



## ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT

**To:** WARDEN AND COUNCIL OF THE COUNTY OF FRONTENAC

**From:** Elizabeth Savill  
CAO

**Prepared By:** Julie Shillington  
Administrator of Fairmount

**Date Prepared:** October 6, 2011

**Date of Meeting:** October 19, 2011

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**Re:** Fairmount Home – Auditorium Redevelopment

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### **Background**

The Fairmount Home auditorium was built circa 1976 and includes a kitchenette, foyer and two two-stall accessible washrooms. Unfortunately the element of renovation scoped and undertaken as part of the Home's redevelopment project affecting the auditorium was the installation of a sprinkler system.

A report was brought forward to the past County Council in September 2009 with the following resolution:

*RESOLVED THAT Council of the County of Frontenac receive the Fairmount Home – Auditorium Redevelopment report for information;*

*AND FURTHER THAT Council support the establishment of a committee to launch a fundraising campaign for the redevelopment of the Fairmount Auditorium.*

This resolution was tabled and was to be brought forward to the new Council. Recognizing the need for new Councillors to orient themselves to the operations of the County, management staff at the home has delayed bringing this report forward this year. However, given the issues we have had with the auditorium this past year combined with pressure from residents, family members and other users, we feel the introduction of the project to Council can be delayed no longer.

### **Comment**

The auditorium is a key element in the delivery of services at the Home and, as the availability of staff and volunteers is limited, having the auditorium allows the Home to provide more regular activities to the residents. Without the auditorium some programs would have to be smaller and held more frequently in order to reach the same number of residents. For example, bingo is

held every Wednesday for an hour and a half in the auditorium and residents from all four home areas attend. We have a dedicated team of volunteers who take turns running the bingos. Without the auditorium, bingo would have to be held on the resident home areas in the much smaller activity rooms and we would need additional volunteers to support the program. We would go from reaching many residents in one and a half hours to needing six hours of volunteer time to reach the same audience.

Current uses of the auditorium include:

- a) Annual garage sale sponsored by the Fairmount Auxiliary
- b) Annual fall tea and sale sponsored by the Fairmount Auxiliary
- c) Annual Christmas sale
- d) Special celebrations such as Valentine's Day Dinner, Mother's Day Tea, Volunteer Appreciation Dinner, Remembrance Day
- e) Pub (the auditorium is licensed by the Alcohol & Gaming Commission)
- f) Bingo
- g) Movies
- h) Music
- i) Dancing
- j) Church services
- k) Recreation and exercise programs
- l) Audio-visual presentations
- m) Staff and Volunteer training

In addition several musical groups use the auditorium an evening a week for practice in exchange for free performances for the residents. In the recent past, we have also had community groups and other performance groups regularly use the auditorium.

During the past two summers, on numerous occasions, the heat and humidity in the auditorium have required the relocation or cancellation of programs from/in the auditorium. Residents do get upset when a program is cancelled and we learned just how important the auditorium is to them through the relocation of church services to the lobby. There are a large number of residents who attend church services and when we could not use the auditorium the lobby was the only other space that could accommodate them. While this seems a simple solution it was not. Residents expressed concern that there are just too many distractions in the lobby for a program such as church and the distractions are especially upsetting to those residents with hearing impairments.

There are many deficiencies in the auditorium including the following:

- a) The existing ventilation system is extremely noisy as Council members have noticed in the past. If we have an event or a meeting we need to shut off the ventilation fans so attendees can hear speakers, performers, etc. In the winter if we shut off the fans we also shut off the heat and the room chills very quickly. In the summer we shut down any air movement and swelter.
- b) There is no air conditioning in the auditorium and over the past two summers we have had to move, shorten or cancel a variety of programs due to extreme heat in the auditorium. Unfortunately we cannot use fans as when we plug them in and have the public address system working the electrical breaker blows.
- c) The electrical panel is full and, as it is outdated, we can no longer purchase replacement breakers for it. There are not enough electrical outlets and several that we do have do not work so we rely on extension cords which pose a regular trip hazard to our residents, even when taped down. Again, if we have too many items running at the same time, the breaker blows.

- d) The acoustics in the auditorium are poor, particularly when we have to keep the ventilation fans on for heating purposes and it is a particular challenge for those with hearing impairment. While we do have a hearing assistance system, it does not work well and needs replacing with a system using current technology.
- e) The lighting is poor and inefficient. There is no ability to aim the lights or set alternate lighting levels for different events. There is one small window but no real natural light. Pictures taken in the auditorium always have a yellow tinge.
- f) The existing auditorium roof is original and is leaking to the point that some of the ceiling is falling apart and has become a safety hazard. The floor is peeling and each time it is cleaned the tiles have to be glued back into place.
- g) There is a ramp that leads from the parking lot to the exterior entrance of the auditorium however it is difficult to use, especially in the bad weather, as the snow melting system no longer works and the ramp needs repairs. The automatic door openers do not always work due to the disintegrating concrete at the entrance. In addition the doors and door hardware are worn out.
- h) Storage is inadequate. There are two small closets one of which holds the public address system and the other chairs. Tables and chairs are stacked along the walls of the auditorium as well. There is a small storage room which is used to hold recreation and pub supplies. A large cabinet is taking up space in the storage room as that is where we keep our pub supplies which needs to be locked to restrict access.
- i) The kitchenette is small and poorly ventilated. Currently it is only used for minimal internal catering and pub service. The cupboards are old and inefficient for current use.
- j) The original washrooms were not barrier free however some upgrades have been done but we have been advised these will not meet accessibility requirements. Taps and toilets need replacing and the existing bathroom exhaust fans no longer work.
- k) The auditorium lobby area houses the lost laundry cart, the pool table, the air hockey table, and four vending machines. We also have a shuffle board table in storage as there is no space in this area for its use. Ideally these would be accommodated in the renovated space as they are well used by residents and visitors. This space is also used to display portraits of our past County Council Wardens. Many of these cannot be viewed as they are being blocked by the various items identified above.

Council approved an auditorium redevelopment study which was completed by Shoalts & Zabak Architects in 2009. It is important to note that the report states that the “*auditorium is in good structural condition*” and is “*a good candidate for renovation and revitalization*”. The report also noted that given the long list of deficiencies, the full potential of the auditorium is not being realized especially in the area of revenue generation.

Opportunities for improvement identified in the report include:

- a) Improvements to the existing building envelope, finishes, equipment and infrastructure
- b) Provision of a new HVAC system and lighting
- c) Provisions of new technologies such as aids for hearing and visually impaired
- d) Provision of new windows
- e) Additional space to the north of the building
- f) A conference/meeting room suite
- g) Inclusion of folding partitions so the auditorium could be used for more than one purpose at a time
- h) Additional storage space
- i) Washrooms brought to accessibility standards
- j) Expansion of the vending area
- k) Accommodation of the residents’ games tables
- l) Addition of a new vestibule with entrance and a barrier free lift

At the end of the project we would be able to achieve the full potential of the auditorium. It would be fully accessible, accommodate all of our space and recreation needs, and less long-term maintenance would be required. At that point we could also offer it as a fully functional resource to the community.

With the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary of the County of Frontenac approaching in 2015, we would like to see the auditorium renovations completed by the end of 2014 and include activities in the auditorium as part of the anniversary celebrations. This would be a prime opportunity to highlight it as a community resource. With this in mind, I would like to advise County that the auditorium project will be brought forward with the 2013 budget as a capital building project.

In the mean time, we, being staff, residents, family members and volunteers, are asking for Council's approval to put together a committee and launch a formal fundraising campaign to offset Frontenac's share of the renovations. You should be aware that we have already received \$32,473 towards the project without any formal fundraising and, as we are cognizant of our human resource limitations, the size and scope of the campaign will be much less than that of the Capital Campaign conducted prior to and during the renovation and rebuild of the home. We would also research other opportunities for cost offsets including available grants and subsidies.

### **Sustainability Implications**

The Infrastructure vision statement in the County's *Directions for Our Future* document reads:

*Services and economic activity in the County of Frontenac are supported by good quality, well maintained and well managed public, commercial, industrial, and residential infrastructure, with life-cycle cost and environmental considerations. County and Townships' prudent fiscal management ensures an appropriate balance between servicing ongoing municipal demands and investing in future operations.*

By authorizing the commencement of a fundraising campaign for the redevelopment of the auditorium, Council will be taking a step to ensure the quality of Fairmount's infrastructure.

### **Financial Implications**

The 2009 feasibility study estimated the complete cost of full renovations to be \$1.5 million. It is recognized that this estimate would need to be updated. While a final fundraising target has not been decided we are aiming for no less than \$200,000.

### **Recommendation**

That Council of the County of Frontenac receive this *Fairmount Home – Auditorium Redevelopment* report for information,

*AND FURTHER THAT* Council support the establishment of a committee to launch a fundraising campaign for the redevelopment of the Fairmount Auditorium.

### **Organizations, Departments and Individuals Consulted and/or Affected**

Residents  
Staff

Volunteers  
Family Members