

Victoria Hall refurbishment costs could rise \$1.7 million



A new addition to the rear of Victoria Hall and new flooring to remove dry rot are among the drivers that could lead to a significant budget increase to make the venerable building a community hub once again.

Council this week will consider a recommendation from staff to increase the previously budgeted \$500,000 refurbishment plan by \$1,682,000, proposed to be funded from reserves.

First built in 1883, Victoria Hall, which sits on the southwest corner of Mosley and Victoria Streets began life as a church before being converted to a school, spending 20 years as a public library, and has since been used as a community space.

While it has been largely used for storage and occasional community meetings in recent years, the Town began looking for tenants to breathe new life into the space in 2024.

In order for a new chapter to begin, however, staff say much work still needs to be done to bring the building back up to code and make it fully accessible under Provincial guidelines.

?New information and unforeseen conditions have invalidated both original estimates and early feasibility studies, thus impacting staff's ability to complete the project under its existing authority,? said Kyle Stitt, Facilities Management, in a report to Council.

An initial feasibility study conducted in 2024 assessed the bulk of the building, but they were not able to access sub floor components at the time. Further reviews were carried out in 2025, the report notes. It was here they found the building's floors had ?badly deteriorated? due to dry rot and would be unable to support the weight required under the Ontario Building Code.

The existing brick addition to the back of the building was also found to be in the way of building a new ramp to be in compliance with AODA (Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act).

?The current south addition does not harmonize with the existing heritage building, nor the newly-developed Aurora Town Square,? Stitt continued. ?To achieve a usable facility that is conducive to supporting long-term use, demolition and construction of a new slab on grade flooring structure, as well as a new addition compliant with AODA requirements, is needed.

?Due to the newly understood project complexity, consulting services to assist with detailed design and contract administration may account for ~20 per cent of construction costs. In 2025, staff contracted an architectural firm to conduct additional reviews and initial concept design under a low value procurement. Given the expanded scope and complex coordination related to the project, a contract amendment is required to continue with design and construction administration services. Anticipated consulting costs are expected to be near \$250,000 and may exceed if additional design work is required throughout the project.?

Last year, Victoria Hall was due to be included in a request for expressions of interest issued by the Town looking for new tenants for the Aurora Armoury and the Café at Aurora Town Square following the exit of Niagara College's Canadian Food & Wine Institute at both venues.

The café spot was subsequently filled by Newmarket's My Indie Coffee, while Uxbridge's Slabtown Cider Company formally opened Slabtown Armoury in the spot this past fall.

By Brock WeirEditorLocal Journalism Initiative Reporter