

Orangeville to hire \$50,000 consultant to provide options for Broadway parking lot

By Mike Baker

Orangeville Council has agreed to spend \$50,000 on a consultant as it considers various potential development options for a plot of prime downtown land.

Following on from a request made back in February that staff draw up recommendations for land sitting at 82 and 86-90 Broadway, which currently houses a 125-spot municipal parking lot, Council held off on making a decision at this point. In his proposal, Ray Osmond, the Town's General Manager of Community Services, presented three possible options for the site.

The first would be to sell the land to a private developer, the second to potentially establish a long-term lease of the property, and the third would be to enter into a private public partnership, whereby the Town would offer up the value of the land and a private developer would build at the site, working alongside Council on any proposal. It has previously been noted that the approximately one-acre site could house a multi-purpose high-rise building, featuring commercial space, upper-level residential dwellings and a multi-level parking facility, to expand the inventory of public parking spaces in downtown Orangeville.

"We've yet to determine the creative use of this wonderful piece of land. We know parking is part of the solution here, and will be part of this building. We need some creative thought put into this, and we need to look at other municipalities and what successes they've seen," Mayor Sandy Brown said. "That, I would hope, would be what a consultant would come back to Council with."

The Town purchased the land at 86-90 Broadway in 2007 for \$999,000, before striking a partnership with the Orangeville Business Improvement Area (OBIA) that saw the downtown stewards take over the loan payments on the property. The Town joined forces with the OBIA once again, in 2012, when it purchased land at 82 Broadway for \$750,000. Through that agreement, the Town fronted a 25 percent down payment (\$187,500), with the OBIA picking up the rest of the bill, around \$562,500, payable over a 12-year period.

As a result of these past agreements, should the Town sell the land in question, 75 percent of the funds will be payable to the OBIA. Because of that, Coun. Debbie Sherwood, who currently sits on the OBIA board, believes the organization should be involved in the decision-making process.

"I would be very hesitant in choosing any of these recommendations without giving (the OBIA) the opportunity to meet and discuss this," Coun. Sherwood said. "The OBIA should be involved in this entire process. If there's a sale, they're entitled to 75 percent of the net proceeds. We need to adhere to our partnership agreement, bring them on board and get some insight."

While he was seemingly undecided over what should go into any potential development, Coun. Todd Taylor said the municipality should put itself in as good a position as possible to take advantage of potential funding opportunities in the near future.

"This is about sharpening our axe before we cut down the tree. We need to find out exactly what paths are available to us," Coun. Taylor said. "We are going to come out of this crisis that we're in, and I think it's incumbent on all of us to ensure that we're preparing ourselves to be ready. The provincial and federal governments, I do not know this for a fact I am simply espousing my opinion, I believe will be coming out with some massive programs for infrastructure (soon) that we may be able to take advantage of."

The \$50,000 required to pay for the consultant will be funded through capital reserves. Council voted 6 to 1 in favour of hiring the consultant, with Coun. Sherwood the lone vote against.

"Because this isn't in (this year's) budget, I will not be supporting it," Coun. Sherwood said.