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Shelburne Curling Club seeks minor variance for new cooling plant

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LOCAL JOURNALISM INITIATIVE REPORTER

The Shelburne Curling Club is seeking a minor variance from the Town of Shelburne council to install a new exterior cooling plant, citing aging infrastructure, rising maintenance costs, and the need to prevent a potential system failure that could disrupt operations.

During a recent council meeting, club representative Rob Scott presented the request on behalf of the club's board, outlining plans to replace the facility's cooling plant, installed around 2006 and now showing signs of deterioration.

The plant, which cost approximately $96,000 at the time of installation, has required increasing repairs in recent years, including an additional $10,000 in maintenance costs in 2025 alone.

Scott told council the existing system is no longer reliable and is becoming increasingly resource-intensive.

?It's also obviously an older or less efficient plant than is available these days. High electrical costs,? he said. ?I think we budget between $40,000 and $50,000 a season for electricity.?

Club officials estimate the current system has only a few years of operational life remaining and warned that a failure would be ?catastrophic? for the facility's ability to operate.

?We think it maybe has about five years left,? Scott said. ?We are again trying to get ahead of a failure that would be catastrophic for the function.?

The club is planning to install a new cooling plant outside the building because it is not feasible to place a replacement in the existing basement space. To accommodate the installation, the club is requesting a minor variance to extend the current property line setback, which is presently five feet from the building.

?The new cooling plant? will be placed outside of the curling club,? Scott said. ?The dimensions required for it? come on the back of a flatbed truck, and they just crane it off and set it on a concrete slab that we'd have to pour. But we need to have three feet of clearance around the cooling plant, so that dictates the 17-foot by 14-foot.?

The proposed location would extend into the laneway between the curling club and the neighbouring fire hall. Club representatives noted that while the installation would use additional space, a 12-foot pathway would remain for access.

Safety measures, including protective fencing and barriers, would also be installed to reflect the new system taking up space previously unused.

Club officials said the new system would provide energy savings of up to $10,000 annually, improve reliability, reduce maintenance costs, and lower the facility's environmental impact.

The Shelburne Curling Club said they have been in discussions with three companies regarding the required work and have identified a price range for the project.

?We have had a couple of interviews with three companies, and their costs range from $225,000 to $300,000,? Scott said. ?We've estimated an additional $25,000 to pour a concrete slab and for electrical hookup to build a protective fence around it, and car barriers? we would need to install bollards too, because it'll be near the road.?

The Shelburne Curling Club operates as a membership-funded organization with approximately 135 adult members and a growing youth program, and representatives indicated they are also pursuing grant funding to support the project. They are also looking for additional local support.

?We are hoping for whatever support we can get from our community as well,? Scott said.

Council members were cautious about but not opposed to the curling club's plan, acknowledging the need to replace the aging ice plant while stopping short of endorsing the specific laneway installation.

Mayor Wade Mills ultimately directed staff to work with the club, the fire chief and planning staff to review access, site constraints, alternatives and long-term implications before deciding whether to support the proposal and any related grant applications.

?I think at this point, connect with staff,? he said. ?Let staff coordinate with the fire chief, have those discussions to make sure that there are no major concerns from their perspective. And then we can come back here.?

The request for the minor variance will proceed through the town's planning process for further review and consideration.