



## Report to Committee of the Whole

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**From:** Brian Masschaele, Director of Community and Cultural Services

**Date:** July 8, 2025

**Subject:** Response To Aylmer Town Council's Letter of Intent Regarding Aylmer Library Expansion at Old Town Hall Location

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### **Recommendation(s):**

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THAT the correspondence titled "Letter of Intent – Town of Aylmer - Elgin County Library Branch Construction Policy" from the Town of Aylmer dated May 22, 2025 be received and filed; and

THAT Aylmer Town Council be requested to confirm the approximate size of the area to be designated for Aylmer Library use in a future expansion to the Old Town Hall, along with a proposed date to commence construction at that location, in order to be considered a "Letter of Intent" under the County of Elgin's Library Branch Construction Policy; and

THAT copies of this report be circulated to the Councils of the Town of Aylmer and Township of Malahide.

### **Introduction:**

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At the June 10, 2025 meeting, Elgin County Council directed staff to respond to Aylmer Town Council's "Letter of Intent" regarding expansion of the Aylmer Library at its current Old Town Hall location. This report recommends that County Council seek further clarifications to Aylmer Town Council's initial resolution in order to be considered a "Letter of Intent" under the County's Library Branch Construction Policy.

### **Background and Discussion:**

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Aylmer Town Council endorsed the following resolutions at their May 21<sup>st</sup>, 2025 meeting:

"That Council approve in principle the construction of an 8000 square foot building to be leased to the County of Elgin for library purposes; and,

That a "letter of intent" as required by the County of Elgin be sent; and,

That the County of Elgin be asked for a long-term lease of 20 years; and,

That the County of Elgin be asked to establish a fundraising committee for this building; and,

That Council single source the design of the new library to the Town's appointed engineering firm (GEI Consultants) to proceed as soon as possible in 2025; and,

That GEI be directed to place priority upon a design that connects the Old Town Hall on both floors and is in keeping with the existing character and design of the Old Town Hall; and,

That GEI also be directed to examine costing for a standalone library build in close proximity to the Old Town Hall; and,

That interior design considerations be in collaboration with the County of Elgin; and,

That a 2025 budget amendment of \$250,000 be approved by Council towards the detailed engineering and architectural design sufficient to meet grant requirements and that this amount be funded through the Council Initiatives Reserve."

### **Responses for County Council's Consideration**

The "Letter of Intent" endorsed by Aylmer Town Council is a positive development in terms of meeting County's Council's identified space needs for the Aylmer Library. Aylmer Town Council is now proceeding with an engineering study, design and costing analysis for an expansion at the current Old Town Hall location. The next step in this process would then be a formal commitment from the Town to proceed with the project with timelines associated at which time County Council can then affirm its support to lease the facility. From the County's perspective, the Town should continue its process to assess the feasibility, cost and timelines for such a project as soon as possible given County Council's current direction to explore re-location to the East Elgin Community Complex. County Council has a long history of being a willing partner on library expansion and building projects with local municipal partners and the same can be expected with this proposed project should the results of this study lead to a firm commitment to build at that location. However, the process is not yet at that point so any firm commitment to a long-term lease by County Council remains pre-mature.

The Town's "Letter of Intent" contains several resolutions, some of which require an analysis and response from Elgin County Council as follows:

That [Aylmer] Council approve in principle the construction of an 8,000 square foot building to be leased to the County of Elgin for library purposes

Elgin County Council has endorsed space needs of a minimum of 10,000 square feet of assignable library space in considering any proposal to expand, relocate or construct

new premises for Aylmer Library. The construction of an 8,000 square foot building if connected to the Old Town Hall has the potential to meet these identified space needs, assuming the library's existing 3,081 square feet is incorporated into the plans. **Such an addition would satisfy the County's requirements on future space needs for the branch. However, further clarification on total space allocations is required from Aylmer Town Council.**

That a "letter of intent" as required by the County of Elgin be sent

Aylmer Town Council is referencing the County's "Library Branch Construction Policy" last updated in 2015 in proceeding with this "Letter of Intent". The policy is attached to this report. The current resolution does not fully meet requirements under the policy to be deemed a "Letter of Intent" at the present time. First, under section 2.03, it does not specify the total square footage that would be encompassed for library usage, instead referencing only an 8,000 square foot building. Second, under section 2.05, it does not state the proposed date to commence construction on an expanded facility at the current Old Town Hall location. Therefore, it is premature to consider the Town's resolution as a formal "Letter of Intent" under the policy. Rather, it is more of a positive intention to take the necessary steps to issue that letter of intent as stipulated under the policy.

**Staff recommend that County Council communicate to Aylmer Town Council the need to clarify the approximate size of the area designated to be for Library use in a future expansion at the Old Town Hall location of the Aylmer Library under Section 2.03 of the County's "Library Branch Construction Policy". Furthermore, staff recommend that County Council communicate to Aylmer Town Council the need to provide a proposed date to commence construction under Section 2.05 of the policy.** Should this information be provided by Aylmer Town Council, County Council can then consider the proposal as a "Letter of Intent" for further consideration under Section 4.0 of the policy.

For County Council's information, further insight into a potential timeline for a future expansion at the current Old Town Hall location is provided in a report from the Town's CAO to the Town of Aylmer's Finance Committee which was received at the committee's meeting on June 18<sup>th</sup>, 2025. This report can be viewed under Section 6.2.2 by clicking [here](#). This report states that; "At this stage, staff believe it is appropriate to begin planning for the new library to begin construction in 2028." The report further alludes to the service disruption that will result if such a build takes place, speaking to the need to consider temporary library space in the community while the project unfolds. If construction were to proceed as soon as 2028, it is not unreasonable to expect it to last for up to two years, taking completion and the establishment of a new lease with the County to 2030 at the earliest. The above timeline also brings this proposed project into a new term of Aylmer Town Council and will likely be a major issue during the 2026 municipal election which could also impact the commitment and/or timeline for a new build. County Council is reminded that the current lease at the Old Town Hall expires at the end of 2027.

**Staff recommend that County Council continue the path of stabilizing Aylmer Library's space and service needs when the current lease expires in 2027 through**

**potential re-location to the East Elgin Community Complex on either a temporary or permanent basis.** The branch will require stable quarters in the short-term regardless of the commitments made by Aylmer Town Council to build on to the current location for the long-term based on current information and timelines.

That the County of Elgin be asked for a long-term lease of 20 years

The County's standard "Elgin County Library Municipal Library Lease", which currently applies to all ten branches that are owned by local municipal partners and the Port Stanley Festival Theatre, already contains a renewal clause (in five-year terms) which has resulted in long-term accommodation well beyond twenty years at the majority of the library's branch locations. A commitment to a longer-term lease could always be considered when the Town completes construction on an expanded facility at the current location but there is no need to make such a commitment at the present time as a longer-term arrangement is already implied in the current framework. **Staff recommend that no formal action be taken on this matter.**

That the County of Elgin be asked to establish a fundraising committee for this building;

The County's capital fundraising efforts have traditionally been focused on facilities directly owned and operated by the County. A recent example is the successful fundraising campaign on behalf of Terrace Lodge. Any expansion to the Old Town Hall to facilitate an expansion to Aylmer Library would be owned by the Town of Aylmer. **Therefore, the Town should lead any fundraising efforts**, with the County providing support to those efforts similar to the approach taken during the last capital campaign for a library expansion at the Shedden branch. Those efforts were led by the Township of Southwold, with County staff serving in an advisory capacity. Similar support could be offered to the Town of Aylmer but the committee itself should be led by the Town. There may also be impediments under Canada Revenue Agency rules regarding use of the library's charitable status in fundraising efforts for a facility that is not under the County's auspices. **Staff recommend that no formal action be taken on this matter.**

That interior design considerations be in collaboration with the County of Elgin

Elgin County Library staff have played an active role in past designs for an expanded library facility for Aylmer, including extensive input into the design and tendering of a proposed downtown library between 2012 and 2014 and proposed re-location to the East Elgin Community Complex in 2017. The Director of Community and Cultural Services, Manager of Library Services and Supervisor for the Aylmer Library will provide similar support to the Town's current study. The County's CAO will determine an appropriate level of support for these efforts. **No formal action is required at the present time by County Council on this matter.**

**Financial Implications:**

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Not applicable.

## **Advancement of the Strategic Plan:**

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### **Strategy #5 – Community Well-being and Inclusivity**

Goal 3: Future expansion of the Aylmer Library will increase utilization of the County's library system.

### **Local Municipal Partner Impact:**

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It remains pre-mature for County Council to make a formal commitment to an expansion at the current Old Town Hall location of Aylmer Library at the expense of considering other options such as re-location to the East Elgin Community Complex. However, this lack of formal commitment at the present time should not dissuade the Town of Aylmer from proceeding with an engineering study, design and costing analysis to determine feasibility of proceeding with an expansion project to accommodate the Library over the long-term.

### **Communication Requirements:**

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It is recommended that a copy of this report be circulated to the Councils of the Town of Aylmer and Township of Malahide.

### **Conclusion:**

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Aylmer Town Council's "Letter of Intent" is certainly a positive development in terms of meeting Aylmer Library's endorsed space needs over the long-term. Regardless of how that proposed project plays out, completion and occupancy will likely not take place until 2030 at the very earliest according to the Town's budgetary planning projections. In the interim, staff recommend that the process to re-locate the Aylmer Library to the East Elgin Community Complex continue to ensure that the Library has stable quarters out of which to operate for the short to medium term (at the very least) beyond the expiration of the current lease at the Old Town Hall location on December 31<sup>st</sup>, 2027.

All of which is Respectfully Submitted

Approved for Submission

Brian Masschaele  
Director of Community and  
Cultural Services

Blaine Parkin  
Chief Administrative Officer/Clerk