

Town looking at uses for Belfountain Hall

By Bill Rea

There are a number of possibilities for Belfountain Community Hall, and the Town is working on them.

Town council has approved spending \$216,000 on minimal required maintenance on the 122-year-old structure, although more needs to be done.

The hall is at 17204 Old Main St. in Belfountain, and was built by the community in 1893, according to the staff report that went to council. It has always served as a meeting place for the hamlet. The land was acquired from the Belfountain Methodist Church. The building was raised in 1932, a foundation was installed under it and electricity was put in. The report stated this was all done with local labour. A rear addition was put on in 1956, and that included a kitchen and washroom facilities.

It was deeded to the municipality in 1973.

The report also pointed out that while there are structural deficiencies, the building has served the community well over the years. In 2013, some needed work on the building was identified, including a septic system upgrade and roof replacement, and as Town staff looked into design options and cost estimates, it became apparent that there were other deficiencies, prompting them to start a comprehensive review of the facility.

The problems include issues with the foundation, the concrete steps at the entrance need to be replaced, damage to the roof trusses deterioration of window seals, etc. There are also issues regarding lack of parking at the site, accessibility, potable water, needed electrical upgrades and fire protection. Addressing all the needs will cost in excess of \$844,000, according to the staff report.

There are also discussions about future uses for the hall. The report stated there has been talk of the community taking it on. That would make the facility eligible for Trillium grants. As well, Caledon OPP has expressed interest in using it as a satellite office on the west side of town.

Staff recommended the minimum maintenance work be carried out as an interim measure.

Councillor Nick deBoer pointed out this is another case of an old building owned by the Town that needs expensive work. He suggested setting up line items at budget time to allow for these expenses.

Town CAO Doug Barnes said that would be a good topic to discuss at budget time. He also said if the municipality is interested in establishing community hubs, it has to consider what buildings are available, and which ones might be surplus.

Councillor Doug Beffort said each village and hamlet has to be considered on its own merits. He said the hall in Belfountain is the only place where people in the community can meet, apart from the school. He also said the interest being shown by OPP is tremendous, both for the hamlet and the Forks of the Credit area.

But he also said they need time to determine what to do with the building.

This is a perfect example of engaging your community, Councillor Barb Shaughnessy commented.

Councillor Johanna Downey said she supports the idea of maintaining facilities on the west side of town. She said visitor centres are needed, with facilities like washrooms, to handle the crowds who visit the area to view the fall colours, etc.

Councillor Annette Groves was enthused about the police using the hall. She said they have a satellite facility at the Caledon Centre for Recreation and Wellness in Bolton, and it works well.