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CANADA

Developers to front \$94 million in charges to help get Erin's wastewater treatment plant built

By **Alison Sandstrom**, Local Journalism Initiative Reporter GuelphToday.com

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ERIN – Erin has finalized agreements with developers eager to build new subdivisions connected to the town's planned wastewater treatment plant that will see the companies pay \$94 million in charges up front toward the estimated \$118-million project.

The town announced the agreement in a media release Tuesday. Additional information was provided in a report to council.

The funds include development charges the developers would eventually pay anyway, but in this case they are willing to pay them up front to help get the needed wastewater plant built.

"They are fronting the development charges because they can't build without a wastewater plant, they know that," Mayor Allan Ales said in a telephone interview.

Developers have also agreed to pay \$7,000 per new single detached unit built in Erin and \$10,000 per new single detached unit built in Hillsburgh. That money will offset the portion of the cost of building the facility existing Erin rate-payers are responsible for, Ales said.

Those funds are not normal development charges.

"This is a big win for the community," he said.

The agreements signed with around 10 developers who own land in the town will allow for the construction of 4,120 single detached equivalents in Erin over the next 30 years. A single detached equivalent represents the amount of wastewater generated by a typical single detached home. Ales explained one single detached equivalent might amount to 1.8 townhouses, and similarly multiple apartment units could fit into one single detached equivalent.

He stressed the growth is planned over 30 years and any new subdivision proposals will still have to go through a full approval process including public meetings.

Asked how he'd respond to residents concerned new growth will change Erin, Ales said he agreed "it will change Erin, there's no doubt about it."

"But everybody else is growing around us and we can't just certainly lock our doors and say 'we can't grow' because that's not what is expected, we have to take our share of the growth that is going to come one way or another," he continued. "What we've tried to do as council is control growth, so it's spaced out over 30 years and it won't happen overnight."

The Town of Erin plans to apply for federal and provincial grants to subsidize its remaining approximately \$24 million share of the wastewater treatment plant.

Meanwhile the town is still looking for someone to build the facility after it received no bids from pre-qualified contractors before the closing deadline.

“I mean the obvious question would be why, I guess that still has to be vetted out,” Coun. Rob Smith said during Tuesday’s meeting. “I personally myself find it highly unusual that three people would not bring anything back from a tender.”

Town staff plan to reach out to the three companies who were allowed to bid on the project to find out why they did not. Director of infrastructure services Nick Colucci said those meetings are planned for later this week. Following that, the tender will be reposted.

Colucci noted staff received 524 questions from contractors during the tender process. Although all were answered, staff now plan to compile all those answers into one document, Colucci told council.

With a project of this complexity, the number of questions received did not surprise consultants, Colucci said.

Erin hopes to break ground on the waste water treatment plant in last fall of 2021 or spring of 2022, said Alls.

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