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A conceptual rendering of what the nished community hub could look like.

By Mike Renzella

The Haldimand Press

HAGERSVILLE—Ward 4 Councillor Tony Dalimonte is excited to share plans with his constituents for a brand new library and active living centre planned for Hagersville.

The proposed facility was presented to Council last week as part of the Tax Supported Capital budget. It would be located at Grant Kett Memorial Park and would feature a fully functioning library as well as athletic facilities, including indoor basketball, pickleball, and badminton courts, and an outdoor pavilion.

“The idea came from me, but it’s in line with the way the County is going in terms of building new facilities,” said Dalimonte. “About three years ago I went to Council after speaking to our library manager. We talked about the fact that our library is an old building, and with the growth of Hagersville bursting at the seams we can’t run the programming for children or adults that we want to run. It was time to do something.”

Initially, the idea was to build a standalone library downtown in place of the municipal building. However, after the last election Dalimonte began to get a look at some of the other development projects being planned and decided that with the surging population of Hagersville, the time was right to consider a new community centre as well.

Staff and Council bought into Dalimonte’s vision and decided to apply for a \$3 million provincial grant. Unfortunately, the application was rejected. Instead of abandoning the idea, Council decided approve the \$10,325,600 cost in its budget, provided that the community can raise \$1 million of that cost to prove there is sufficient community interest in proceeding.

“Had we gotten that \$3 million, we would have probably moved ahead fairly quickly. Council would have had to make the decision on whether they would go back to the community or just go ahead,” said Dalimonte, who plans to head the fundraising committee himself. “Unfortunately, that didn’t work out, but there is a round two and I think we may apply for round two. At the moment I’m running on the basis that I’ve got to raise \$1 million.”

“I’m not nervous at all. I live here; I know the community and I know the track record that we have in terms of fundraising,” he added.



A site plan of the new building and parking structure, which would sit south of the current baseball diamonds and east of the arena.

Grant Kett Memorial Park presents an ideal location for the new facility as it is already zoned for recreational use and has running water and sewer, along with existing street access.

“Now is the right time to do this. Our community centre is over 100 years old. It has served the community well, but this is the right time for Hagersville. We just went through an official plan review of the County, and it was identified very clearly in that document that Hagersville is the second fastest growing community in Haldimand County and probably will be for the foreseeable future,” said Dalimonte. “We have tremendous interest in development here, so it makes sense as an asset to serve the existing population and to meet the demands of a growing community.”

Dalimonte touched on the many ways a facility like this will benefit all members of the community.

“It provides a multi-use centre where parents can come in and do activities. We’re looking at the possibility of after-school programs for kids. There will be a commercial kitchen in the building, which opens up opportunities for cooking classes and things of that nature,” he noted. “One of the things I’ve been hearing in the community over the last five years is, for the older age groups, where is there for us to go during the winter months to do activities like pickleball or badminton? A place for seniors to congregate, a place for kids to go after school, where do we go to have something like that.... It serves the community at large and gives everybody something to do.”

Hagersville has a history of rallying behind fundraising challenges to better the community, with Dalimonte mentioning three major renovations to the arena and the community splash pad as examples of local residents supporting a worthy cause.

“This is an investment in the future of the community,” said Dalimonte. “I’m confident that given the time that we have here, I think we are up to the challenge.”

Currently, the goal would be to see the facility open to the public by the end of 2024. The plan is to hold a public meeting this summer to show the proposed layout of the facility and receive feedback from the community. Dalimonte believes that with support from the community, the project could happen earlier than expected, with 2023 in his sights: “It’s going to require some work. I’m committed to the fundraising end of it, I’ve got lots of contacts and ideas on who to go to.”



Hagersville Library & Active Living Centre Floor Plan. Note: triangles mark entrances. —All photos provided by Haldimand County.