

Council wants funding options to fix seniors centres 'problem'

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"Which indicated to me at that time, that council was prepared to support the project(s)," said Chambers.

But last week they found out differently, when learning through an *Independent & Free Press* Nov. 22 article, that design, engineering and construction of both the \$18 million Gellert Centre Phase 2, which includes a Georgetown Seniors Centre, and the \$2.5 million Acton Seniors Centre were removed from the 2013-2021 Capital Forecast.

Town treasurer Ed DeSousa had stated the projects were placed on the unfunded list based on the fact that projected development charges (DCs) funding that the Town would be receiving over the next couple of years would not be enough to help pay for them. DCs are developer dollars provided to the Town to help pay for road and infrastructure improvements.

But both Jones and Chambers said the seniors had proceeded ahead with fundraising plans— \$400,000 for the Acton centre and \$500,000 for the Georgetown centre— based on previous council decisions. The groups have already spent thousands of dollars on conceptual plans, architectural drawings, funding feasibility studies and hiring a financing consultant.

However, a lack of commitment from the Town could jeopardize the centres' ability to raise future funds, said Jones.

Councillor Jane Fogal and Councillor Jon Hurst motioned to add amendments to Capital Budget/Forecast calling on Town Chief Administrative Officer Dennis Perlin, DeSousa, and director of Recreation and Parks Terry Alyman to develop funding strategy options for council con-

sideration for Gellert Centre Phase 2 and the Acton Seniors Centre before the August 2012 budget meeting which sets the 2013 budget directions. One option could be a special dedicated levy. Council approved the motions unanimously.

Fogal said the Town, in her opinion, overcommitted itself on the three-arena project at a time when there was a lot of financial unknowns, such as housing development, reassessment and the recession. As well, the Town had to kick in \$2.7 million for the Georgetown Hospital redevelopment and \$1.3 million for the McKenzie-Smith Bennett School lands.

"So here we are in a situation where I believe we promised the seniors community that we would build these communities," said Fogal, "and now we're not. ... We have to fix this problem and we have a lot of people here tonight counting on this."

"Yes, we are well extended as far as our capital expenditures over the next several years, but this is an absolute priority and has been for several years," said Councillor Ann Lawlor.

Jones said the current seniors space in the Acton Arena & Community Centre is too small to accommodate existing programs, let alone expand its program offerings.

Similarly, the Georgetown Seniors Centre is an expensive rental facility on Guelph St., inefficient to operate and will not meet the needs of the projected number of new seniors, said Chambers.

"I support this recommendation to go back and look at how we can do it (fund the projects)," said Councillor Moya Johnson. "However, the recommendations may be difficult from a taxpayers' point of view."



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