NAW Township revamps facilities in Golden Lake

New satellite office, firehall renovations, and accessibility upgrades at Golden Lake

By Christina Vietinghoff
Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Golden Lake -- North Algona Wilberforce (NAW) Township council and staff officially welcomed the public to the township's new satellite office in Golden Lake with a ribbon-cutting ceremony on October 6th attended by all of NAW council.

As previously reported by *The Leader*, the township's new satellite office is located at 11038 Highway 60, in the former Carl's Auto Repair building.

With a doughnut in hand and a grin on her face, local resident Elaine Mundt was the first community member to visit the satellite office.

"I'm delighted," she said. "It's just so much easier to come and pay your taxes here. I've lived in Golden Lake all my life and it was always a chore, when it became North Algona Wilberforce to run down there (to Lake Dore) and pay your taxes and get whatever you needed."

Mrs. Mundt explained she's not the only one excited about the township's establishment of a new satellite office in Golden Lake.

"I've talked to quite a few people and they're all in agreement that this was a good choice, a good decision," she said.

Township staff will be available one day a week, on Wednesdays from 8:30 a.m. to 12 p.m. and 12:30 to 4 p.m. providing township services such as garbage bag tags or payment of taxes. These hours will be a pilot project for three months at which time the township will reassess whether that schedule is meeting the needs of the community.

Mayor James Brose cut the ribbon to inaugurate the new office and said he was very happy with how things turned out.

"This is an exciting day and moment for North Algona Wilberforce, to be able to purchase a building that is a turn-key operation, something that we were planning to construct on our own but it was going to take two years because of delays in finding a contractor and acquiring the materials," he said.

Mayor Brose said the building the township was looking at constructing to meet the public works department's needs would have cost about $150,000 just for building costs and that those costs would have been inflated because of COVID.

The township paid $325,000 for the Golden Lake property.

According to the mayor, vital public works equipment including snowplowing equipment can now be housed in Golden Lake, ensuring crews can get out earlier and address roads at the west end of the municipality, such as Tramore Road, without delays from having to travel from the main garage on Shaw Woods Road at Lake Dore.

Space has now been liberated in the firehall where equipment was previously stored, allowing renovations to enhance safety.

"Purchasing this building allowed us to accomplish what we needed to do for the fire department and also for public works at a much more reasonable cost," Mayor Brose said. "We certainly were able to save money."

The building will serve several purposes and will have publicly accessible WiFi.

North Algona Wilberforce officially opened their new satellite office/works yard in Golden Lake with a ribbon-cutting ceremony on Wednesday. From left, councillors Janet Reiche-Schoenfeldt, Melvin Berndt, Mayor James Brose, councillors Doug Buckwald and Maria Robinson.

"We have always struggled with archival space," CAO Andrew Sprunt noted, adding the new loft space in the satellite office will serve to store the township's archives. The tractor for clearing sidewalks in Golden Lake will also be stored in the new garage.

During the office launch last Wednesday, a fire safety display was set up and township staff were also in attendance.

In addition to the renovations at the firehall, at the west end of the hamlet, accessibility upgrades are also happening at the Golden Lake Community Centre.

"There will be (new) dedicated accessible parking spaces," Mr. Sprunt explained. "We are also going forward with a couple of accessible play structures funded through a federal grant."

Throughout the day, tours were also offered at the renovated Golden Lake firehall. Thanks to the newly liberated space from the removal of the public works equipment, Fire Chief Kevin Champ explained that important changes were made to facilitate safety.

"There are now a couple showers," he said, explaining that toxins from firefighting duties can be safely washed off at the firehall. "You don't want to be taking [toxins] home to your family if you can help it".

Gear used in the course of their duties can now be stored in a designated room that meets safety standards for ventilation.

There is also a new office space.

"Our office used to consist of a desk pushed up against a back wall," Chief Champ said.

The office space features historic firefighting gear, including helmets used by firefighters decades ago.

A final upgrade is that the Golden Lake firefighters now have washing machines that can handle the specifications necessary for washing firefighting gear. This means they will no longer have to regularly send the gear to Gatineau to be cleaned.

Firefighter Don MacPherson, who was also on site to assist with providing tours to the public, said the department is always looking for new recruits.

"It's an opportunity to give back to your community," he said. "You learn so much."