

Castleton Town Hall bids skyrocket: on to Plan B

COBOURG CHRONICLE
BY BOB OWEN
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The Township of Cramahe's plan to renovate and expand the Castleton Town Hall hit an obstacle Nov. 29 when the tenders were opened by the township's chief building official, Natalie Moroz-Cornell.

Since the township began taking an active part in the upgrade in 2005, it has allocated over \$200,000 for the repairs and improvements identified by architect Phillip Carter and designed by the Ventin Group.

Ms. Moroz-Cornell revealed in an interview Nov. 30 that the township has \$227,000 at its disposal. Of that, \$158,000 was received in a grant. Another \$58,000 was set aside by council in its Spring 2007 budget discussions.

The problem is the lowest of four bids received Nov. 29 was a \$440,000 offer by Dalren Ltd. of Cobourg. The other three

were all over \$600,000.

The chief building official explained that 10 general contractors picked up tender packages and were at the mandatory site meeting Nov. 13. All had trouble getting their sub-contractors to quote so the Nov. 22 deadline was extended a week. Contractors were allowed to make substitutions in the amended versions of their bids - supplying materials that would meet the stated needs of the project, but for a lower price.

None did.

All the contractors who bid were local.

Facility Services of Grafton bid \$635,240, Fisher Construction from Cobourg came in at \$645,000 and the Jeffery G. Wallans Construction of Brighton price was \$669,000.

Ms. Moroz-Cornell readily admitted that, with \$227,000 available, the project can't be completed in the way the township had envisioned.

It was on to Plan B.

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When Ms. Moroz-Cornell presented her report to council Dec. 4, she planned to recommend all submitted bids be turned down, a selection process be accepted and a committee be formed to make the final decisions about the design, and the company which will do the work on the town hall.

If council approved that recommendation, Ms. Moroz-Cornell planned to ask for expressions of interest from all who bid the first time, and from all local contractors, many of whom found the original tendering process too unwieldy.

She says she kept hearing contractors saying they could do the job more cheaply. So, she will ask if anyone is interested in building the addition and making the renovations within the budget. They have until Dec. 14 to let her know if they are interested.

If they think they can do everything for under \$250,000, and provide all the needed aspects, they will be asked to provide

design and construction costs.

Ms. Moroz-Cornell expects every one of the designs will be different. But, they must include six washrooms, an elevator, and a kitchen. After that, the contractors can exercise their skills and use their experience to provide cost-effective concepts and building materials.

The contractor with the best price and the best plan will be chosen by the proposed selection committee to do the work if Ms. Moroz-Cornell's recommendations to council are accepted.

Ms. Moroz-Cornell admits she likes the tender process better because all the details are tied down. But, that didn't work. Contractors couldn't produce the building to the design specifications set out by the Ventin Group design team.

Even though the Ventin Group design will probably no longer be used, the chief building official is hoping the business stays with the project to approve the final plans for the 997-square-foot addition and administer the contract for the work.

Castleton parents reassured about new school plans

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No decision has been made by the public school board about the location of a proposed new school in Cramahe Township, parents were reassured Nov. 26 at Castleton Public School.

The Kawartha Pine Ridge (KPR) District board has begun the review of plans to close both Castleton Public School and South Cramahe Public School and replace them with a new school in 2010.

There will be four meetings of a review committee before June, 2008 when it is expected the board will make a decision using the committee's findings. The meetings will alternate between the two schools affected by the proposed change.

KPR Associate Director of Education Sherry Summersides attended the Nov. 26 Castleton Parents Council meeting to explain the process to the parents and to answer questions. She was at South Cramahe Public School Nov. 20.

The board's review committee will include Ms. Summersides, Superintendent of Education Bruce Shaw, local school board trustee Cyndi Dickson, trustee Verna Shackleton, Cramahe Township Mayor Marc Coombs, Principal Michele Adams, reps from the two school councils and staffs, the community and businesses.

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