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Bennett Health Care Centre seeking cash

By LISA TALLYN

Staff Writer

Bennett Health Care Centre is asking for some hefty concessions, — about \$800,000 worth-from the Town of Halton Hills for its Scotsdale Supportive Living project.

The centre is hoping that relief will come by way of the Town waiving building and planning fees and development charges.

Kathy Dorbeck, Board Chair of the Bennett Health Care Centre, outlined the project and why the Town should support the request at a recent Council meeting.

Scotsdale Place is to be a non-profit supportive living facility for seniors built on the Bennett Village campus, the same site where the Gallery, a life-lease seniors' apartment building, is located. The eight-storey building will have 100 rental units — 80 will be independent supportive living units and 20 assisted living units. Of the 80, 22 will be funded by the region through Halton's Investment in Affordable Housing Program.

As a non-profit, the residents will be eligible for supportive daily living care and support at no cost, including personal support and homemaking services, said Dorbeck.

She said an adult day program would also be offered on site, available to both seniors who live at Scotsdale Place and others in the community.

The project will benefit local seniors, aligns with the Town's Strategic Objective and Imagine Halton Hills vision for seniors, will provide significant local economic benefits, will help to avoid unnecessary admissions to long term care and supportive living is the missing piece of the puzzle for area seniors, Dorbeck said.

"Scotsdale Place will meet the needs of all the seniors in our community — the very frail, the not-so-wealthy, those facing the challenges of early stage dementia," said Dorbeck.

She stressed that without significant support from the Town the project can't move ahead. The total cost is \$25 million, with a \$13.5 million mortgage. The Bennett Health Care Centre is kicking in \$5.8 million, the federal/provincial government \$3.9 million, and Halton Region \$1 million.

Dorbeck said the funding from the Region won't remain available to the community unless they proceed immediately.

"We need a conditional building permit by April 30. We need to have a shovel in the ground by May 1 or we lose the money," she said.

money," she said.

Halton Hills CAO David Smith said the Town has a long history of supporting

the Bennett Centre and outlined what it's

done so far.

He said when the Gallery was being built the development charges were deferred and less valuable environmental land was accepted in lieu of parkland, the Town waived early planning fees, and spent \$160,000 to upgrade the road.

He said the Town is legislated to charge planning and building fees to recover staff costs, but Council does have the ability to waive development charges.

But he said, "Town Council's official position is growth pays for growth."

"We want to ensure there is consistency with other future developments," said Smith. Decisions made related to this project "can have longer term implications on other development projects similar or related to this," he added.

Smith explained building and plan-

Smith explained building and planning fees must be paid and accounted for, so if Council chooses to waive them they must be taken from Town reserve funds — which is money raised through taxes.

"So there is an impact, waiving a fee means someone else is paying for it," said Smith.

In a report on the Bennett Health Care Centre's request, town staff provided two options for Council to consider.

Option 1:

• Council approve a waiver of Town development charges for 20 assisted living units in the amount of \$77,150 and direct staff to apply a one-time grant payable from the Tax Rate Stabilization Reserve for prorating building and planning fees for the amount equivalent for the 20 assisted living units in the amount of \$45,755. The total is \$122,906.

Option 2:

Council approve the waiver of development charges for the 20 assisted living units in the amount of \$77,150, Council direct staff to apply a one time grant to cover development charges for 22 affordable housing units to be built in the amount of \$133,716, and direct staff to apply a one-time grant for prorating building and planning fees for the equivalent of 20 assisted living units and 22 affordable housing units in the amount of \$93,559. The total of that option is \$304,426.

"If we make a decision tonight it might be a wrong one," said Mayor Rick Bonnette, after some questions and discussion by Council members.

He said there might be something coming forward from the Bennett Centre Board and there may be other funding mechanisms available "to try to make this work."

Bonnette made a motion, which was supported by Council, to refer the report back to staff to report back to Council at a later date.