

Enhanced 911 system a topic at town's budget session

At Monday night's Finance and Administration Committee meeting for budget discussion, new spending for an enhanced 911 call system and the need to set priorities became talking points.

Local resident Allan Toms spoke to council about the importance of prioritization during this process.

"It is imperative that during the review process of the capital and operating budget, there is clear prioritization given to all points of interest," said Mr. Toms. "However, it may be necessary to hold off on some projects in order to fund projects that are in more of an immediate need. Council must not keep borrowing, causing an increase in long-term debt."

Two issues Mr. Toms called into question both fell under the category for the Police Services budget, which in the Draft Budget proposal, sits at just under \$8.5 million dollars.

"There hasn't been really any discussion in what these costs are for, beyond the 911 Project," he said.

"We haven't heard anything more concerning looking at OPP costing either. This is something that cannot be forgotten about."

While the issue of the 911 project was broached briefly by council earlier this month, full discussion on the item had been deferred until Police Chief Wayne Kalinski could be present to speak to the concern.

"The 911 upgrades are a mandatory project," explained Councillor Gail Campbell during Monday night's meeting.

"These items, which were listed in capital projects, were deferred because council felt that you should be able to comment on why or why not it needs to happen now."

The amount requested for the 911 project in this year's budget is \$90,000, and would be for necessary upgrades to ensure that Orangeville Police could continue providing 911 service locally.

"Currently, the Orangeville Police Service operates on an analog system," explained Chief Kalinski.

"The Bell system that is coming in, whether we like it or not, is based entirely on a fibre optics system."

The biggest issue is that analog and fibre optics cannot communicate with one another, meaning that if Orangeville does not participate in the system upgrades, we will no longer have local 911, and all calls will be routed into the provincial system.

The budget for the project, passed in previous years, is \$261,000.

Currently, the Town has already invested \$171,000 on the project, and the \$90,000 in the capital budget is needed for completion of the project.

The enhanced fibre optics could provide an opportunity for growth into more enhanced 911 services, including text messages for the hearing impaired. Whether that is the route of the Orangeville 911 hub though, has yet to be discussed.

According to Chief Kalinski, once the new system is up and running, they can expect a revenue to the tune of over \$300,000 from other areas they provide communication to.

As far as the OPP costing, council has not currently pursued any further information.

While it hasn't been provided as a reason, Mayor Jeremy Williams has posted publicly on Facebook, as well as said in multiple

meetings that at this point, he would like to work with Orangeville Police and the new Chief to work through the current issues and improve our local services.