



City of
Peterborough

To: Members of the Peterborough Architectural Conservation Advisory Committee (PACAC)

From: Erik Hanson, Heritage Resources Coordinator

Meeting Date: September 17, 2020

Subject: Report PACAC20-029
Designation of 470 Water Street (County Courthouse)

Purpose

A report to request direction on the designation of 470 Water Street (County Courthouse).

Recommendations

That the Peterborough Architectural Conservation Advisory Committee approve the recommendations outlined in Report PACAC20-029, dated September 17, 2020 of the Heritage Resources Coordinator, as follows:

- a) That the report with respect to the designation of the County Courthouse be received for information, and;
- b) That the committee request that staff prepare a draft designation brief for 470 Water Street (County Courthouse) and the adjacent lands known as the County Jail, and Victoria Square.

Budget and Financial Implications

There are no budgetary or financial implications associated with the recommendation.

Background

In August of 2020, the County announced a possible sale of the County Courthouse and adjacent lands including the jail and Victoria Square. Staff is seeking direction from the PACAC as to the suitability of designation of the site prior to preparing a designation brief for the committee's consideration.

Site History

In 1838 the large colonization area known as the Newcastle District was divided and the District of Colburn was established, with Peterborough selected as the District Town. The District received a Crown grant for six acres of land between Brock and Murray Streets stretching eastward from Water Street for the construction of a County courthouse. After a public competition, the design by Joseph Scobell was chosen for the building. In August of 1838 Lieutenant-Governor of Upper Canada, Sir George Arthur, laid the cornerstone for the courthouse. The stone for the courthouse, like most of the earliest buildings in the Town, including Hutchison House, was quarried at Jackson Park. Construction on the courthouse was completed in November of 1840 and the jail was finished two years later in 1842.

In September of 1863 plans for a new jail, to the design of T. F. Nickel the County engineer, were announced. Construction began in June of 1864 and the new jail was completed the following year. Major renovations were undertaken to the interior of the courthouse in 1878 and 1879 when the cupola was removed from the roof of the to allow for the ceiling of the main courtroom to be elevated.

In the early 1860s some improvements had been made to the Courthouse Park, as it was known then, and a board fence was constructed around the perimeter. In 1885 the Horticultural Society undertook the development of Victoria Square including the construction of a bandstand for Sunday concerts and the installation of the fountain, a gift from James Stevenson, in the centre of the park.

Recognition and Protection of the Site

The Courthouse and Jail site is not designated. The property was added to the City's Heritage Register as a listed building in 2017. Currently, the only recognition that the courthouse has received is the installation of a provincial plaque in 1958 relating its early history, which carries with it no protection under the law. In 2004 the County Courthouse was evaluated by the Heritage Preservation Office under its old rating system (now superseded by the criteria for significance outlined in Reg. 9/06 of the Ontario Heritage Act), and received a score of 84.8 out of 100, before any historical research marks were added, suggesting that the complex is among the most significant buildings in the city.

In January of 1976, a designation brief was presented to Council, but it does not appear that a Notice of Intention to Designate was made. It is not clear why that process was

never completed. A letter to the County by the chair of PACAC in 1988 suggests that the County was considering the possibility of designation at that time, but again, the matter does not appear to have made it to Council.

The County has always been amenable to receiving input from the City relating to the preservation of the courthouse site. In 1992 PACAC was asked to review the proposed design of an elevator installation and other upgrades after an accessibility audit was completed that year. PACAC also took the initiative to have the plans for a major rehabilitation of the jail reviewed by a masonry conservator provided by the Architectural Conservancy of Ontario. The conservation work on the jail was completed in 1995 and included a partial archaeological investigation of the jail exercise yard for the purpose of exhuming the remains of four victims of hangings at the jail.

In 2001, a riot at the jail left the facility unusable and it remained vacant until 2015 when the County announced plans for its demolition and at that time County staff made presentations to the PACAC and ACHAC outlining their plans. From those discussions and supported by the City, the County revised its plans and through a partial demolition of the structure, created a unique park interpreting the site.

Staff is recommending that a brief be prepared for the committee's consideration and recommendation to Council.

Submitted by,

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