

Southwest recreation facility, parks move forward in \$29.5m Capital Budget

By Brock Weir

A new recreation centre in Aurora's southwest is among the big ticket items moving forward to the next level as Council approved the 2018 Capital Budget last week.

The Capital Budget is, along with the Operations Budgets, one of the two major components that come together to form the overall budget for the year ahead. While the Operations Budget, the talks for which kicked off Saturday morning at Town Hall, has the most direct input on your tax dollar, the Capital Budget allocates dollars for infrastructure projects, as well as the repair and replacement of assets not only for this year but within a 10 year window.

All items in the Capital Budget are funded from existing reserves held by the Town, and not directly from the tax or water rates. In total, the 2018 Capital Budget clocks in at just shy of \$29.5 million, with \$13.4 million allocated for the repair and replacement of existing infrastructure, \$16.03 million for Growth and New Capital, and \$605,500 listed for ?studies and other projects.?

?As a result of the concept of Cash to Capital reserve allocation from tax levy and the internal funding of capital coming from resultant infrastructure and other reserves, there is no longer a direct impact on the tax rate by the capital budget,? said Dan Elliott, Treasurer for the Town of Aurora, in his report to Council. ?As such, the Committee recommended capital budget is driven by asset need rather than impact on taxes. The proposed Growth & New Capital Budget for 2018 represents a gross cost of \$16,029,611. This capital program includes funding for the construction of new sidewalks, a new skid steer loader, a new park in 2C and a playground and design for a new recreational facility.

?The proposed major studies and other projects?includes a DC (Development Charges) background study and Municipal Energy Plan.?

Community stakeholders ? namely Aurora's sports community ? had a chance to weigh in on the new recreation facility at a Town Hall meeting on Monday night where they sounded off on what they would like to see in a new space. Presented by Al Downey, Aurora's newly minted Director of Operations, which includes large parts of his previous portfolio as Director of Parks and Recreation, there were a number of suggestions brought forward.

Members of the public can also weigh in at a meeting of the Parks & Recreation Advisory Committee next Thursday, November 30, at 7.30 p.m. at Town Hall.

At last week's Council meeting, lawmakers focused largely on repairs to existing infrastructure, particularly roads.

?When we had the flood [this summer], we had a car swimming at Industrial, and Yonge and Wellington was flooded west of Wellington, flooded on Orchard Heights, is there anything in the money that we're putting in the budget that is going to address the flooding issues that we had so we don't have them again?? asked Councillor Wendy Gaertner.

This, said Director of Planning Marco Ramunno, was a ?difficult? question to answer at the meeting as he didn't have all the information before him, but he said repairs are in the works to improve underground storm sewers.

?We are trying to prevent any future flooding but this past summer we did have some extreme events,? he said. ?I think we were fortunate that within the Town only a couple of pockets really experienced flooding and, [in] some of the newer areas, the storm water management systems really held up and did their job and we didn't see much in the way of flooding. We're always looking at?making improvements to avoid those issues down the road.?

Councillor Gaertner, however, said she had her reservations.

?I think we need to put some money into this because it is going to be progressively worse a problem.?