



**ENGINEERING SERVICES**

**Town of Newmarket**

395 Mulock Drive

P.O. Box 328, STN Main

Newmarket, ON L3Y 4X7

www.newmarket.ca

engineering@newmarket.ca

T: 905 895.5193

F: 905 953 5138

**April 27, 2015**

**DEVELOPMENT & INFRASTRUCTURE SERVICES  
ENGINEERING SERVICES 2015-31**

TO: Committee of the Whole

SUBJECT: William Stickwood House (Fernbank Farmhouse) – Update

ORIGIN: Director, Engineering Services

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**RECOMMENDATIONS**

**THAT Development and Infrastructure Services Report – ES2015-31, dated April 27, 2015 entitled “William Stickwood House (Fernbank Farmhouse) – Update” be received and the following recommendations be adopted:**

- 1. THAT Council not pursue a rental agreement with a potential community-based lease client due to the extensive renovations that would be required to accommodate this particular client and the capital costs associated with those renovations;**
- 2. AND THAT the potential community-based lease client be advised of Council’s decision as soon as possible;**
- 3. AND THAT Staff consider recommendations for the short-term and long-term use of the William Stickwood house and property as part of a long-term Facility Accommodation Plan being undertaken for the Town’s Strategic Properties;**
- 4. AND THAT staff will come forward with a future amended capital budget request for the William Stickwood House consistent with the long-term plan as determined through the Accommodation Plan;**
- 5. AND THAT the existing residence continue to be occupied by a residential tenant to maintain the security and integrity of the property.**

## **PURPOSE**

The purpose of this report is to provide an update to Council on the William Stickwood House (Fernbank Farmhouse). This report provides a brief history of Council direction to staff as well as an update on the current status of the project and a recommendation from Staff regarding how to proceed.

## **BACKGROUND**

The William Stickwood House (also known as Fernbank Farms and The Stickwood Walker Farm) was built in 1885 as an upgrade to the 1830 Bogart family home. In June 1998, the house received a Municipal Heritage Designation under the Ontario Heritage Act. This designation provides public recognition and promotes awareness of heritage properties. It also provides a process for ensuring that changes to a heritage property are appropriately managed and that these changes respect the property's heritage value. This includes protection from demolition.

Character-defining elements listed in the heritage designation which illustrate the heritage value of the William Stickwood house include:

- Representation of the Stickwood family and their importance in the development of Newmarket as the only local brick manufacturer
- Gothic Revival design, with a "T"-shaped floor plan and a cross-gable roof
- Construction consisting of grey/white brick that was manufactured by William Stickwood
- A four bay front façade with central gable
- Fenestration (windows) consisting of two-over-two, double hung sash with brick arches and louvered shutters
- Single storey veranda enclosing the principal entrance
- Stone rubble foundation
- One grey/white brick chimney located on the east side of the brick structure

Any change to these features requires the approval of the Newmarket Heritage Advisory Committee.

In January 2003 the Town of Newmarket purchased the property and entered into an agreement to preserve the property's rich heritage. As part of the agreement to purchase, the Town of Newmarket agreed to restrict the use of the house and outbuildings to either a heritage museum and/or a historical/agricultural interpretive centre for educational purposes or other similar or recreational public use for a period of 20 years. This agreement expires in January 2023, at which time the Town may alter the potential use of the home and property.

In 2008, Council approved a budget of \$450,000 to undertake renovations to the main house. In 2010, a building assessment was conducted, which concluded that there was insufficient budget for the amount of work required. Therefore, the Town proceeded to conduct only minimal work in order to maintain the building at a reasonable standard until such time as Council would decide on an appropriate use for the house.



In March 2013, Community Services Report 2013-05 was adopted as follows:

**THAT Recreation & Culture, Public Works Services, Engineering Services, Planning and Building Joint Report 2013 - 05 dated March 5, 2013 regarding the Future Use of the Fernbank Farmhouse be received and the following recommendations be adopted:**

- 1. THAT staff be authorized to issue a request for proposals with the intent of securing a suitable charitable and/or not for profit organization dedicated to serving Newmarket for use of the Fernbank Farmhouse;**
- 2. AND THAT staff report back recommending a tenant along with operating and capital projections.**

In November 2013, an information report by the Commissioner of Development Infrastructure Services (Information Report 2013-59) provided an update to Council regarding a Request for Proposals (RFP) to secure a suitable charitable and/or not for profit organization dedicated to serving Newmarket for use of the Fernbank Farmhouse who could assume the property effective January 1, 2015. Only one proposal was received. This proposal met all required criteria.

In preparation for moving ahead, the Commissioner of Development & Infrastructure Services provided a confidential information report (D&IS Commissioner Report 2014-27) in which he recommended that staff undertake a due diligence exercise to quantify the investment required to renovate and modify the facility to meet the needs of the potential community-based lease client. In keeping with this report, Staff retained the services of a qualified heritage architect (Lynch + Comisso Architecture) to provide information on the required renovations, as well as a cost estimate for the works.

## **CURRENT PROJECT UPDATE - WILLIAM STICKWOOD HOUSE AND OUT BUILDINGS**

To gather the information necessary to make an informed decision, staff divided the RFP for the heritage architect into the following two phases:

**Phase 1** - review all background materials, meet with potential community-based lease client and Town staff to determine the extent of required renovations with the intent of establishing a construction cost estimate. This phase would include:

- Pre-design services to assist the Town in analyzing the feasibility of the renovations
- Advice on measures to assist the Town in aligning the project requirements within the proposed budget
- A cost estimate (based upon a comprehensive list of project requirements (i.e. scope) and assumptions)
- A tentative Project Schedule

**Phase 2** - the detailed design and construction administration of the project and the calling of tenders for a contractor to conduct the renovation works. This phase would include:

- Complete schematic designs
- Complete design development
- Production of construction documents
- Assisting the Town through the Bidding/Negotiation of a Construction Contract
- Contract administration during the works

A report dated August 10, 2014, entitled “Fernbank Farmhouse Feasibility Report” was received from Lynch + Comisso Architecture, outlining the findings of Phase 1. The report was completed in consultation with the potential community-based lease client, the Newmarket Heritage Advisory Committee and Town staff. None of the works in Phase 2 have been undertaken to date.

During the course of Phase 1, it was discovered that the existing building poses significant challenges in terms of accessibility required by the potential community-based lease client. Firstly, there are many elevation changes on the ground floor, requiring a new floor or a series of ramps to be constructed to allow for wheelchairs and other assistive devices. Also, corridors would have to be widened and doors relocated to meet accessibility requirements. Additional accessible washroom facilities would also be required to accommodate this potential community-based lease client. The accessibility requirements would add significantly to the cost of the renovations.

Based on extensive investigations, including test pits to assess the depth of the existing foundations, as-built drawings were completed and two viable preliminary design concepts were costed out:

**Concept A:** Alteration of the main house, leaving the existing tail wing “as is” (see photo in Attachment 1) – Estimated investment required of **\$670,000** (including contingency and 10% architectural fees)

**Concept B:** Alteration of the main house and enhancing the “tail wing” as a multipurpose space – Estimated investment required **\$762,000** (including contingency and 10% architectural fees)

The architect’s cost estimates also include the following improvements:

- Improving access to the building and making the ground floor barrier-free;
- Expanding HVAC systems to eliminate reliance on the wood fired stove;
- Stabilizing the existing wood structure;
- Modifying the wooden portions of the structure to make them habitable;
- Waterproofing the foundation;
- Upgrading the mechanical and electrical systems;
- Enhancing the garage and the garden shed to increase their utility.



## **ADDITIONAL CONSIDERATIONS**

Staff has been in constant communication with the potential community-based lease client. Although the client has expressed its interest in an agreement to occupy the grounds if the renovations can be done to the required accessibility requirements, they insist that nothing is binding on either party at this time. If the Town was to go ahead with the potential community-based lease client's proposal, the client would still have to bring the matter back to its Property Committee for approval before being able to move ahead, so there is some uncertainty in whether or not an agreement could be executed. Timing is of concern and the potential community-based lease client is interested in pursuing other properties as well. The sooner the Town can provide a definite response on whether it wishes to move ahead with the potential community-based lease client's proposal or not, the sooner the client can move on to pursue other options.

## **CONSULTATION**

The Fernbank Farmhouse Feasibility Study involved a great deal of consultation with internal departments and external groups, including Procurement, Legal Services, Public Works, Facility Staff, Finance, the Newmarket Heritage Advisory Committee and the potential community-based lease client.

## **BUSINESS PLAN AND STRATEGIC PLAN LINKAGES**

Well Equipped and Managed

- ensuring that capital assets retain their value and are managed/funded accordingly to sustainable, lifecycle based principles and practices

Well-respected

- Strive to be respected and valued for our exceptional judgment and innovative programs and services while striving to preserve our heritage and environment.

## **HUMAN RESOURCE CONSIDERATIONS**

No impact to current staffing levels.

## **IMPACT ON BUDGET**

### **Operating**

In its proposal to the Town, the potential community-based lease client offered a monthly rental payment of \$1,500 excluding utilities (or \$18,000, annually) over 10 years. Annual rent increases would follow an escalation clause that is based on the Consumer Price Index.

The 2015 operating budget for the property is \$10,250. If this project moves ahead, additional revenue and subsequent cost avoidance associated with utilities is anticipated to have a favourable net operating impact of approximately \$7,750 for 2016, assuming no capital repayment is necessary.

In the meantime, staff is in the process of renewing a residential twelve month lease agreement complete with a payment schedule along with associated valuation being attributed for ensuring the historical residence is protected through an ongoing presence at the house. If Council chooses to not proceed with the proposal from the potential community-based lease client, it is recommended that the Town extend the existing residential tenant's lease agreement to ensure a rental income and the continued protection of the property.

If Council wishes to proceed with the proposal from the potential community-based lease client, Staff recommends that the agreement be structured similar to our existing lease with the Chamber of Commerce, whereby the Town would be responsible for building maintenance associated with the building envelope.

### Capital Budget

Considerable time has passed since the original budget of \$450,000 for the renovation of the Stickwood Walker Farmhouse was approved by Council in 2008. A building condition assessment from 2010 identified needs of \$575,000 to maintain the building, which is now 5 years old. Since then, the cost of construction materials and services has escalated. A request was being made as part of the 2015 budget exercise for an additional \$250,000, but this budget request was deferred for consideration until 2016, pending Council's decision as to whether to proceed with the proposal from the potential community-based lease client or not.

It is important to note that, in April 2006, the barn located on the parcel of land was destroyed by fire. A claim was processed through the Town's insurer and a settlement was received in the amount of \$ 250,049. The funds were set aside into a designated capital reserve for the purpose of rebuilding the barn. These funds can be re-appropriated for other purposes as deemed appropriate by Council at a later time.

### CONTACT

For more information on this report, please contact Rachel Prudhomme at 905-953-5300 extension 2501; [rprudhomme@newmarket.ca](mailto:rprudhomme@newmarket.ca).

Prepared by:



R. Prudhomme, M.Sc., P.Eng.  
Director, Engineering Services



P. Noehammer, MBA, P.Eng.  
Commissioner, Development & Infrastructure Services



**Attachment 1**

