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Council approved budget increase for park revitalization project

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Shelburne Town Council has approved increasing the budget for the Jack Downing Park revitalization project.

During their meeting on Monday (May 10), Council approved increasing the budget for the Jack Downing Park project to $56,000, up from the original $20,000, and the project was funded through the Town's parks and recreation reserve.

Jack Downing Park, located along Main Street in the downtown core, is named after Shelburne resident John Robert ?Jack? Downing who passed away in 2014 at the age of 93. Downing, in 1998, advocated for the Town to purchase the vacant land where the park now sits in and raised over $86,000 for the parks development. The park officially open in June 2000.

The revitalization project of Jack Downing Park was scheduled for 2020, to mark the 20 year anniversary, but has been delayed due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

?The budget, while modest, was based on the partnership approach we were going to be taking, not only with the donation of products but the donation of labour in working with volunteers to build it,? said CAO Denyse Morrissey. ?Unfortunately COVID has seriously impacted those kinds of approaches particularly the use of volunteers, and as many may know the price of lumber and wood has significantly increased in the last year to the point that a $20,00 budget would not allow us to proceed with the scope park redevelopment we had envisioned.?

Town staff have looked at concept designs for the park, predominately looking at replacing the pavilion which will cost between $25,000 and $35,000. A memorial to commemorate those in the community who have died as the result of COVID-19 is also included in the estimated redevelopment budget ($5,000 to $8,000).

According to the report, the estimated budget for the redevelopment is between $43,000 and $56,000, while the 2021 parks and recreation levy reserve has an estimated balance of $82,152.

Councillor's debated whether to draw on the reserve or raise the funds through local development partners.

?If we are sure on the funding, I'm not sure why we have to wait and can't just draw and replenish,? said Coun. Walter Benotto.

?When I look at this it's two and a half times the original budget, and I think we need to look at what that cost impact is, and take a further set back,? said Coun. Shane Hall.

?There's only $82,000 in that reserve, and if we are going to take it all up in this one park, what happens on other overruns??

Council approved the increase in the park budget to $56,000 and funding through the levy reserve, with the expectation the funding could be replenished through community contributions.

Shelburne's next Council meeting is scheduled for May 31 at 6:30 p.m. The meetings are accessible online by visiting the Town of Shelburne's Youtube Page: https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCsar-MwF8CXrgPbe2EVxh-w/videos