SUBJECT: Relocation of the Taxi Inspection Office/Garage (PED06427) (City Wide)

RECOMMENDATION:

a) That the expenditure of $220,000 to renovate and outfit a taxi inspection office in the garage facilities at 330 Wentworth Street be approved.

b) That the cost of the work to renovate and outfit the garage be financed by a loan from the Tax Stabilization Reserve and that the loan be repaid over a ten (10) year period.

Lee Ann Coveyduck
General Manager
Planning and Economic Development Department

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

As a result of the proposed renovations at City Hall, the current taxi inspection office/garage will have to be relocated in order to accommodate construction activities and allow for the onsite storage of material and equipment within the existing garage building. This move must be completed prior to the commencement of the renovation work which is currently anticipated to begin in June 2007.

Although the move of the taxi office/garage is being dictated by the proposed renovations to City Hall, staff considers it appropriate and timely to relocate to more suitable accommodations as the existing facility is too small, has inadequate equipment (ie: hoist) and has a number of safety concerns that require a remedy. The most suitable location is the City owned and operated garage at 330 Wentworth Street North. The cost of renovating the facility for use as a taxi inspection office/garage is estimated to be $220,000.
BACKGROUND:

As a result of the proposed renovations at City Hall, the current taxi inspection office/garage will have to be relocated in order to accommodate construction activities and allow for the onsite storage of material and equipment within the existing garage building. This move must be completed prior to the commencement of the renovation work which is currently anticipated to begin in June 2007.

The existing garage facility has long been recognized as a less than ideal location for the taxi office/garage due to its small size and inadequate equipment (no hoist). The present location is also difficult to manoeuvre into and out of due to the constricted laneway leading to the garage door. While the semi-annual taxi inspections are taking place, the presence of the taxis in the rear parking lot exacerbates an already congested traffic and parking problem.

The existing garage was never intended to accommodate a taxi office/garage and there have been safety concerns regarding the facility which last year led to the Ministry of Labour writing an Order on this workplace. Although the Ministry Order was satisfied by providing violence in the workplace training and revising policies to limit the number of taxi drivers or owners who can be present while the inspection is taking place, the facility does not have a proper waiting room where owners and taxi drivers can await the results of inspections and, as a result, the tendency is to hover over the vehicle while the City mechanic is performing his inspection. This is a safety concern for the mechanic and it is also not safe for the taxi driver or owner to be in the garage.

Currently staff are developing a new and more professional approach to taxi inspections. The new program is named “TIPS” (Taxi Inspection Program) and will involve a comprehensive inspection being performed by qualified inspectors at approved garages. The inspection performed will go beyond the usual safety certificate routinely produced by garages; and, a detailed schedule of required inspection points together with the criteria for passing and failing has been developed. A similar approach is now in place in the City of Calgary.

The TIPS program will be introduced in the new year and will include details on the following:

- the inspection process
- dispute resolution
- By-law authority
- oversight process
- administrative requirements
- technical resource requirements (for approved garages)
- facility requirements and terms of engagement (for approved garages)
- orientation/training
- Program integrity
- administrative process
Although the move of the taxi office/garage is being dictated by the proposed renovations to City Hall, staff considers it appropriate and timely to relocate to more suitable accommodations in line with the more professional direction to be introduced by the TIPS program.

**ANALYSIS/RATIONALE:**

In order to assess existing alternate locations for the taxi inspection office/garage, staff developed a number of criteria the facility would have to meet in order to be considered acceptable. The criteria includes the following:

- The facility must be available and able to accommodate the taxi inspection process;
- The facility must be centrally located in order to allow the taxi inspection process to take place with as little inconvenience to the taxi industry as possible;
- The facility must have sufficient parking space available to allow taxis to park on the premises;
- The facility should be City owned in order to provide continuity of operation;
- Security of staff, equipment and vehicles must be considered;
- Renovations to the facility to efficiently accommodate the taxi inspection process must be permitted;
- Long term use of the facility for the taxi inspection operation must be assured;
- The facility must be available and accessible after working hours and on the weekend; and,
- Availability of access to the City network and phone system was considered an asset.

The only facility which met all of the criteria was the proposed location at 330 Wentworth Street. This facility has the added benefit of having showers, locker rooms, a lunchroom and washrooms available to staff.

A preliminary estimate of the cost to renovate the existing facility in order to accommodate the taxi inspection office/garage has been prepared by staff in Facilities and is included below for information.
Preliminary Estimate of Costs to Renovate Garage

Hire an Architect as required to provide drawings and specs including electrical/mechanical engineering for quotation/tender (10% of contract) $24,000

Electrical/mechanical equipment removal + demolition $ 25,000

Existing spray booth + staging area ~ 1700 sq. ft. of leasehold improvements @ $30/ sq.ft. $ 51,000

Inspection: 1 bay with hoists + possible 2nd bay $ 25,000

General Facility Use:
Showers - use as available
Lunchroom - use as available
Lockers - 3 within space $350 * 3 = $ 1,050

Move from City Hall – relocation of equipment $ 10,000

Waiting Room and Inside Office:
Provide approximately 400 sq. ft. renovated area to include new windows, doors, finishes, flooring, $60/sq.ft. $ 24,000
Electrical/Mechanical and HVAC (none currently available) $ 20,000

Subtotal $180,050

Contingency 10% $ 18,000

P.M. fees 7% $ 14,000

Total $212,050

Due to the preliminary nature of this estimate, staff is requesting that an expenditure of $220,000 for this work be approved.

ALTERNATIVES FOR CONSIDERATION:

At the present time, there are no alternate facilities available within the City which meet the selection criteria. Staff considered the garage adjacent to the Chedoke Golf Course; however, this is currently being used by Public Works and there has been a recent sizable expenditure by Public Works to renovate the facility for their use.

The Animal Control facility in Stoney Creek was also considered; however, it also was being used currently by Public Works and it was less than optimum from the standpoint of location (not centrally located) and there were security concerns for this building.
FINANCIAL/STAFFING/LEGAL IMPLICATIONS:

The cost of the work is in the order of $220,000 to outfit and renovate the taxi office/garage at the proposed location. Staff is recommending that this cost be financed by the Tax Stabilization Reserve (TSR). The loan from the TSR will be repaid over a ten (10) year period by increased inspection fees. This recommendation is in keeping with previous Council direction that the Taxi Inspection Program be self sustaining.

POLICIES AFFECTING PROPOSAL:

Proposed renovations of City Hall necessitate the move of the taxi inspection office/garage from the existing location to accommodate construction.

RELEVANT CONSULTATION:

Staff have consulted with Facilities over the availability of the proposed location and the cost of renovation, as well as, the availability of other facilities suitable for the taxi inspection office/garage.

Finance has been consulted over funding and budget.

CITY STRATEGIC COMMITMENT:

By evaluating the “Triple Bottom Line”, (community, environment, economic implications) we can make choices that create value across all three bottom lines, moving us closer to our vision for a sustainable community, and Provincial interests.

Community Well-Being is enhanced. ☑ Yes ☐ No
Public services and programs are delivered in an equitable manner, coordinated, efficient, effective and easily accessible to all citizens.

Environmental Well-Being is enhanced. ☑ Yes ☐ No
A sustainable transportation network provides many options for people and goods movement; vehicle-dependency is reduced.

Economic Well-Being is enhanced. ☒ Yes ☐ No

Does the option you are recommending create value across all three bottom lines? ☐ Yes ☑ No

Do the options you are recommending make Hamilton a City of choice for high performance public servants? ☑ Yes ☐ No

The creation of a respectful, desirable and supportive workplace.

The new taxi office/garage will allow taxi inspections to take place in a modern, efficient and safe environment with adequate facilities and equipment to ensure a thorough inspection is conducted. The City Hall renovations will require that the existing facilities be vacated and this location will meet the needs of the licensing staff as the new Taxi Inspection Program (TIPS) is implemented.

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