

Wollaston council special meeting held for fire hall

By **Kristena Schutt-Moore**

On Friday, Nov. 25, at 1 p.m. the Wollaston council held a special meeting of council. Mayor Micheal Fuerth started the meeting addressing the curiosity of many people saying that the council had two special meetings within a 10 days of inauguration to talk about the Wollaston Fire Hall Contract. ?Once we had the drawings for the fire hall we discovered that the fire hall is approximately 5,200 square feet, that's footprint, and the cost is \$3,000,000. Works up to be about \$600 a square foot. Our neighbours in the Township of Madoc, I stopped there on Monday, they put up a fire hall that is 900 square feet larger than this, 6,080 square feet for \$1.2 million. Less than \$200 a square foot. And any research that I've seen, this isn't exactly a taj mahal fire hall. In major cities where they're building fire halls with sleeping quarters, kitchen, exercise rooms, recreational rooms, they are less than \$400 a square foot, they are in the \$375 range. This fire hall here should be less than \$300 a square foot. So that's why we are having these meetings.?He continued on to say that the council was hoping that legal would be in attendance at the meeting. He said that they did have a very good contract that is in favour of the owner, which is the township, but that they need to take costs out of the building. Fuerth explained that he has been trying to get a breakdown of the costs that are going into the fire hall, ?and I have failed, I could not get that information.?The second item the council discussed was the resignation of the office assistant Jenn Peplinski and how the position should be filled again. Deputy Mayor Paul Ordanis said that instead of just filling the position, that the council may like to have staff bring forward some options on how efficiency of the office can be increased, and possibly look at neighbouring townships and what level of service that they provide and the variables that could be brought forward into Wollaston township and have staff bring forward a report and recommendations at a future meeting. Councillors Sheila Currie and JD Fentie agreed on the idea of having a review done on what staff do. Currie commented on how they had a job description for the office assistant but not one for the clerk/CEO, so it would be nice to know exactly what everyone did and mitigate overlaps. Fentie did not do a full scale human resources review with an outside consultant, but said that having the staff do a review would be helpful. Council voted to have a report brought back for a future meeting. In the meantime they will be looking to hire a contract person for six months to fill the office assistant position.

The third motion discussed was that council directs the clerk to contact Greenview Environmental and Beacon Construction to request that they provide the stipulated contract price as per the CCDC contract for the fire hall. Ordanis said that they need to break down the cost of the fire hall in any way that they could to help understand where the costs were coming from, and then they could go on from there. Fentie suggested that it would be possible to put a stop work order in place until the contractor provides a stipulated contract price. Currently the fire hall is to be slated by August 2023. The clerk, Bernice Crocker, was asked to get hold of the township's legal council to set up a meeting with council to discuss what a stop work order implications might be and how they can get the stipulated contract price. Such a meeting will most likely be a closed session meeting.