

## Pedestrian crossing for seniors comes in over budget

By Brock Weir

Safer crossings on an increasingly busy section of John West Way are expected to take one step closer to becoming a reality this week.

Councillors are set to approve the installation of new pedestrian signals on the heavily traffic collector road at its intersection with Hollandview Trail. The intent is to make things safer for residents of the established townhome area, as well as the two existing condominium and seniors residences, and a third condo building currently under construction.

Following tentative approval at last week's General Committee meeting, if the project proceeds as recommended, the pedestrian signals and their installation will clock in at just under \$94,700, nearly \$21,000 over previously approved funds.

Residents in the area have expressed safety concerns in crossing John West Way to access Civic Square Park and shopping areas beyond the park, said Ilmar Simanovskis, Director of Infrastructure, in a report to Council. The traffic signals only control traffic on John West Way and only stop traffic (display a red light) when activated by a pedestrian.

Included in the project are two traffic signals with countdown displays, pavement markings, additional street lighting, and audible signals for those who need them.

Of the more than \$21,000 additional funds needed to complete the project, \$12,200 is attributed to connecting to a power supply 125 metres from the location, and the balance to building ramps in the sidewalks outside of any previously scheduled sidewalk improvement projects in the area.

Although Councillors approved the project at the committee level last week, they questioned whether this increase in cost would be necessary since a building on one of the intersection's four corners is still under construction.

I am not arguing against putting in a signalized intersection, but I do have a question of whether or not it needs to be done now, said Councillor Evelyn Buck. These buildings were all understood to be retirement buildings. John West Way is known as a busy collector and getting busier with all the additional developments. When their site plan was approved, why weren't the developers required to put in that facility they should have known their residents would need? Why didn't they give us money for it and have it included in the site plan?

In response, Councillor Paul Pirri who chaired last week's meeting, argued that because the funds for this project are coming out of Development Charges that the developers indeed were paying for it. Marco Ramunno, Aurora's Director of Planning, said nothing of this nature was included as specific conditions in their development plans.

Mr. Simanovskis added, however, that when the building still under construction was up for approval, a debate was had on whether they should request a signalized intersection, but traffic studies were carried out and they missed the mark to warrant one. We didn't feel we would have a sufficient argument, he said.

Councillor Buck, however, pressed on in her arguments, questioning whether money could be saved by including this in next year's budget and including sidewalk modifications, as well as whether closer sources of power could be found to cut the cost, such as power from a nearby light pole or tapped into one of the buildings for which this is being built.

This is a piece of public infrastructure that needs to be provided for through a public infrastructure connection, said Mr. Simanovskis, noting power from a streetlight would not be enough to do the job. To tie it into a private service connection is not appropriate and it is not something I would recommend. It would take us from having control of that power supply and it would also hamper the operation of the intersection because now we would be relying upon a private connection to that power.

Other Council members were in favour of going forward with the larger budget.

?Council decided to put this in because pedestrian traffic is only going to increase in that area,? said Mayor Geoffrey Dawe. ?I do support the increase.?

Councillor Wendy Gaertner said she agreed.

?I am very sorry it has come in over budget, but we're talking about safety, which is why we made our original decision. I think tax dollars or DCs that are spent in the name of safety are well spent.?