

## Staff Report

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**Report To:** Corporate Services Committee  
**Report From:** Bradey Carbert, Manager of Corporate Services  
**Meeting Date:** November 14, 2024  
**Report Code:** CR-24-121  
**Subject:** Owen Sound Fire Station Expansion and Renovation Pre-design Study

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### Recommendations:

THAT in consideration of Staff Report CR-24-121 respecting Owen Sound Fire Station Expansion and Renovation Pre-design Study, the Corporate Services Committee recommends that City Council direct staff to include the construction component of the Owen Sound Fire Station Renovation and Expansion project in the 2025-2029 Multi-year Capital Plan update.

### Highlights:

- The Owen Sound Fire Station is over 50 years old and needs capital investment.
- A pre-design study has been completed and is recommending a renovation and expansion of the existing facility at a 2024 project value of approximately \$5.7 Million, of which \$613,000 has been funded through previous budgets.
- If the construction component of the project is approved, staff are anticipating construction to commence in the spring of 2026.

### Strategic Plan Alignment:

This report supports the delivery of Core Service.

## **Climate and Environmental Implications:**

There are no anticipated climate or environmental impacts at this time. The City will provide the architect with its Climate Adaptation and Mitigation Plans for consideration during the project's design stage. However, this building is not anticipated to be a strong candidate for net-zero construction.

## **Previous Report/Authority:**

[Report CR-24-040 - Owen Sound Fire Building Condition Assessment and Pre-Design Study](#) approved the scope of work for this project.

## **Background:**

### **Owen Sound Fire Station's Aging Infrastructure in Need of Significant Renewal**

The Owen Sound Fire Station was constructed in 1973 and is home to the City's fire apparatus, suppression operations, and administrative functions. Both Council and staff have acknowledged that the Fire Station needs significant renewal as many of the original building components have exceeded their recommended useful life. Repairs to the roof, garage doors, and HVAC equipment over the past five years have been in response to the failure of components and have been completed in a like-for-like fashion to maintain services. The 2023 Building Condition Assessment report identified needs of \$2,473,446 over the next five years. These needs are reflected in the City's multi-year capital plan, with funding being allocated to building envelope-related projects due to the significant funding gap between the available funds and the required funds. Other projects have been deferred until the future status of the facility has been confirmed.

### **Accessibility and Compliance Shortcomings Identified in Current Fire Station Design**

In addition to the capital needs of the facility components in their current format, both Council and staff acknowledge that the building lacks compliance with current accessible design standards, diversity, equity, and inclusion (DEI) standards, and many of the current National Fire Protection

Association standards for facility design, particularly around decontamination of fire equipment and firefighters.

### **Fire Staff Cite Inadequate Facilities and Training Spaces as Key Concerns**

Concerns raised by current and previous fire staff include inadequate bunker gear and equipment storage, lack of gender-neutral or female-only change rooms, washrooms and dormitory space, no decontamination space, and insufficient training space. These concerns include aged mechanical and electrical infrastructure, building envelope deterioration and lack of insulation, and no accessible customer service area.

The City retained Whiteline Architects Inc. to proceed towards the development of a pre-design study for the renovation and possible expansion of the facility and included the following scope of work:

1. Review background information, including previous building assessments and preliminary design work, and interview fire staff to confirm programming needs.
2. Complete a site analysis, including a review of zoning, site-servicing and operational requirements.
3. Prepare a conceptual design incorporating programming needs, expansion footprint, and other lifecycle improvements.
4. Prepare a Class D Cost Estimate.
5. Prepare a pre-design report summarizing all work completed.

### **Architects Tasked with Pre-Design Study for Station Renovation and Expansion**

Whiteline Architects Inc. was supported by an internal project team that included Fire Services, Corporate Services, Planning and Heritage, and Building division staff to engage these groups, typically consulted during the detailed design stage. The early inclusion of this group allowed for a more collaborative approach rather than a compliance-based approach and will result in a more efficient detailed design process.

### **Proposed Solution Recommends 30% Renovation and 4,000 ft<sup>2</sup> Expansion for Essential Upgrades**

Whiteline Architects Inc. has provided the City with a Pre-design Study that recommends a renovation of approximately 30% of the existing 11,662 ft<sup>2</sup>

facility to address end-of-life building components and to meet current design, diversity, equity, and inclusion standards or best practices. The recommended option also includes the addition of approximately 4,000 ft<sup>2</sup> to address the need for additional apparatus and equipment storage and decontamination space, as well as to allow for adequate training space, addressing the concerns raised by fire staff.

### **Expansion Plans Include Training Room and Living Quarters, Avoiding Elevator Costs**

The 4,000 ft<sup>2</sup> expansion includes the expansion of the administrative/living quarters of the fire station on both the main and upper level of the building. The second-floor expansion consists of the addition of a new training room. In consultation with the City's Building Division, the second-floor addition will not require the installation of an elevator as this space will be limited to fire staff only. Removing the need for an elevator has significantly reduced anticipated construction costs. The addition also allows for the entrance of the facility to be relocated to the back of the building to allow for accessible entrance to the building to address the lack of accessibility associated with the steep grade between the existing front entrance and 3<sup>rd</sup> Ave. E. The additional space can also accommodate the return of the City's 1923 Antique Fire Truck from Grey Roots, allowing this piece of City history to be shared with firefighters and visitors.

The Architect estimates that the construction period for this project will be approximately twelve months and believes there will be potential for fire operations to remain in the building for some of this period. An allowance has been included in the construction cost estimate for the temporary relocation of fire staff and equipment, which will be finalized during the design component of the project.

Based on known rehabilitation needs and cost-per-square-foot, the Class "D" cost of the proposed option for the design, construction, and outfitting of the renovation and expansion of the existing fire station is \$5.7 Million. The financial implications of the proposed project budget are further defined in the Financial Implications section of the report below.

### **Analysis:**

As identified in Report CR-24-040 - Owen Sound Fire Building Condition Assessment and Pre-Design Study, the process of considering the need for

the fire station to be renovated or expanded commenced in 2020. There has been turnover in both the Fire Services and Corporate Services teams since this time, which has delayed the finalization of the needs for the facility. Both Council and Senior Leadership have been able to tour the site to view its current condition. They are now being provided with detailed information to address the current concerns and establish the facility's future needs.

In addition to the pre-design report for the renovation and expansion of the current facility, Corporate and Fire Services staff have completed an in-house review of other considerations to provide Committee and Council with additional information to support the recommendation to proceed to detailed design for this project.

### **Facility & Location Rationalization**

Fire services staff have reviewed existing calls for service information to confirm the City's need to maintain its current location within its boundaries. With the exception of being located directly adjacent to the 10<sup>th</sup> Street Bridge, no other location in the City's core would provide a more consistent response time.

By recommending the renovation and expansion of the existing facility, the City will avoid the cost of acquiring and servicing a new location within the City's core. The relocation outside of the City's core would not allow Fire Services to maintain their current response times.

The City also consulted with Grey County Paramedic Services to discuss the long-term facility needs of their facility next to the fire station as a potential expansion opportunity. Grey County confirmed that they recently completed an analysis of their paramedic stations and that no recommended changes were made to their Owen Sound location. This eliminates the potential for acquisition or joint expansion between both parties.

Staff also considered the potential for a joint facility to be shared by Owen Sound Police Services and Fire Services, recognizing that the Police Station facility also requires significant capital investment. Similar to the location concerns identified for the relocation of the existing fire station to another location in the downtown core not being available, the cost of a joint facility would be more than \$30 Million before debt servicing costs and cannot be absorbed into the City's Multi-year Financial Plan or Annual Repayment Limits for Debt in the short or medium term. Potential funding sources could include an external design, build, finance, and maintain the partnership.

However, the City does not include this option as the facility needs a capital investment strategy at this time.

### **Construction and Operations Considerations**

As identified above, the Architect believes that construction can be staged to allow operations to remain at the existing fire station for some of the projects to minimize impact on the Grey County Paramedic Station. An allowance of \$40,000 has been included in the report to address the potential costs of relocating some or all the fire services operations during some periods of the project. Fire services staff will review opportunities for relocation during the design component of the project so that the scheduling requirements can be included in the construction Tender.

In addition, and subject to construction in 2026, the Fire Station renovation and expansion project could be completed at the same time as the renovation of the former courthouse and jail property. The combined timing of this project will minimize the disruption in the neighbourhood surrounding the facility.

Likewise, proceeding to complete a full-scale renovation and expansion through one construction project rather than through a series of smaller projects will result in economies of scale, allow for consideration of alternative solutions, and reduce the impact on operations.

### **Design and Construction Schedule**

Subject to Council approval of the proposed budget for the construction component of this project, staff are proposing that detailed design be completed during 2025, construction commence in late spring 2026, and it be substantially completed by the end of 2027.

### **Financial Implications:**

The recommended solution in the Fire Station renovation and expansion pre-design is valued at approximately \$5.7 Million. This is based on a Class "D" High-Level Estimate based on the values extracted from the previous building condition assessments, the cost per square foot for an addition to the facility, and the estimation of engineering, contingency, and other non-construction costs.

\$228,000 of the work proposed to be completed through the project, such as floor resurfacing and window, door, and exterior siding replacement, has

already been included in previous or current multi-year capital plans. Still, it has been deferred until the future of this facility has been confirmed. Likewise, \$400,000 has been approved for architectural services, with the caveat that it would be allocated towards building condition assessment recommended projects if the renovation and expansion project does not proceed. The breakout of construction-related items and available funding is as follows:

<b>Item</b>	<b>Cost</b>	<b>Funded</b>	<b>Difference</b>
Demolition	\$260,000.00		\$260,000.00
Site Works	\$153,000.00		\$153,000.00
Addition	\$1,600,000.00		\$1,600,000.00
Exterior Renovation	\$441,000.00	\$200,000.00	\$241,000.00
Interior Renovation	\$2,071,500.00	\$28,000.00	\$2,043,500.00
General Conditions	\$240,000.00		\$240,000.00
FF&E	\$100,000.00		\$100,000.00
Temporary Relocation	\$40,000.00		\$40,000.00
Architecture	\$380,000.00	\$385,000.00	(\$5,000.00)
Inspections	\$30,000.00		
Permits	\$18,000.00		\$18,000.00
Contingency Allowance	\$358,500.00		\$358,500.00
<b>Total</b>	<b>\$5,692,000.00</b>	<b>\$613,000.00</b>	<b>\$5,079,000.00</b>

The difference between the estimated project cost and the previously funded projects is \$5,079,000.

The City has not been contributing to a Reserve Fund to renovate or expand the current facility. The annual contributions to the Fire Station Reserve Fund have generally been used towards the pay-as-you-go approach to funding annual capital needs, and there is no surplus available in this Reserve Fund. In addition, the City's 2025-2029 Multi-year Capital Plan does not include surplus funding that can be allocated to this project without cancelling other non-fire-related projects.

In addition to this, staff are not currently aware of any external grant funding opportunities for this type of renovation. Other municipalities have successfully obtained funding through the Federation of Canadian Municipalities Green Municipal Fund, but staff do not believe that the proposed renovation of this facility will meet the required targets without the building transitioning to a net-zero facility. Staff do not believe this facility can be transitioned to a net-zero facility without incurring significant costs

that may not provide the required return on investment. The City will investigate this funding for other facilities within its portfolio. Additionally, the City is eligible to use its Canada Community Benefit Fund allocation towards constructing this facility. However, this will mean that this annual funding of approximately \$700,000 will be removed from the annual road rehabilitation program, effectively terminating that program due to a lack of other funding sources.

Taking construction-related inflation and the timeline until the project is completed into consideration, staff are proactively forecasting or allotting \$5,400,000, which will need to be financed through external debt over a 10-year period. This will ensure that this amount is considered in the City's debt planning activities.

The annual cost for the 10-year period will be approximately \$677,160, and at the end of this period, the total cost of financing will be \$6,771,600, with \$1,371,600 representing financing interest costs.

Staff believe that the total projected costs of \$6,771,600 represent a better mid-to-long-term return on investment for the City, as the anticipated use of the renovated facility will be at least 25 years.

### **Communication Strategy:**

External communication is not anticipated at this stage of the project. However, if the project proceeds to the construction phase, an external communication plan will be developed.

### **Consultation:**

The internal project team included the Fire Chief, Chief Building Official, Deputy Chief Building Official, Senior Planner and the Manager of Corporate Services. City firefighters and officers were involved through the Fire Chief. External consultation included Grey County Paramedic Services.

### **Attachments:**

Attachment 1 – Owen Sound Fire Station Expansion and Renovation Pre-Design Study Report – November 2024



**Recommended by:**

Kate Allan, Director of Corporate Services  
Bradey Carbert, Manager of Corporate Services  
Phil Eagleson, Fire Chief

**Submission approved by:**

Tim Simmonds, City Manager

For more information on this report, please contact Bradey Carbert, Manager of Corporate Services at [bcarbert@owensound.ca](mailto:bcarbert@owensound.ca) or 519-376-4440 ext. 1240.