

New lease on life for Armoury, Library Square set for December demolition

By Brock Weir

Change will soon be in the air throughout Aurora's Downtown Core but it is unclear at this point just what that change will be. Council last week executed a confidential lease agreement on the historic Aurora Armoury on the northeast corner of Town Park. Discussed behind closed doors, the vague motion stemming from the Closed Session meeting was approved out in the open and carried on a 8 ? 1 vote on Tuesday night with Councillor John Abel being the lone dissenting voice.

Stephanie Mackenzie-Smith, Manager of Corporate

Communications for the Town of Aurora, says just what the lease entails ? and what the future of the building will be ? is expected to be announced by the end of the month, but some Council members expressed optimism about what's in store.

?I wanted to take an opportunity to thank staff and our CEO and everyone involved,? said Councillor Tom Mrakas just before the vote was taken. ?I think they have done a tremendous amount of work and I think we will all appreciate it. I also want to thank Councillor Pirri for all the work he has done on this specific item.?

These sentiments were shared by Mayor Geoff Dawe who said, ?I think we all look forward to announcing a little more fully what this is all about.?

There has been no shortage of speculation in the community on just what this is all about. Whatever the details, Councillor Abel has been consistent in his opposition while seated at the Council table, suggesting the Armoury has value as a community space and should be shared as such, whether as a place for the Town of Aurora to host events or as space for local organizations, such as the Aurora Bridge Club and Air Cadets, who have been displaced pending the demolition of the old Aurora Public Library and Seniors' Centre buildings on Victoria Street.

?We have come out of Closed Session and instructed staff to go ahead with the lease at 89 Mosley Street and I think we should declare that facility surplus and see if there is an expression of interest,? said Councillor Abel during the New Business section of last week's Council agenda, which took place after the Armoury vote. ?In lieu of that not being the case, I think an explanation to our residents should be forthcoming, a communication as to why that is not taking place.?

The Councillor stated his case after Council received an update on the fate of the two buildings occupying the space which has become known as ?Library Square.?

Council approved the demolition of the former library and seniors' centre buildings earlier this year and, by the end of the summer, it was expected the land would be levelled by the end of this month.

There has, however, been a slight delay, according to CAO Doug Nadorozny.

?I don't have all the details but I know the tender closed,? said the CAO on executing the demolition contracts. ?The winning tender was below the budget and we anticipate moving forward. I don't know if there was any alteration to the timeline in that winning bid, but I believe it was to start in December.?