amalgamating with Richmond Hill Fire. The agreement is going to have to be opened up regardless at that point.'

Indeed, at the last meeting of the JCC, Newmarket officials confirmed that meetings have taken place between Aurora, Newmarket and Richmond Hill on possible amalgamation. An update, however, would be coming down the line later this fall.

In the meantime, the current agreement remains in action. In the last term of Council, the Edward Street fire hall underwent repairs, which were covered by Aurora, said Councillor Abel. In turn, repairs to Newmarket's fire hall just off Gorham Street, were shouldered by Newmarket.

'This is part of the agreement,' said Councillor Abel last week. 'This is the fifth [fire hall], it is here, and that is why I think it is important to revisit that.'

From the perspective of Councillor Gaertner, there is another important reason.

'We have the Stronach Aurora Recreation Complex, which is not all that old, and we're having all kinds of repairs that we have to make on it,' she said. 'It depends on how this building is built, how well it is built, circumstances and weather. I think it is really important.'