



County of Brant Council Report

To: The Mayor and Members of County of Brant Council
From: Cindy Stevenson, General Manager, Emergency & Protective Services
Darren Watson, Fire Chief
Lindsay Plant, Facilities Project Coordinator
Date: March 25, 2025
Report #: RPT-0125-25
Subject: North Paris Fire Station Project Update
Purpose: For Information and Direction

Recommendation

That Council approve an additional \$215,250 in fees payable to Masri O. Architect for the North Paris Fire Station project, to be funded by Development Charges;

That Council direct staff to proceed with Option 2 as outlined in this report for the final design and construction tender of the North Paris Fire Station;

And that the construction tender results for the North Paris Fire Station be presented to Council for consideration.

Executive Summary

The North Paris Fire Station project has progressed from site selection to approved concept, to detailed design, and pre-qualification of contractors. Prior to the release of the construction tender, a Class B cost estimate was recently provided to staff by the architect. As the Class B estimate has a large increase to the project budget, staff have requested other options from the architect for the County's consideration. This report details three (3) options: 1) Proceed with current approved design; 2) Preserve floorplan of current design with cost savings; 3) New floorplan. In evaluation of the three (3) options, staff are recommending the County proceed with option 2, which provides cost savings, while preserving the current and future functionality of the station as well as conserving the project schedule.

As the scope of the project has expanded from the RFP, the architect has requested additional fees. Staff are of the opinion that additional fees as presented in this report are warranted, based on the increase in building size, additional room functionality, and increase in design complexity for high energy efficiency.

Following direction from Council and prior to release of the tender, staff will continue to evaluate market conditions given ongoing uncertainties with tariffs. Staff have incorporated a larger project contingency at this time to hedge against future unknowns.

Council will be presented with the results of the tender for consideration. An updated financial impact will be included, including refined project budget, funding for the project from Development Charges (DC's) or debt to be repaid by DC's, and impact to the County's Annual Repayment Limit (ARL). Any change to the overall project budget recommendation will be presented for Council's consideration as part of this award.

Strategic Plan Priority

Strategic Priority 3 - Healthy, Safe, and Engaged Citizens

Impacts and Mitigation

Social Impacts

The project supports the growing community and supports community health and well-being. The station will prioritize longevity, efficiency, and safety for County of Brant volunteers, staff and residents.

Environmental Impacts

The location for the new Fire Station lies within a wellhead protection area; therefore, stormwater management is a key aspect for this project. The design and operation of the new station will take into consideration site runoff from potential contaminants to ensure there is no impact to source water.

The North Paris Fire Station will be designed with sustainable features, to meet FCM Green Municipal Fund requirements. The design will be net zero and carbon zero operational. This means that the building is designed and constructed to produce as much renewable energy as it consumes on an annual basis, resulting in a net-zero energy balance. Additionally, "carbon operational" ensures that the facility minimizes or eliminates on-site greenhouse gas emissions through the use of high-efficiency electrification, such as heat pumps, and on-site renewable energy generation with solar PV.

This approach to design supports the County's commitment to green energy, reducing carbon emissions and supporting climate change actions.

Economic Impacts

The Development Charges Background Study includes the North Paris Fire Station as 100% funded by Development Charges.

Council directed staff to apply to the FCM Green Municipal Fund for the project. Funding through this program would be a combination of a loan (up to 80% of eligible project costs) and a grant (up to 15% of the loan amount). If the County is successful in being eligible for this funding, staff will review the loan terms and grant amount to be incorporated into the final funding recommendation. Aside from any grant amount towards this project, all costs will be funded as debt to be recovered from Development Charges.

Council approved a concept design and estimated overall project budget of \$7 million dollars, inclusive of construction costs, architect fees, furniture, and other fees, in September, 2024. The Class B estimate for the approved concept design is \$7,263,874, which includes construction costs only. The Class B estimate is generally expected to be within +/- 10% of construction costs. Staff have been working with the architect to look for cost efficiencies and other options which are outlined throughout this report.

The project architect, Masri O. Architect, was awarded the project in April, 2024, at a fee of \$613,000. Masri O. approached County staff in the fall of 2024, requesting an increase in fees due to the project's increase in overall scale, additional works related to green energy, additional functional area and extended project timeline. Staff have given consideration to the request and provided detail regarding the architect fees in this report.

Report

Background

The Fire Master Plan, 2021, included a recommendation to add a fire station in the northern part of the Paris community. In addition to reducing the response times to the north end of Paris and the County, this station would reduce the call demand on Station 1 for single apparatus responses.

Following Council's approval of the 2022 budget decision package for a new north Paris fire station, a site location was selected for the new station, known as the Gilbert property on Scott Ave., Paris. This is an excellent location for the station, to provide emergency response and improved response times in this area.

The next phase of roadworks on Grand River Street North will include the proposed roundabout at Scott Ave., as well as the extension of Scott Ave., beyond the new Fire Station, all planned for the 2025 construction season. Operations staff are working to coordinate the roadworks with the Fire Station project to maintain contractor site access along with access to the Gilbert Water Facility.

The project Architect was awarded in April 2024, to Masri O Architect. Masri O Architect is completing the conceptual design, detailed design, tender documents, and contract administration and will oversee and advise through all phases of the project including procurement and construction management.

In September 2024, Council approved the North Paris Fire Station concept design, at an updated estimated project cost of \$7 million dollars. Council directed staff to proceed with construction drawings and pre-qualification of contractors for the project.

Analysis

Current Project Design & Project Alternatives

In light of the expected increase in construction costs for the project, the project team has worked with the architect on developing two alternative design options that would reduce costs. The approved concept design is referred to as Option 1, whereas the two new options are considered Option 2 and Option 3, for the purposes of this report.

Option 1

The approved concept design and floor plan is attached to this report as Attachment 1. The concept design includes 9,818 sq ft of ground floor space, and 2,507 sq ft of mezzanine space, for a total of 12,325 sq ft. This design includes truck bay accommodations for appropriate space to house six (6) apparatus, including an aerial size truck. Firefighter health and safety is incorporated as a priority, with a contained area for bunker gear storage, gear extractor, and separate storage of SCBA. Male and female washrooms/change rooms with showers for firefighters are incorporated as well as a universal washroom for public use. The

training room and small kitchenette may be used for fire training and other meetings by the Service. Administrative space provides the Station District Chief and Officers office space. The IT room permits easy access for County IT staff to access servers and IT equipment 24/7. An antique truck display room is situated at the public-facing entrance, intended to house one of the Paris Station's antique trucks. This space will permit retro-fitting of the administration area in the future to accommodate full-time career firefighters. The vestibule is intended to house a Library Kiosk. The mezzanine on the second floor includes storage space, electrical and mechanical rooms for the facility.

The Class B cost estimate, based on the approved concept design, is \$7,254,000 or \$636.65/sq ft. At the time the concept design was approved, the construction cost was estimated at \$5.5 million dollars. As part of the report to Committee in September, the estimated cost per square foot ranged from \$550/sq. ft to \$779/sq. ft. The estimated project budget of \$5.5 million missed the inclusion of square footage and costs attributed to the mezzanine.

A rendering of Option 1 is attached to this report as Attachment 2. The grey shaded area represents the future space for a paramedic base.

Option 2

The concept design for Option 2 is attached to this report as Attachment 3. This option preserves the original floor plan but finds cost savings in removing clerestory framing and windows, removing the firewall for future EMS base, and incorporates a revision to the mechanical system. The estimated construction cost with these modifications is \$7,030,400, or \$617.02/sq ft.

Option 3

The concept design for Option 3 is attached to this report as Attachment 4. This option would require further refinement and recommended consultation with the station members and library staff, if Council directs staff to proceed with this option. The floor plan would be reduced by 1,409 square feet, by removing the antique truck display, one office, and reduce the size of the vestibule intended to house the library kiosk. The library kiosk may not be viable in this option, with further review required to determine if accessibility needs are met as well as operational impacts, given the public and fire station members would use the same entry and exit. The training room/kitchenette area would also be reduced in size. The design changes to find savings in Option 2 are also incorporated into Option 3. The estimated construction cost for this design is \$6,514,000 or \$652.44/sq ft.

This option would result in additional design fees of \$55,000. The additional design fees are required for the architect and sub-trades to update the detailed design package for tender, which would include changes to the original footprint as well as updated specifications to meet the requirements of the new Building Code, which come into effect April 1, 2025.

Evaluation of Options and Updated Estimated Costs

Staff have evaluated each option from a cost and design perspective, detailed in the following chart:

	Option 1 – Current Approved Design	Option 2 – Current Design Floorplan with Updates	Option 3 – New Floorplan
Estimated construction cost	\$7,254,000	\$7,030,244	\$6,514,000
Other estimated project costs (furniture, fixtures, equipment, IT, other)	\$887,000	\$887,000	\$887,000
Architect Fee	\$613,000	\$613,000	\$613,000
Requested Additional Architect Fees	\$215,250	\$215,250	\$270,250
Estimated Project Cost	\$8,969,250	\$8,745,494	\$8,284,250
Additional 10% Construction Contingency (Estimate)	\$725,400	\$703,024	\$651,400
Estimated Project Budget	\$9,694,650	\$9,448,518	\$8,935,650
Design Considerations	-floor plan is designed to meet current and future needs of the Fire Service. Features include adequate storage space, antique truck display, and vestibule to house library service kiosk. Space provides potential for future interior renovations to accommodate full-time firefighters. Future addition considered as part of design for EMS station.	-floor plan preserves Option 1 footprint to meet current and future needs of the Fire Service. Design features remove clerestory framing and window, energy saving reductions, and firewall for future EMS building. Future addition considered as part of design for EMS station.	-floor plan removes significant portion of footprint, removing the antique truck display room, reduce size of vestibule to house library kiosk and risk loss of library service. Size of training room reduced. Limits current and future use of the facility (full-time staffing). Future addition considered as part of design for EMS station.

<p>Estimated Project Timeline</p>	<p>-construction tender planned for release at end of April. Tender award in June. Construction start in July/August. Construction of building approximately 1 year. Station operational fall 2026.</p>	<p>-construction tender planned for release at end of April. Tender award in June. Construction start in July/August. Construction of building to take approximately 1 year. Station operational fall 2026.</p>	<p>-construction tender estimated release in June. Tender award in September. Construction start in October/November. Construction of building to take approximately 1 year. Station operational spring 2027.</p>
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Because this project is 100% funded from development charges, the additional cost does not have any tax levy impact on either the 2025 budget or the Long-Term Financial Plan (LTFP) model presented to Council in January.

The total costs to be funded as debt repaid from Development Charges will have an impact on the County’s Annual Repayment Limit (ARL) of between 0.17% (currently approved) to 0.29% (Option 1), bringing the County’s overall ARL between 11.63% and 11.75% of its own source revenue, which is within the County’s self-imposed debt limit of 15%.

Architect Fee

The architect’s original submission to the project was based on the RFP specifications, which included a 7,200 sq ft building, request for energy efficiency as part of the design, and optional antique truck display. The expected project completion was December 2025. Through consultation with the architect, the station members, and staff, the approved concept was 9,950 square feet, plus the mezzanine of 2,502 square feet, for total floor space of 12,325 square feet.

The approved concept’s footprint is larger than the original specifications and includes a new functional room (IT data room) that was not part of the RFP. The scope of mechanical, electrical, and architectural work has expanded to meet the higher energy efficient standards required under the FCM grant specifications (net zero and carbon zero operational). The project timeline has also extended from expected completion in 2025 to 2026.

Based on the scope of changes to the original RFP submission, staff are of the opinion that an increase of 35% in fees to the architect is warranted. This increase would apply to Options 1 and 2. Should Council request staff to proceed with Option 3, an additional \$55,000 has been requested from the architect in fees, as previously noted.

There have been two other adjustments to architect fees, to date. The RFP submission from the architect included geotechnical works for a sum of \$15,000. This work was shifted to Operations staff in-house to coordinate. Both parties agreed that this fee would not be charged to the County. In addition, some changes were made to the design by the civil engineers working on the stormwater management system, to incorporate the recommendations of the Gilbert Wellfield Drainage Master Plan as it was finalized. Staff agreed to an additional sum of \$21,000 for these changes. A full summary of architect fees is as follows:

	Option 1 – Current Approved Design	Option 2 – Current Design Floorplan with Updates	Option 3 – New Floorplan
Original Fee Submission	\$613,000	\$613,000	\$613,000
Removal of Geotechnical works	(\$15,000)	(\$15,000)	(\$15,000)
Additional Engineering Fees Stormwater Management	\$21,000	\$21,000	\$21,000
Requested Additional Architect Fees	\$209,250	\$209,250	\$209,250
Requested Additional Architect Fees for New Design Option	\$0	\$0	\$55,000
Total Fees	\$828,250	\$828,250	\$883,250

Tariff Considerations and Project Contingency

The U.S. has imposed a 25% tariff on imported steel and aluminum as of the date of authoring this report. This could affect specific processed construction materials used in the project. While Canada produces its own raw steel, aluminum, and lumber, certain materials are still processed in the U.S. before being reimported. The true cost impact will ultimately be determined by general contractors when they respond to the tender but incorporating some mitigation strategies will help reduce the tariff impact. Canadian and non-US alternatives may offer the best pricing, if available.

Given the uncertainty in the tariffs, staff will continue to closely monitor the situation as the release of the tender comes near. If there is substantial market volatility or other indicators that the timing is a significant risk, the tender release may be temporarily paused. Council is advised that the same tender cannot be released more than once, as it may be viewed as bid shopping.

The County typically requires bidders to hold their bid price between 60 and 90 days. During this period of uncertainty, contractors are generally not willing to hold prices more than 2-4 weeks. As construction is expected to last for approximately one (1) year, it would be prudent for the County to consider a larger than usual contingency for the project. While County projects of this nature often carry a 10% contingency, given the current market conditions, a

larger contingency is recommended. For the purposes of this report, an additional 10% has been incorporated. Staff will seek additional advice on this prior to tender award.

Project Next Steps

Pre-qualification of contractors for the project has recently been completed. Thirty-seven (37) contractors submitted a proposal. All proposals were evaluated by a staff team including the architect. Thirteen (13) contractors have been pre-qualified to submit bids once the tender is released.

The results of the tender for construction will come forward to Council for consideration.

Summary and Recommendations

The North Paris Fire Station project has proceeded to detailed design and preparation of the tender documents for the approved concept. In light of the increase in architect fees, expected increase in construction costs, as provided in the Class B estimate, as well as current market conditions, staff have requested alternative options for the project design.

Should Council provide direction to staff to proceed with Option 1 or 2, staff will actively monitor market conditions up to the planned release of the tender at the end of April. If the tender release moves forward, the tender award will proceed to Council in June.

Should Council provide direction to staff to proceed with Option 3, staff will consult with the Paris station members, refine the concept, and proceed with detailed design.

In evaluating the value of the presented design options vs. cost savings, it is staff's opinion that Option 2 is the preferred option, which preserves the floor plan to accommodate current and future needs of the Fire Service and also preserves the library service. With increasing pressures and call volumes on the Paris Station, it is important that advancing the project towards efficient completion be given weight in evaluating options. Options 1 or 2 result in the earliest expected project completion date.

Attachments

1. Option 1 Design – North Paris Fire Station
2. Rendering of North Paris Fire Station, Option 1
3. Option 2 Design – North Paris Fire Station
4. Option 3 Design – North Paris Fire Station

Reviewed By

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Kelly Bernstein, CEO, Brant County Library
Russ King, Chief of Brant-Brantford Paramedic Services

By-law and/or Agreement

By-law Required No

Agreement(s) or other documents to be signed by Mayor and /or Clerk No