

Home > Cayuga > New County administration building now open to the public

CAYUGA COUNCIL FEATURES HALDIMAND

The estimated reading time is 4 minutes

New County administration building now open to the public

February 27, 2020 at 3:41 am 729 Views 0 comments



CAYUGA—Haldimand County’s new administration building opened its doors to the public on Tuesday, February 25, 2020. Shown above is Phil Mete, General Manager Public Works; Kyra Hayes, Supervisor, Corporate Affairs; and Craig Manley, Chief Administrative Officer, who have helped significantly with the project, along with dozens of other staff members.

—Haldimand Press photo by Jillian Zynomirski.

By Kaitlyn Clark

The Haldimand Press

CAYUGA—The new Haldimand County Administration Building officially opened to the public on Tuesday, February 25, 2020.

“This project is five years in the making,” said Chief Administrative Officer Craig Manley, noting that Council requested staff review the County’s buildings and service in 2015. “A lot of the buildings we inherited when the County was created. We filled those spaces, but it got to the point where those spaces weren’t necessarily fulfilling our needs or they were in need of repair.”

Those spaces included the Caledonia office, which had a \$240,000/year lease to rent, and others that were reaching their end of useful life.

Staff presented Council with three options, and it was ultimately decided to consolidate staff from six offices into one. The 42,900 square foot (sq.ft.), three-storey design and 11,400 sq.ft. basement has a total project budget of \$20.94 million, including \$1.75 million for contingency. While this option is more expensive up front, once paid off its remaining lifespan will make the project “\$15.5 million cheaper than maintaining the existing administration centres”; this does not include the projected operational savings.

Manley noted there were many factors in Council’s decision: “It was going to be expensive either way. While this option was not the cheapest, it had the best payback overtime for the value.... Fundamentally, it was for better customer service. Before, a developer may have had to go to three different towns, but now all of that staff is in one location.”

Residents are able to do a number of County services online, and those without access to internet or needing assistance operating the website can visit the administration building or the myHaldimand community hub at their local library.

Staff, who began moving in February 21, are already seeing the efficiencies of the new space. Tyson Haedrich, General Manager of Engineering, said, “During a budget discussion we had a question for someone. Where before we’d send off an email to a satellite office and get a response back to everyone the next day, now we could just go pull them into the meeting to discuss it.”

The design is meant to maximize efficiency, while still maintaining full functionality. Office spaces have been reduced in size, but that space is better utilized. Upwards of 100 staff members were involved in the project, with about 30 who worked on it significantly.

“You have to consider the building as a whole. If this office was 50 sq.ft. bigger, that pushes out the hallways and has a big effect on the building’s footprint,” said Manley, noting that the wider hallways are one of many design choices to ensure a fully-accessible space. Rather than being set in place, much of the furniture can be adapted depending on its user. “We come in all shapes and sizes. For tall people, we used to put blocks under their desks, now they can just raise the desk. And people like me with arthritis can do standing work.”

The Council chambers are also designed for multi-functionality as they are used by the provincial offenses court on Wednesdays and Fridays. It holds the same number of seats as the current chamber, and considerations have been undertaken to provide overflow space in the lobby if needed. New technology has also been invested in this space, such as a hearing loop for those with hearing aids, and noise attenuation has been considered throughout the building to keep noise contained.

The Grand Erie Business Centre is also a tenant of the building and is strategically placed to share collaboration space with the Economic Development division.

There is a variety of collaboration spaces and meeting rooms in the building. This includes The Haldimand Room, which is self-contained and has direct access outdoors for after-hours meetings, such as public information centres; it doubles as the emergency operations centre should it be needed. All of the meeting spaces will be named to recognize the area’s heritage, with historical artwork and displays featured throughout the building. Haldimand Museums will have two display spaces in the lobby, including one that allows visitors to touch or interact with the artifacts, and will display artwork throughout the building.

The basement provides storage space, such as for inactive development files and surveying equipment. It also includes specialized storage for museum artifacts that reduces exposure to temperature, dust, and light that could otherwise harm the collection. There is also a wellness room for staff; this works as an incentive for staff retention and the contents will be funded by staff fundraising efforts.

The footprint of the building was in part decided by the property, which required something long and narrow. The County had considered about 20 properties, but ultimately decided the Thorburn site alongside the Cayuga Memorial Arena was best suited to their needs.

“We saved about \$2 million compared to the other sites because we were already here, so we could share the storm drainage, parking, landscaping,” said Phil Mete, General Manager Public Works. “We’re creating a campus effect. With our connection to the arena, the McSorely Room offers space for 150 people if needed, and staff can use the walking track alongside the public on their break.”

The building was created to last; with a 60-year life expectancy they have included 22% expansion availability within the current space if needed. Manley added, “We used quality products to make sure it stands the test of time. Hopefully it will be pleasing to the public, too.”

Some outstanding construction work and finishing touches will be completed over the next few weeks during nights and weekends. This includes the Council chambers, which are expected to open at the end of March.

“We really want to impress the level of thought and energy that went into making this a good project that is functional and comfortable,” said Manley. “It’s a great space, without being overly ostentatious.... There is stone and wood used to fit the rural nature of the community.”

Mete added, “I’m really proud of what we have achieved. I’m happy to have been a part of it.”

 Share


