

Ten-year financing mulled to pay off Joint Operations Centre

By Brock Weir

Municipal workers have begun the process of moving into the Town's new Joint Operations Centre (JOC) on Industrial Parkway North and with \$20 million project complete, now comes paying off the debt.

Council approved a budget of \$20,385,589 with the majority covered by development charges and the sale of municipally owned land, including the former public works yard on Scanlon Court made surplus by the construction of the new facility.

Officially marked as 'complete' last month, over \$4.4 million has been funded by the sale of land, \$4.3 million from development charges, with the remaining \$11.7 million financed through a construction line of credit. Now, the line of credit must be paid off and the Town proposes refinancing the line of credit with 10 year amortization.

'As the funding sources were not fully in hand, but had a reasonable expectation of being collected within a 10 year time frame, Council authorized that funding shortfalls be financed in the interim by a construction line of credit to a maximum of the full budget amount until that project was completed,' said Town Treasurer Dan Elliott.

'Predicting the exact timing of the receipt of the remaining funding sources through DCs (Development Charges) or sales of land parcels is difficult. There remain several parcels of Town-owned land that are available for sale, including the tentative deal to sell the two existing Scanlon Court operations facilities once the Town vacates when moving into the new JOC. One of those two Scanlon Court properties is expected to transact this summer, while the other may take over a year to close due to required site remediation and soils work.'

Of the municipally-owned lands on Leslie Street earmarked for business, four parcels are still in place, Mr. Elliott noted, and a sale of a double parcel of land is expected to close this summer with another deal for another parcel also on the horizon. Once those deals are one, one 10-acre plot will be all the Town has left to move.

'Further, where the development of the Town seems to be peaking and may soon begin to wane, it is difficult to predict exactly when the anticipated remaining development charges will be received to fund this project,' Mr. Elliott concluded. 'Staff believe 10 years is a reasonable period to expect the outstanding DCs and sales of lands to fund the JOC to be collected, and accordingly recommend a financing period of a maximum of 10 years.'

'Having seen a lot of recent activity in the Leslie Street lands, and having tentative deals on both of the Scanlon Court properties, staff recommend using two successive five year terms, allowing for land sales proceeds and interim DC collections to reduce the overall cost of borrowing to the Town through a mid-point payment.'

Councillors were to tackle the recommendation at last week's General Committee but the matter got bumped for time constraints. Don Iafrate of One Space Unlimited, however, was still on hand to provide Council with a status update on the JOC.

Mr. Iafrate told Council that he expected the move into the new digs to be complete by the end of June with an official opening for members of the public set for this fall.

'One of the goals was the building had to be an example of an environmentally responsible product as it is a Town building and is to be showcased by the Town,' he said. '[The second was] it should be accessible to the public, with a clear distinction between the public and the private spaces. The current yard did not have a well-defined separation between public and private so, for safety reasons, and other reasons, we tried to focus on that. Thirdly, the building should speak of its purpose; that is an infrastructure building the way it expresses itself to both the public and to staff.'

Among the amenities he highlighted were use of natural light, a public viewing area for the Aurora Community Arboretum, a

bio-swale to collect all storm water diverting it into cisterns for use within the on-side greenhouse and filtering the rest before it goes into the municipal system, and a 5,500 square foot 'shell space' on the top floor to allow for future growth within the building,