**THE MUNICIPALITY ANSWERS CITIZENS' QUESTIONS ABOUT THE FIRE STATION AND TOWN HALL PROJECT**

On November 28, the municipality held a presentation evening to share the revised fire station and town hall project. Since then, some citizens have asked valid questions to municipal councillors about this project. The municipality therefore wishes to widely disseminate the answers to the questions asked by citizens. In fact, the municipality would like to thank the residents for their interest in the fire station and town hall project.

**MULTIFUNCTIONAL ROOM AT THE NEW FIRE STATION**

For several years, residents have wanted to build a community hall in the Township of Stanstead to meet the needs of various groups wishing to organize activities. As part of our civil security plan, the municipality also wants to have a crisis room with **all the necessary infrastructure to respond to this type of situation: showers, kitchen, washrooms**, etc. Considering the Canton's aging population, this **multifunctional room must be easily accessible to all citizens, regardless of their level of mobility**.

**The construction of a new fire station provides the municipality with the opportunity to build a multifunctional hall that would meet all the needs of residents, firefighters and the municipality.** The municipality wants this **multifunctional room to be alive and inhabited**. Thus, the municipality reiterates its openness to consider the specific requests of citizens and groups so that this site can truly play its role as a community hall: rental for private events, loans to the community, storage spaces for various equipment, etc.

**PRESERVATION OF THE ANGLICAN CHURCH AND REVITALIZATION OF THE VILLAGE HEART**

As you know, the municipality wants to revitalize its village heart and is working to do so. **The preservation of the Anglican Church and the Canon Gustin Hall is one of the elements of this revitalization.** Although this site does not correspond to current municipal needs (multifunctional room, fully equipped with universal access), **the municipality wishes to support the rehabilitation of this site for other types of needs and will actively support the various citizen actions aimed at its preservation. The Canon Gustin hall, with its character and architecture, could become a very complementary place for meetings and events.**

You also know that a process is underway with the organization Rues Principales to identify concrete actions to revitalize our village heart. The municipality remains focused on the need to revitalize our living environment. The fire station and town hall project is in line with this orientation. In keeping with the 2019-2023 strategic plan, the municipality will take the necessary steps to support and develop structuring projects, other than the fire station and town hall project, that will revitalize the heart of the municipality.

**ARCHITECTURE OF THE TOWN HALL**

As mentioned on November 28, **the architectural concept for the expansion of the Town Hall is still being developed with the architects**. The fire station-mayor's project committee noted, during the evening of the project presentation, that some citizens felt that it might be interesting to add a touch of modernity to the expansion of the current town hall. Work on the architectural concept will continue in the coming weeks and **a revised architecture will be presented to the population via the newsletter. Citizens can also follow the PIIA** (Site Planning and Architectural Integration Program) process, led by the Planning Advisory Committee.

**MUNICIPAL GARAGE (CURRENT AND FUTURE)**

The expansion of the town hall requires the demolition of the current municipal garage. While the **option of relocating the current municipal garage was considered, it was eventually abandoned as it was very expensive (and does not meet the needs of the municipality)**. The construction of a new barracks makes it possible to review the use of certain sites:

Former Sheldon Street Fire Station will be used:

* Storage of various equipment

Current Fire Station in Georgeville:

* Maintaining a fire truck and a first responder truck to meet the risk coverage scheme.
* The Georgeville Fire Station will become the public works headquarters and will accommodate employees and vehicles. This new space meets the municipality's short- and medium-term needs since this site is much larger than the current municipal garage that will be demolished.

It is important to note that the **relocation of the municipal garage (to the former Sheldon Street Fire Station and the current Georgeville Fire Station) is done at no cost** since the sites already belong to the municipality and maintenance is also already assumed by the municipality. In this way, the municipality avoids new construction for the public works needs.

Nevertheless, **the municipality is open, in the medium term, to reconsider the use of the new municipal garage on Sheldon Street (in the former Fire Station) to make way for a more structured project related to the revitalization of the area.**

**TRAFFIC AND OFFICES AT THE TOWN HALL**

**The analysis of current and future municipal needs shows the relevance of the renovated town hall housing 10 offices and approximately 25 parking spaces.** The offices will be consolidated in the new wing since the basement of the old building does not have universal access to meet citizens. It should also be added that the basement does not provide adequate working conditions for municipal employees. The expansion will free up the basement of the former part to provide storage areas (for equipment currently stored in the church), a ventilated area for municipal archives, meeting spaces and a kitchen for employees.

Considering the addition of parking spaces and the traffic flow generated by this expansion, it is preferable to provide an independent entrance and exit, creating a loop. This ensures smooth traffic flow while maximizing the safety of pedestrians in the parking lot.

**CONSTRUCTION COSTS AND COST OVERRUNS**

The fire station and town hall project is estimated at approximately $3.4 million. The $3.4 million budget was estimated based on discussions and submissions provided by a few suppliers with whom the municipality is in discussion for this project. It is important to understand that **contingency costs (cost overruns) have already been estimated and are already included in the $3.4 million** to offset, if necessary, some cost overruns during the project.

It is also important to understand that the final costs will be known when the municipality issues a real call for tenders - from several suppliers - for the work to be carried out. **If the successful bids exceed the estimated amount of $3.4 million, the Fire Station and Town Hall project committee will then make choices, for the project, to respect the overall estimated envelope of $3.4 million.**

**FINANCIAL HEALTH OF THE MUNICIPALITY**

The Municipality of the Township of Stanstead enjoys excellent financial health on all indicators: debt ratio, property wealth, tax rate and net expenditures.

Debt ratio

With the completion of this project, the municipality's total net debt would increase to $3,331,214 on an estimated standardized property value (SPV) of $626,065,782 for 2019. This would bring the overall debt ratio to $0.5321 / $100 SPV. It should be recalled that the average for municipalities of comparable size is $1.17 / $100 SPV and that of the Memphrémagog MRC is $1.01 / $100 SPV. The municipality of the Township of Stanstead therefore has a debt ratio that is half as large as that of the municipalities in the MRC.

Property wealth and tax rates

According to the most recent data, the municipality's property value, per unit of assessment, is approximately $399,277 in 2019. The average for municipalities of comparable size in Quebec is $152,190 per evaluation unit, and the average for the MRC territory is $256,612 per evaluation unit. The municipality's overall tax rate is $0.4354 / $100 of assessment, while the average for municipalities of comparable size is $0.9677 / $100 of assessment and the average for the MRC territory is $0.7866 / $100 of assessment. Thus, the municipality of the Township of Stanstead has a tax rate almost half as that of the municipalities in the MRC.

Net Expenditures

Finally, the net expenses are $0.55 / $100 of assessment for the municipality, while the average for municipalities of comparable size is $1.43 / $100 of assessment and the average for the MRC territory is $1.34 / $100 of assessment. Once again, the municipality of the Township of Stanstead has an expenditure rate that is almost three times lower than the municipalities of the MRC and municipalities of comparable size in Quebec.

**OPERATING AND MAINTENANCE COSTS**

At this stage of the project, it is risky to estimate the operating costs of the various sites since these **costs are closely linked to the construction choices that will be made, which are linked to the available budget**. For example, the type of heating system, as well as the type of roof and siding, will have a significant impact on the operating and maintenance costs of buildings.

The new fire station will benefit from an annual rent paid by the Régie intermunicipale et de protection incendie Memphrémagog-Est to cover operating costs, as a tenant since the municipality will own the building. Currently, the Régie pays $30,000 annually to the municipality for the use of the Fitch Bay area fire station. **Discussions may be planned with the Régie's authorities regarding the annual amount, fair and equitable, paid to the various municipalities that have barracks on their territory.**

**CHANGE IN THE COST OF THE BORROWING BY-LAW**

The project's funding was presented at the public evening on November 28. The project cost presented was $3,434,000. This amount excluded taxes ($337,000). The total project cost with taxes is therefore $3,761,000.

The borrowing by-law provides for an expense, including taxes, of $3,760,905 ($95 less than the estimate presented on November 28) which is financed with a borrowing by-law of $3M and an investment by the municipality from its surplus.

As indicated in the borrowing by-law, taxes will be recovered once the project is completed. This amount will be applied to the municipality's debt, bringing the project cost without taxes to approximately $3,434,000.

You can also refer to page 23 of the PDF document (presenting the project costs) which is available on the website:

<https://www.cantonstanstead.ca/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/caserne_mairie_VA_web.pdf>

**NEXT IMPORTANT DATES**

Construction is planned for spring 2020 for the Fire Station and summer 2020 for the Town Hall. The municipality will adopt the borrowing by-law ($3M) on December 16.

For more information, you can consult the PPT presentation presented at the information evening on November 28.