



To: Council
From: Kevin Amelotte – Director of Parks and Recreation
Date of Meeting: January 13, 2021
Subject: Raisin River Heritage Centre – Updated Facility Options

Recommendation:

That Council direct staff to commence the process to demolish the Raisin River Heritage Centre as part of the 2021 budget, further, Council directs the Clerk to provide public notice of the intention to repeal By-Law No. 3418, being a former Township of Cornwall by-law, designating the Raisin River Heritage Centre building, previously occupied by the convent at St. Andrews West, of historical value and interest.

Summary:

The Township of South Stormont is the owner of the Raisin River Heritage Centre (RRHC) located in St. Andrews West. Construction of the facility was completed in 1909 and used as a Roman Catholic Convent and boarding school until the departure of the sisters in 1976. The Cornwall Township Historical Society (CTHS) was formed in 1977 and worked with the former Township of Cornwall to save the facility from a planned demolition. This created a partnership between the former Township and the CTHS for the use and maintenance of the facility, subsequently, the land was designated as having “historical value and interest” by way of a municipal by-law in 1978. Over the years this building has been used as a library, storage facility, and CTHS archive museum. The Township also owns approximately five feet (5’) of land around the perimeter of the building that is landlocked from the roadway by the property owned by the Catholic District School Board of Eastern Ontario (CDSBEO). Access to the landlocked property is by way of a registered easement through the CDSBEO property.

Following the completion of the Designated Substance Report and Building Condition Assessment Report, Council moved forward with the recommendation to close the facility to the public in 2017, and subsequently completed the maintenance required to ensure the exterior of the facility did not pose any further health and safety concerns. Since this time the Township has been actively working with stakeholders, members of the public, and professional consultants in order to research all options regarding the future of the RRHC. This report provides Council with the following updated options:

Renovation of the Facility:

Renovate to re-open for public use = \$892,393.00

In October 2020, the Township hired an architectural firm to review the original "Class D" estimate that was prepared in 2017. The amount listed for option #1 was calculated by the firm using the original 2017 estimate of \$541,616.00 and adding the anticipated inflation, coupled with quotes for required renovations to meet the emergency exiting and fire codes that were previously noted as being omitted. This renovation option would allow for continued public use but would not address any changes to the use of the building.

Renovate facility to archive standards = \$1,773,873.00

The architectural firm was tasked with expanding the original renovation quote in order to consider additional resources and renovations required to develop this facility into a regional archives centre that meets all required standards.

Staff also researched this option by conducting a survey with all neighbouring municipalities within SD&G, local conservation authorities, and local school boards. All five (5) of the community partners that took time to respond indicated that they do not have a current need for this type of archive facility.

A public meeting and survey were conducted in 2019 to review future options for this facility and to see if public input could generate any potential future uses for the facility. At that time, the development of a regional archive's facility was the only viable option.

Demolition of the Facility = \$698,800.00

Staff worked with a local contractor to review the original estimate from 2018. Upon review, the contractor provided an updated 2020 document with the same estimate.

Demolition will require that the original municipal by-law designating the facility as having "historical value and interest" be repealed. This will require a formal process where the Township publicly advertises the intention to repeal the by-law and allows for an appeal process.

A consultant will be required to assist with the specifications of a Request for Proposal (RFP) for the demolition project.

If the facility is demolished, this would leave the CTHS with no planned storage for their current archives/displays that are currently located within the RRHC.

A Conceptual drawing (2018) was provided for consideration should the facility be demolished, and the Township wish to consider building a small monument.

Sale of Property = \$9,000.00 to \$49,000.00

The CDSBEO was not interested in obtaining ownership of the facility.

Staff obtained the recommendation of a solicitor in order to understand all legal responsibilities surrounding the potential sale of the RRHC. Provided the Township obtains an Environmental Assessment, the sale of the property "as is" with all supporting building condition reports could be viewed as a legal option.

A Phase I Environmental Site Assessment could be conducted to determine if there are any potentially contaminating activities (PCA) on site or within the vicinity of site. This cost is approximately \$4,000.00 and would take approximately 8 weeks to complete, should no PCA's be observed there would be no further action required.

Should PCA's be identified in Phase I, a Phase II ESA would be required at an approximate cost of \$40,000.00 and could take an additional 10 weeks to complete. They would be required to perform several intrusive investigation methods including soil samples, installation of monitoring wells, and ground water sampling. This would eliminate any environmental concerns regarding the exterior soil surrounding the facility prior to sale.

Once the ESA is completed, the consultant would need to work with the Township solicitor to complete a full review and provide official legal counsel on the sale of the property. These professional fees would be approximately \$5,000.00.

Additional Comments:

The CDSBEO has officially provided notice that they do not want to own this facility and their desire would be for the Township to demolish the building for health and safety reasons.

Now that the building is vacant and closed to the public, the Township is not able to retain adequate insurance coverage to protect this asset from damages, content replacement, or other unforeseen events.

Staff has not been able to obtain a grant without a clear business case that demonstrates the need for the renovations and the long-term viability of the facility.

Sale of the land to another agency could significantly complicate the operation of the CDSBEO school yard and could create health and safety risks for the school children should the right of easement be challenged by new ownership. It should also be noted that the septic system for the RRHC is located on the CDSBEO property and outside of the easement.

Staff has met with the CTHS to review options for archives storage and what needs the organization might have in the future. Due to the pandemic, meetings in 2020 were cancelled.

Substantial staff time, resources, and research has been allocated to this project since 2016;

- 2016: Asbestos & Substance Survey Report
- 2017: Building Conditions Report
- 2017: Exterior Renovations & Fencing
- 2017: Class D Estimate Report
- 2018: Demolition Estimate
- 2018: Consultations with CDSBEO
- 2019: Public Meeting & Survey
- 2019: Monument Concept Drawings
- 2020: Updated Class D Estimate & Archives Options
- 2020: Updated Demolition Estimates
- 2020: Consultation for Sale of Property

Notwithstanding the resources listed above, the cost to provide the facility with basic maintenance and utilities since 2017 is approximately \$15,000.00/year.

Options:

1. That Council direct staff to commence the process to demolish the Raisin River Heritage Centre as part of the 2021 budget, further, Council directs the Clerk to provide public notice of the intention to repeal By-Law No. 3418, being a former Township of Cornwall by-law, designating the Raisin River Heritage Centre building, previously occupied by the convent at St. Andrews West, of historical value and interest.
2. That Council direct staff to hire a consulting firm to complete an Environmental Site Assessment to further explore final legal options for the potential sale of the property.

3. That Council direct staff to prepare options for renovations to the facility and present these options during 2021 budget deliberations.
4. Other.

Financial Impact:

If approved, the cost for the demolition will be included in the 2021 budget. Specific allocation will be addressed as part of budget deliberations.

To meet necessary timeline for demolition established in collaboration with the CDSBEO and the school year, it is necessary to begin the process to repeal the heritage designation and issue an RFP immediately. This will allow actual demolition to occur over the summer and explain the reason staff are presenting in advance of formal budget discussions.

Others Consulted:

Senior Management Team
Catholic District School Board of Eastern Ontario
Professional Consultants
Cornwall Township Historical Society
Members of the Public