

## Orangeville Council approves plans for new fire station, slated for 2024

By **Sam Odrowski**

Orangeville Council recently approved the site and floor plan for its nearly 30,000 sq. ft fire station that's being built at the corner of Commerce and Centennial Road.

In a unanimous vote on June 13, Council also directed Town staff to prepare an application for capital funding in the amount of \$5 million from the Federation of Canadian Municipalities Green Municipal Fund Program to design the new fire station to net zero standards. As well, Council directed staff to include \$5 million in additional funds for the fire station project for their 2023-24 capital budget.

The expected completion date of the fire station is spring of 2024, with an 18-month construction timeline.

While the 28,649 sq ft. facility has a larger footprint than originally anticipated, the architect for the new fire station, Frank Alaimo of Alaimo Architecture Inc. said every inch is being utilized to the fullest.

"There was no waste and no excess to the station," he said. "We laid it out accordingly to meet the requirements of [Town] staff."

The current fire station at Dawson Road is roughly 9,000 sq. ft and is unable to be extended since it's located on a flood plain. After the new fire station is built and the old one is out of service, Council has discussed converting the building into a crisis care bed facility.

While the new fire station was originally budgeted at \$11.5 million, Town treasurer Nadini Syed noted that it is anticipated a future report to Council will request an additional 20-30 per cent increase in the budgeted amount due to inflation. This could bring the project's total cost up to nearly \$15 million, stemming from uncertainties and unknowns in global markets, particularly associated with materials and labour.

Syed said this increase is a contingency, and could be lower than a 20-30 per cent projection.

"We don't know whether we would require that whole 30 per cent or we will just require 15 per cent," she noted.

"We are closely monitoring the market as it stands, and you have to appreciate the fact that inflation is happening in real time. Bank of Canada just released as of June 1, the new rate, which is a half a percent increase from April 13. The next rate increase will happen on July the 13th again. So, for me to provide a concrete direction or say how this is going to play out in the next few months or even in the next couple of years, it's very hard for me to pinpoint that."

If the interest rate hikes lead to decreased borrowing, it is anticipated that the market will stabilize to an extent, creating the possibility of reassessing the fire station budget in the future, if costs lower.

Since December of 2021 the architect has been working with town staff and Orangeville Fire Service to determine what's needed for the fire station, which is designed to last several decades.

"It was really great to have all their input into the overall design, which hopefully informed the outcome," said Orangeville's interim CAO Ray Osmond.

The fire station will feature four apparatus bays for vehicles, an emergency operations centre, training room, administration area, decontamination area, living quarters, and an area for community engagement

"We have designed this fire station not only to meet the immediate needs of the fire department, but we also have allowed for future growth in the facility? so that the building and the layout can be expanded, if necessary, thereby providing Orangeville with a fire station for the next 50 to 60 years," said Alaimo.

In the last two years, Alaimo Architecture has done design work for fire stations in Innisfil, Mississauga, Alliston, and Tottenham.

The new fire station is being designed with energy efficiency and sustainability in mind, noted Alaimo. The Town is hoping to secure up to \$5 million in grants to help incorporate even more net zero features.

The new fire station will be compliant with the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA) and the current plans account for two accessible parking spaces.

The station is being built on a 6.18-acre property that was previously purchased by the Town from Metrolinx for around \$2.4 million. The fire station only requires roughly three acres, so Council can sell the remaining lands to offset costs for the new fire station.

"We want to give Council the opportunity to really think about what to do with that land. So, look at what are the optimal uses of the land, what would net the best return on the investment that we put into? that land to get full value for the land in terms of resale down the road," said Osmond, who added it could be used for employment lands or manufacturing.

If there aren't any hold ups, construction on the new fire station is anticipated to take 18 months with a completion date slated for the spring of 2024.

Orangeville Mayor Sandy Brown said he's looking forward to seeing the project come to fruition.

"This is a very important thing for not only Orangeville, but the surrounding towns that we serve with our fire department," said Mayor Brown. "This is a 50-year plan that we're setting in motion now, and I think it's an excellent design and I'm looking forward to seeing it completed in a couple of years."