

New lighting is 'missing link' in Aurora Promenade

By Brock Weir

Things could soon be a little bit brighter for drivers along Wellington Street.

Council is set to approve this week a new lighting scheme which would replace and increase lighting on one of Aurora's busiest streets from Mary Street in the east to just past the Aurora GO Station.

The project got approval at committee level last week with Councillors opting to go a more expensive route than providing basic lighting, but going with a decorative option clocking in at \$366,000.

The simpler option would have come in at approximately \$116,000 and entailed the minimum of what would be required in the area. This includes using already existing utility poles and attaching lighting, but would be out of place compared to adjacent fixtures.

These fixtures would come under the 'decorative' header and match the 'heritage' features outlined in the municipal plan for the 'Aurora Promenade.'

Both options would be funded out of reserve accounts, both of which are currently in the red, waiting to be replenished from the influx of funds expected when ground breaks on the new 2C developments on the east side of Town.

'Although the reserve fund will be even more in the negative position for a while I think we need to do the more expensive option,' said Councillor Wendy Gaertner. 'It makes sense with respect to what we're trying to achieve in the Promenade Plan and the Official Plan. It is also a safety issue and although I sincerely don't like to hear myself say we should put a reserve account in a more negative position, I think in this case it needs to be done.'

Councillor Chris Ballard was also supportive of the idea, arguing it was an investment in Aurora's downtown.

'This is all about creating the right streetscape and the right vision to make the right impression of our downtown core,' he said. 'This is one of our entry ways and it is imperative that we go ahead and do it.'

Councillor Evelyn Buck, however, said she wasn't so 'enthusiastic' about moving forward with the decorative option. She said it is the responsibility of the Town to ensure that street lighting is up to snuff for everyone but with the use of development charge reserve funds it is the residents of tomorrow paying for the infrastructure of today.

'Why should they have to pay for ornamental lighting on Wellington Street?' she asked. 'I don't know what decorative lighting has to do with a new homeowner coming to live in Aurora and why they should have to pay for that. The normal standard of lighting [should] be enough to light the road.'

I do agree that there should be better lighting in that location than there is in some subdivision by-waters, but 'the whole burden is on the new homeowners and I don't know why they should have to deal with this burden for the lighting, which is a choice, it is not something we have to do. We can provide adequate lighting at a far lesser cost.'

According to Ilmar Simanovskis, Aurora's Director of Infrastructure, once this project is completed, it will be the missing link in creating the promenade streetscape 'atmosphere' and uniting it with similar features in the area 'moving towards a common goal.'

'Lighting improvements along Wellington Street have occurred primarily due to planned coordination with development activities along significant portions from Mary Street to Leslie Street,' said Mr. Simanovskis in his report to Council. 'These improvements were substantially driven by the development activities and completed to coincide with increased traffic and pedestrian activity along this corridor.'

'This section of Wellington was excluded from the scope of the previous lighting projects as it was deemed to be removed from the

primary growth areas. Recent development approvals have resulted in a number of vacant and underdeveloped properties being redeveloped along this section and there is now a need to complete the lighting to meet the same standard as other sections of Wellington.?