
TO: GENERAL COMMITTEE

SUBJECT: RETENTION OF 29 SPERLING AND 35 SPERLING DRIVE

WARD: ALL

PREPARED BY AND KEY CONTACT: J. DEVROOM, FACILITIES CAPITAL PROJECT SUPERVISOR, EXT. 4531

SUBMITTED BY: R. PEWS, DIRECTOR OF CORPORATE FACILITIES

GENERAL MANAGER APPROVAL: D. MCALPINE, GENERAL MANAGER OF COMMUNITY and CORPORATE SERVICES

CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER APPROVAL: M. PROWSE, CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

RECOMMENDED MOTION

1. That motion 17-G-199, subsection 7(b) and motion 20-A-092, subsection 2 related to the declaration of 29 and 35 Sperling Drive being surplus to city needs, be rescinded.
2. That staff investigate uses for the former Barrie Police Services headquarters facility and adjacent land with a focus on offsetting costs related to approved and forecast capital projects, as well as other city space requirements, and report back to Council.

PURPOSE & BACKGROUND

Purpose

3. The purpose of this Staff Report is to rescind Council's direction to declaring 29 and 35 Sperling Drive, endorsed through motions 17-G-199 and 20-A-092, as surplus to the city's needs and to allow staff to investigate alternative uses for the facility.

Background

4. In July 2017 City Council approved the construction of the Barrie-Simcoe Emergency Services Campus (BSESC) at 110 Fairview Drive through motion 17-G-199. Through this motion, 29 Sperling Drive and the adjacent parking lot located at 35 Sperling Drive were to be declared surplus to the city's needs following the relocation of Barrie Police to their new facility. Construction of that facility was completed in Q1 2020, and Barrie Police relocated from 29 Sperling to their new headquarters in March 2020, just as the COVID-19 pandemic emerged.
5. In September 2020 Council endorsed the lease of 29 and 35 Sperling Drive to the Royal Victoria Regional Health Centre (RVH) through motion 20-A-092 for use as a regional COVID-19 Assessment Centre. This lease agreement was been extended as the pandemic progressed and is now anticipated to end on September 30, 2022. The motion suspended the sale of 29 and 35 Sperling Drive for a period of no longer than 18 months.
6. In August 2021 through motion 21-G-200, City Council endorsed the execution of an agreement with RVH and the Simcoe Muskoka District Health Unit (SMDHU) to use a portion of 29 Sperling Drive to support the ongoing supplies warehousing for COVID-19 immunization efforts. The SMDHU expects to vacate the space within the building that they are utilizing in Q2 2022.

7. On January 15, 2018, through motion 18-G-007 City Council endorsed a plan to optimize and eventually expand Barrie's City Hall facility at 70 Collier Street to meet the operational needs of our growing city. Upgrades to date have increased the 3rd floor capacity by 22%, with the current large expansion date forecasted out of the 10-year planning cycle.
8. The COVID-19 pandemic, while terrible from public health, societal and economic perspectives, necessarily drove changes to work practices of both city staff and the broader public, upending the way some municipal services are now delivered in Barrie and around the world. These changes include the use of digital tools and equipment, flexible workspaces, and remote and hybrid work environments, all of which could reduce the city's future physical workspace needs.
9. Considering changes made and the expanding digital work world, the Facilities Planning and Development branch would like the opportunity to investigate the potential of retaining 29 and 35 Sperling Drive as a facility to accommodate the growth of various City departments, provide swing space for several approved or forecast capital projects and, ideally, eliminating the potential need for a costly future expansion of City Hall.

ANALYSIS

10. In discussion with various City departments, additional space is required for future growth, departmental alignment, additional meeting rooms, training space, and record storage. Swing space is required to support the Wastewater Innovation Centre project (FC1215), Operations Centre Master Plan Implementation (FC1124), and City Hall Redevelopment (FC1139).
11. Included in the 2022 capital plan is a study to determine whether it is more economically feasible to update Fire Station 2, the city's oldest fire hall located on Bell Farm Road, or to rebuild a new hall in another location. The proximity of 29 / 35 Sperling Drive to Station 2 may provide a suitable alternative as the current lot size and layout of Fire Station 2 limits the programmatic layout required to support operational needs. As part of this study, staff would also review the feasibility of relocating the BFES' training apparatus from its current location on Saunders Road, a property that is leased on a month-to-month basis from InnPower, to the 35 Sperling lot. Should this be viable, new mutual training agreements with Georgian College may be possible.
12. Records storage at City Hall and Cedar Point is currently nearing its maximum with a need for additional storage space. Currently city records are being stored in various facilities, some in spaces associated with higher-than-average operating square foot costs. This is not an efficient use of space or annual operating budgets. Spaces within 29 Sperling are well suited for records storage and this would allow many of these documents to be consolidated into a single location.
13. The existing facility at 29 Sperling provides an easily convertible space with good access and plenty of parking. As staffing numbers at City Hall increase, and planned developments adjacent to the downtown library progresses, parking in the downtown core will be reduced which will impact staff parking significantly.
14. 29 Sperling is equipped with two large meeting rooms easily accessible from the front entrance. Public meeting rooms available in City owned facilities are often utilized by public organizations, and staff would include in their review the potential to retain and update these rooms for public use, something believed to be beneficial in alleviating the demand on meeting room bookings at City Hall.
15. RVH has expressed interest in continuing to lease space at 29 Sperling in a smaller capacity post-pandemic. Where not all space at 29 Sperling is utilized by City Staff, the potential to lease space to other organizations could assist in covering some of the operational and maintenance cost of the building.

16. Redeveloping an existing building is less expensive and more sustainable than building new. Future redevelopment / retrofit designs would focus on enhancing the building envelope and systems to meet Net Zero carbon emissions in support of motion 19-G-291 and the city's Climate Change Mitigation Plan. Should the study show that relocation of departments to 29 Sperling makes operational and financial sense, future city hall redevelopment work would focus on maximizing efficiency of the existing space as well as upgrading the building envelope and façade, again in support of Council's direction for Net-Zero carbon emissions by 2050.
17. Upon completion of the investigation and accompanied with a supporting business case, staff will report back to Council with recommendations for 29 & 35 Sperling Drive.

ENVIRONMENTAL AND CLIMATE CHANGE IMPACT MATTERS

18. New building construction has a significant impact on climate change as the production of construction material and the process of construction accounts for approximately one third of CO₂ emissions. A shift towards a low-carbon economy is needed. Repurposing and retrofitting existing buildings will significantly decrease the City's carbon footprint while providing departmental space solutions at a reduced cost.

ALTERNATIVES

19. The following alternatives are available for consideration by General Committee:

Alternative #1 General Committee could choose to not endorse the recommended motions contained in staff report FAC005-22.

This alternative is not recommended. COVID-19 has had a significant impact on work practices at the city and indeed around the world, and staff believe that opportunity exists to retrofit 29 Sperling Drive in a manner that meets city needs while significantly reducing future capital costs.

FINANCIAL

20. Staff will identify capital funding requirements through their investigation and report back to City Council with a complete business and operating plan for the facility, if applicable.

LINKAGE TO 2018–2022 STRATEGIC PLAN

21. The recommendation(s) included in this Staff Report support the following goals identified in the 2018-2022 Strategic Plan:
 - Growing Our Economy
22. The recommendations included in this Staff Report support Growing Our Economy as additional space to accommodate staff growth at the City of Barrie is required. Net new construction costs are at an all-time high. Renovating an existing asset is the most economical solution to support our growing economy.