

College rezoning *By STEPHEN UHLER*

August 11, 2009

PEMBROKE, ON - The Algonquin College waterfront campus project has cleared its first hurdle.

On Wednesday, Pembroke's planning advisory committee recommended the city approve the college's rezoning application for 0 Alexander Street, the property where Renaissance Square is to be constructed.

This will permit the land west of the Waterwalk Amphitheatre to be used as the site for the new \$36-million campus.

The rezoning, if approved by city council at its meeting Aug. 11, will change the designation of the property on which the campus buildings will be built from central commercial and Central Commercial - flood fringe to institutional and institutional -flood fringe.

Jamie Bramburger, student affairs director for the college, said this has been a long process since this dream was launched in June 2006, but the school is now rapidly approaching the time when construction will begin in April 2011.

"This is a new beginning for the college, a new beginning for the city and a new beginning for the region," he told members of the committee, which has been enthusiastically supported by just about everyone.

"The campus will open the fall of 2012," Mr. Bramburger said.

Karen Davies, Dean of Algonquin College in the Ottawa Valley, said the people at the college are all really excited by this, stating this will prove to be the hub of activity and revitalization in the heart of the city.

She said the capital campaign has raised more than \$1.3 million as groups, organizations, service clubs, businesses and individuals step forward to support the project.

"They see the vision we see, and it is very exciting," she said, noting once complete, Renaissance Square will provide the college "one of the most picturesque locations in Canada" which will prove to be a real draw.

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The proposed campus, which will be more than 80,000 square feet in size, will be designed to house state-of-the-art learning environments for skilled trades, health care and hospitality education, and will create a minimum of 300 new full-time spaces which will bring the enrolment to 1,000 students.

At the moment it remains a basic concept, as the building and the grounds of the campus are still being designed. The campus territory is bordered by the Kiwanis Riverwalk to the north, the amphitheatre to the east, the railway tracks to the south and the creek crossing the pedestrian and bike path to the west.

Colleen Sauriol, the city's planning and building department manager, said the building will be located close to the amphitheatre side of the property, while more than half of the land will be left as open space.

The main entrance to the campus will be Albert Street, close to the Pembroke Marina, with Alexander and Monroe Streets available for limited access to the site as both entrances dip under the trestles supporting the existing railroad tracks.

Ms. Sauriol said there are few details to go over as the design work isn't completed, such as locations of drainage, the amount of parking required and other such matters. None of this is a concern at this time, she explained, as all of these and any other matters can be covered in a site-plan agreement, which will ensure the design, layout and features of the development confirm to city policies.

"At the moment, this is a conceptual design," she said. Specific details will be worked out as the project proceeds, with continuous feedback from city planners.

Ms. Sauriol said a number of things will have to be addressed as the project moves forward.

She stated meetings have been held with Ottawa Valley Rail, the Ministry of Natural Resources and the Ministry of Culture about the campus plan, and no one had any serious issues with it.

The rail company wants the lines fenced off along the campus border from Munroe Street to Alexander Street and a lighted crossing with barricades at Albert Street, due to expected increases in traffic at that location.

The MNR is satisfied as long as no development occurs below the flood plain of 112.9 metres.

Ms. Sauriol said this is why much of the property will remain open space, with building only occurring above the flood plain.

The Ministry of Culture wants an archaeological assessment of the site due to its proximity to the Ottawa River. This includes doing research on the history of the location, plus digging or ploughing a series of test pits to check for the presence to artifacts.

The planning and building manager stated overall, the department is recommending these zoning changes be approved.

"There has been no phone calls and no one has attended this meeting to object to the project," Ms. Sauriol said.

Coun. Terry O'Neill said he has no questions at this time, and neither does the committee, as there are no details for the project yet to ask questions about. He expects they'll know more as the design work progresses.

A public meeting to discuss the proposed zoning changes and to listen to any concerns people may have about it, will be held Aug. 11 at 7 p. m., just prior to city council.

Stephen Uhler is a Daily Observer reporter

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