

Converted hospital costs under \$80,000 yearly

The Dynes-Grey Apartments, as the converted Shelburne hospital is now officially known, could be fully occupied by mid-2014, and county council next week will be asked to approve a recommendation that 20 of the units would be 'affordable,' and four should be at average market value.

'Affordable' housing is 80% of what the provincial government says the average market is for the area. That figure is expected to rise from the current one in April 2014.

The average market for Shelburne is \$883 monthly for one-bedroom units and \$1,008 for two bedrooms, so the affordable rent would be \$706 for one bedroom and \$806 for two, including utilities.

Based on current rates, a report to the Community Services Committee by Director Keith Palmer estimated that the net costs of operation would be no more than \$81,000 annually, after Development Charges, rental and laundry revenue have been accounted for.

The \$81,000 figure was based on all units being affordable, whereas it would be reduced to \$50,000 if the county opted to have only 10 affordable housing units and 14 market ones.

The committee's option was something of a compromise. The motion by Amaranth Deputy Mayor Walter Kolodziechuk and Warden (Mono mayor) Laura Ryan was for 20 affordable units and four at market.

The county required additional affordable units and secured an \$850,000 grant to provide 10. It is mandated therefore to have at least 10 of the Dynes-Grey units designated as affordable.

According to figures presented to General Government Services Committee Monday, total cost of conversion would be about \$4-million, of which \$850,000 would come from a provincial grant, leaving \$3.15-million to be financed.

The \$4-million cost of converting the former hospital building includes interest on interim financing. That is being covered by the \$850,000 grant and a \$3.35-million, 20-year loan.

The 20-year loan from Infrastructure Ontario bears interest at 3.53 per cent. The annual payment would be \$227,930, included in the operating costs.

The housing units take up all but 3,417 square feet of the building, which has been set aside as a commercial area for, it's hoped, a walk-in medical clinic.

It couldn't be immediately determined how the Veterans group would react to the calculations but its members have had visions of the building's costs overburdening taxpayers.

Their position has been that the building should have been retained as a hospital, and their hopes were that Department of Veterans Affairs would co-operate to create a treatment centre for veterans suffering from post traumatic stress disorder; physiotherapy upstairs and medical clinics downstairs.

Mayor Ed Crewson and Amaranth Deputy Mayor Kolodziechuk had presented the minister of health with the documentation and petitions that called for a restoration of the hospital, but the minister was adamant that there would not be a hospital there. As well, the DVA had not shown an interest.

By Wes Keller

