

Triton Engineering awarded contract for 1st Ave. despite higher bid

By Tabitha Wells

Orangeville Council has voted to overturn staff recommendations on a Request For Proposal (RFP) that went out regarding reconstruction of First Avenue. The item was originally discussed during the December 7 council meeting, but the motion to accept staff's recommendation was defeated.

The topic was brought back to a special meeting of Council last Wednesday evening, where discussion was held on whether the purpose of the RFP process should be about selecting the lowest contract, or one based on familiarity and experience with the Town.

The original staff recommendation was to award the contract to Burlington-based McIntosh Perry Consulting Engineers Ltd. (MP) to develop the engineering design and provide administrative services for the reconstruction of First Avenue between First and Fourth Streets. The RFP from McIntosh Perry came in at a cost \$50,000 below the second-lowest proposal, which raised concerns from some members of council.

For Councillor Scott Wilson, those reasons included not just how much lower the contract price was, but concern that the Town had never worked with McIntosh Perry before, and that their proposal stated their work could take up to two months longer than the other proposals.

"The value is more likely to be achieved if we go to the second bidder," said Councillor Wilson.

Councillor Sylvia Bradley was also concerned about providing the contract to a company that has not worked on any Orangeville projects before.

"I normally don't like going against the recommendation of staff, but I think there are lots of reasons to do so this time," she said. "This is a large contract, close to \$2 million. If this was a small project with a new business interested in doing work in town, I'd say yes, but this is a big project for a company to do as their first time in town."

She also supported awarding the contract to the second bidder, Triton Engineering Services Ltd., the company founded in Orangeville in 1964 and who recently completed a construction project on Lawrence Ave.

In order to come up with a recommendation, Town staff review the proposals and award points based on different criteria to create a full evaluation score. Pricing accounts for 30 percent of final score, allowing a company to earn up to 30 points for the best price, while the technical criteria make up 70 percent of the final score.

During the scoring process, McIntosh Perry received a total of 30 points for the cost portion, while Triton received only 11.4 points. Without the cost portion, Triton would have finished at 38, with McIntosh Perry in second at 32.5.

Doug Jones, Director of Public Works, said Town staff felt that alongside the scores, McIntosh Perry was a viable company to go with. "With this proposal being so much lower than the others, we felt it necessary to delve deeper," explained Mr. Jones. "In a project like this, interested companies are asked to provide a list of projects they have completed, as well as their employers, whom we spoke with. We also spoke to staff of other municipalities and were satisfied with the response."

Councillor Gail Campbell's fear was that despite being the lowest proposal, with the additional time to complete the project and the proposed fewer staff hours to complete it, costs could wind up quite a bit higher once the project is actually completed.

But for Mayor Jeremy Williams, the biggest concern was the amount of money listed in the proposal, as well as the idea that awarding the contract for a higher quote, and basing it on previous experience with the Town, in his mind made the RFP pointless.

?I can't support spending the additional funds,? he said. ?[The difference] could pay for some of the programs we had to cut last year. I understand sometimes there is hesitation in dealing with another company, however I trust our staff and they have done their due diligence, and done their research.?

He added that he didn't see himself supporting Triton, but indicated it was not due to problems with their work.

?It's just too much money,? he said. ?There is no point going to a tendering process if we don't follow that process. To me, it's quite clear cut.?

A motion was passed to support Triton with only Mayor Williams voting against awarding them the contract. Councillor Nick Garisto excused himself from both the debate and the vote after declaring a pecuniary interest, due to a family member working for one of the companies being discussed.

As a result, the contract will be awarded to Triton Engineering to complete the project on First Ave.