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County mulls name for former hospital

The former Shelburne District Hospital will be getting a new name but it's uncertain whether the name would honour a prominent personality or simply identify where the converted building is located.

The recommendation of county staff was that it should be designated ?301 First Avenue,? which would be consistent with other county properties such as the seniors apartment on Lawrence Avenue and 43 Bythia in Orangeville.

The Community Services Committee agreed with county staff although the committee chair, Shelburne Mayor Ed Crewson, disagreed, and East Garafraxa Mayor Allen Taylor suggested at county council that ?sometimes we have to look beyond the mundane.?

County council last week rejected the recommendation and sent it back to committee for reconsideration.

Mayor Crewson says his preference would be to name the converted hospital ?Dynes Village? in honour of Elmer Dynes who was a major factor in the original construction and who penned a detailed history of the hospital's first quarter-century. He says, for an example, that ?Dynes Village would be consistent with McKelvie Burnside Village at Dufferin Oaks.?

Shelburne Veterans Association, meantime, continues to believe the conversion of the building to residential units is an error. Spokesman Ken Mesure, possibly as a personal opinion, doesn't appear to care what it's called, as long as the word ?Folly? is included.

How did it happen that the hospital has given way to creation of 24 dwelling units under the umbrella of Dufferin Housing Authority?

Mayor Crewson said in an interview he would have preferred that the building remained a medical facility.

He didn't say that the Ministry of Health is regulated from the top down, but did draw a comparison with the military, in which the minister would be ?the general.?

?If I had my druthers; if I were the general, I would (have kept the hospital as a medical centre.? However, he said, long-term care (such as Dufferin Oaks) is the only county responsibility, and the town itself does not have a health-care function.

To review the Shelburne situation, he said that in the early 2000s while the old hospital was still functioning as a hospital but without an emergency facility, there were two physicians practising in what had been the emergency department. It was apparently too cramped. The two doctors didn't get along together there, he said, and finally both left. Dr. Sinajon moved in and Dr. Nadine French wanted to come to Shelburne but, based on prior experience, it wasn't felt the former emergency room would not be a prudent move.

At the time, the hospital was still functioning as the Headwaters Shelburne campus. The Centre Dufferin search committee could not convert another part of the building to a medical office. So Dr. French was given space in the Brian Wing of Dufferin Oaks (now the Mel Lloyd Centre).

Had the county owned the hospital building at the time, it is likely that it would have obtained funding for creation of medical offices there.

In about 2004, an application was made to the province for funding to convert a part of Mel Lloyd into a medical office. After about six months, then-minister George Smitherman announced funding of $700,000.

That led to establishment of the Family Health Team, followed more recently by the direct involvement of Central West LHIN and

the Orangeville Family Health Team and creation of the Shelburne Centre for Health (SCH) along with specialist and after-hours clinics and the Telemedicine Network.

Now the SCH has at least six medical practitioners and more coming. As well, said the mayor, there is talk of a walk-in clinic.

?It's all well and good to say what should have been done. But we have never had six doctors in Shelburne before. They are finally coming. If six are recruited and they're happy, why disrupt them (to move from the Mel Lloyd),? he asked rhetorically.

Nevertheless, the mayor had gone to Ottawa on his own nickel to plead with ?General? Deb Matthews, the current minister of health. He said both he and Amaranth Deputy Mayor Walter Kolodziechuk were there when the minister bluntly stated that there would be no hospital in Shelburne.

By Wes Keller