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Developer seeks extension to use King Museum as sales office

By Angela Gismondi

Genview Homes is looking to continue to use the King Township Museum as a new home sales office for two more years.

A public meeting on the matter was held April 8. The developer submitted an application to the Township of King. If approved, the developer will be allowed to continue to use a portion of the museum building as a sales centre for the residential subdivision, which will be located on the lands beside the museum on the north side of King Road, east of Jane Street.

The Genview plan of subdivision was approved in June 2010 and the developer received a temporary use amendment to use the King Township Museum as a sales centre for 18 months in September of 2011. A number of changes had to be made to the existing building in order to accommodate the housing of a sales centre. The developer proposed the changes would be beneficial to the museum in that the area would be expanded. Once the 18-month contract expired, the developer was expected to move out and the museum would be able to use the new space.

However, a few issues came up through the renovation process which required that more extensive work be done on the building and caused the opening of the sales centre to be delayed.

The previous application to allow for the museum building to be used as a temporary sales office was recommended for approval on the basis that it was to be for an 18-month period ? six months for construction and one year as a sales office, while the developer moved forward with the registration of the plan of subdivision and construction of model homes. Unfortunately, the applicant has still not managed to register the draft plan.

The agreement expired in March, but in February, the developer submitted a request to the Township for an extension of the agreement to use the museum.

Elsa-Ann Pickard, a member of the museum board of management, pointed out that while the museum is grateful for the partnership and the new space, they would like to get back to being a museum.

?One of the things that is difficult is that we have already spent two years inconvenienced by this change,? said Pickard. ?We were for this partnership with Genview and it is beneficial but another two years is a long time.?

One of the biggest issues is the museum cannot access the archives or exhibits. She added the museum has a $425,000 endowment that it would like to use to improve the exhibits.

Mayor Steve Pellegrini was hoping to strike a compromise.

?They had their opening in March so I think one year from that day would be fair,? suggested Pellegrini.

Councillor Debbie Schaefer agreed two years is too long, especially considering the generous endowment.

?They are sitting on this wonderful opportunity do something with this museum,? said Schaefer. ?It would be frustrating to have it be in this state for two more years.?

Councillor Peter Grandilli disagreed. He said the developer is entitled to two more years at the museum.

?I think it's the best thing that ever happened to us to advertise the museum in the last 25 years,? said Grandilli. ?Nobody even knows we have the museum in King Township. These people have been through a hard time getting here and I think they deserve two more years now to be honest with you.?

Councillor Bill Cober pointed out the project was delayed and the township needs to take that into account and make accommodations for that delay.

The application for Genview Homes to continue to use the King Township Museum as a new home sales office was received and referred back to staff.