

Shelburne Council to make final decision over future of local police force on July 10

Written By MIKE BAKER

The Town of Shelburne has provided official notice of a Special Council Meeting, to take place next Wednesday, July 10, where it is expected the municipality will make a final decision on the long-term future of policing services in the community.

Taking place at Grace Tipling Hall at 6:30 p.m., the meeting will bring an end to one of the most bitterly disputed issues the community has ever seen.

Introduced back in late 2017, Shelburne Council officially requested a costing proposal from the Ontario Provincial Police to take over policing services in the community. The issue wasn't with the 140-plus year old Shelburne Police Service, but instead with its home.

As several members of this current Council have retorted, Shelburne doesn't have a policing issue, it has a police station issue. The current facility, located within Town Hall, no longer meets privacy and safety standards, with either a brand new station, or extensive upgrades to the current site, required if the force is to continue serving the community.

There has been much debate regarding how much a new station would cost, with some reports indicating it could be as high as \$8 million. A more reasonable prediction would be somewhere between \$5 million and \$7 million. Regardless, Shelburne CAO Denyse Morrissey has stated on numerous occasions that the municipality does not possess the debt capacity required to underwrite such an extensive project.

It has been suggested, then, that the Town could afford to invest in the region of \$3 million to upgrade the current facility. In a report provided to Council in early June, Steve Burnett, one of the Town's consultants, gave recommendations for potential improvements to the current policing facility.

Shelburne Police Chief Kent Moore has expressed considerable concern with the proposed plans, which would see Shelburne Police staff and services spread over three floors within Town Hall. Speaking to the Free Press, Mr. Moore noted that while he isn't in favour of the current proposal, he does believe a plan could be put in place to renovate the space that would be within the Town's approximately \$3 million budget.

While the OPP has not provided official numbers to the Town regarding cost of service beyond its three-year transitional contract, it was revealed at a meeting back in March that the average cost for households serviced by the OPP is \$359 per year. In comparison, Shelburne currently pays \$707 per household for its local force.

Should Council vote in favour of adopting the OPP, Shelburne would be policed by the Dufferin detachment, which operates out of Primrose.