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**To:** Members of the Peterborough Public Library Board

**From:** Jennifer Jones, Library CEO

**Meeting Date:** October 5, 2021

**Subject:** DelaFosse Review – Update, Report PPL21-027

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## **Purpose**

A report to provide the Library Board with an update on the state of the DelaFosse branch library facility and services, and to seek direction on next steps.

## **Recommendations**

That the Library Board approves the recommendation as outlined in Report PPL21-027 dated October 5, 2021, of the Library CEO as follows:

- a) That the report to inform the Library Board on the state of the DelaFosse library branch facility and services be received for information;
- b) That the DelaFosse Library branch remain closed at this time until a decision on its permanent closure or renovation is made;
- c) That staff be directed to provide a report on alternative programming and services that could be provided to the Peterborough community during the DelaFosse library closure;
- d) That the DelaFosse portion of the Library's operating budget be reallocated for temporary use by the main branch to provide alternate services in lieu of the branch opening, and;
- e) That staff be directed to provide a more detailed report on future service delivery options to include a comparison of a full closure of the branch, alternative service programming/services, renovation of the existing branch location, and the development of a new facility.

## Budget and Financial Implications

There are budgetary and financial implications resulting from the approval of the recommendations of this report.

The DelaFosse's operating budget for 2021 is \$123,683, which includes staffing, utilities, telephone, and preventative building maintenance. \$31,000 of the total amount has been allocated to collection development. All additional operating costs (e.g., management salaries) are incorporated into the Main Library operating budget.

Any changes to the current operating model would incur additional costs in staff time, collection funding, and an increase in facility maintenance costs (e.g., utilities).

Initial cost estimates provided by the consultants hired to undertake the facility review indicate that costs would exceed \$3 million to renovate DelaFosse to bring it up to current health, safety, and accessibility standards. Staff have undertaken some preliminary research on either the rental or construction of a new branch location. Staff would intend to provide additional information on alternative costing for either rental or construction of a new branch location as part of the service delivery options report being recommended.

## Background

In February of 1949, a branch library opened in the south end of Peterborough above what was then a hardware store. A new building was constructed next door, and on December 1, 1965, the DelaFosse branch library officially opened in its current location.

The DelaFosse Library branch has mainly remained as it was when constructed in 1965. Public access computers and a security system have been added, minor capital repairs have been completed when necessary, but little else has been done in the areas of modernization, accessibility, and usability.

The facility consists of 4,350 square feet of space featuring library materials for adults and children on the upper level. The lower-level features two open areas with a separate entrance, which a local arts organization previously rented out, and the public washrooms.

Customer service, shelving, and custodial personnel were shared with the main branch. The DelaFosse has four public computers, printing, and self-serve photocopying services available. However, no programs are offered, and only circulation services (library item borrowing) were regularly available during operating hours. Community members were redirected to the main branch if they required any other assistance beyond borrowing physical items.

Due to the pandemic, the DelaFosse has been closed to the public since March 13, 2020. Plans to reopen in 2021 have been put on hold due to safety concerns associated with the condition of the facility.

At the May 11, 2021, Library Board meeting, it a motion was approved which directed that an updated building condition assessment of the DelaFosse be completed.

Working with the City's Facilities and Energy Manager, Lett Architects Inc. was hired to review, assess, and report on the facility's current state and what might be involved to meet today's standards for accessibility, energy efficiency, and serviceability.

### **Facility Concerns**

Lett has provided a report (Appendix A) stating that the building suffers from an undersized floor structure, a poor performing envelope, the use of hazardous construction materials, and a constrained site to access for reconstruction.

Given the facility's age, it is very likely that asbestos was used in its construction, and abatement would be required as part of any renovation project.

Of more immediate concern is the undersized floor structure which has resulted in significant structural deficiencies that need to be addressed related to the weight load distribution of the library stacks. Staff were advised that there may be a potential safety risk to reopen the facility to the public without addressing the issues noted.

The DelaFosse library stacks area floors were constructed to support 60 pounds per square foot of weight. The consultant's report indicated that weight restrictions are being exceeded. As a temporary measure, until remedial action is complete, it is recommended that existing loading in the stack areas be reduced immediately within the allowance of 60 pounds per square foot for which the floor is currently designed.

Minor modifications to the shelf load distribution have been made to reach this target weight. Further inspections by the engineer will be required to confirm.

Given the weight concern and the potential risk associated with the structural deficiencies, it was decided that the best course of action would be to keep the facility closed at this time while the library focusses on a full reopening of the main branch.

Initial cost estimates provided by the consultants indicate that costs would exceed \$3 million to renovate the DelaFosse and bring it up to current health and safety and accessibility standards.

## **Accessibility**

Accessibility to the DelaFosse does not meet minimum modern standards. Should the decision be made to renovate the DelaFosse, then additional work would need to be completed to ensure that it does meet the current Ontario Building Code's accessibility requirements.

There was an internal accessibility audit completed on the facility in 2016 (Appendix C), where several deficiencies were noted. Further deficiencies were noted in the Lett report.

The library entrance features both stairs and a ramp which are too steep for those with mobility issues. The guards and handrails are not adequate to meet today's code, and much of the concrete and masonry work that comprises the ramp needs repair. The stairs that approach the front door also require accessories such as handrails on both sides, tactile warning strips, and improvements to the nosing contrast strips.

The interior upper level is only accessible by stairs. Washrooms are located in the basement, with no elevator access and are currently in an insufficient quantity. The washrooms are also non-accessible single stalls with ageing fixtures in need of replacement.

Lighting in the entire facility is identified in the Lett report as poor, particularly in the washrooms and basement areas.

Both the interior and exterior accessibility concerns create barriers for the public including the inability for Library staff to offer programming in the current space.

Access to the children's area is via stairs only and features a decommissioned fireplace located in a sunken pit area. The entire children's area is not accessible to anyone with a stroller or mobility device.

It is possible that the lower level of the facility could be used for library programming, however there is no accessible entrance, stairs feature prominently on the inside of the facility between the two rooms on the lower level, and insufficient washroom facilities are available for program participants. Were the library to run programs at the DelaFosse, only street parking would be available for participants.

Insufficient parking was also noted concerning both accessibility and general facility deficiencies.

## **Services**

The branch features four public access computers, a photocopier and two staff on site to provide basic circulation (check in/out) services. There are no programs offered, no

reader's advisory support, no technology support, and little else offered to patrons who do visit the branch aside from a small collection of books and DVDs to checkout. With the weight load distribution issues noted above, the size of the collection will need to be reduced further which will further limit the services offered in the space.

Prior to the pandemic closure in March 2020, the DelaFosse branch library was open 5 hours per day on Tuesdays, Thursdays, and Saturdays, for a total of 15 hours per week.

An hourly patron count was done for the four-week period of June 23 to July 20, 2019. During that time, there was a total of 871 visitors, for an average of 14.5 people per hour. (See Appendix B, Table 1)

For comparison, there was an average of 5,438 visitors per week during that same four-week period at the Main Library. It is open seven days a week for a total of 57 hours resulting in an average of 95.4 people per hour.

The hourly patron count was repeated for the two-week period of July 23 to August 3. There was a total of 346 visitors, for an average of 11.5 people per hour. (See Appendix B, Table 2). For that same period at Main, there was an average of 6,471.5 visitors per week or 113.5 people per hour.

Appendix B Table 3 provides an overview of the annual physical item circulation for the previous 10 years. The DelaFosse circulation averages 4% of total library physical material circulation.

## **Future Services**

The City of Peterborough owns the DelaFosse facility, and the Library Board governs the operations of the library services offered there. Bringing the building to current standard would require a capital budget approval from Council if the Library Board intended to continue to operate a branch in this location.

Based on the information gathered in the Library's 2018 Strategic Plan survey, 2020 Library Services Review, and public library service guidelines, it is recommended for a city of Peterborough's size that there should be additional Library service points while maintaining the Main branch downtown.

If the renovation of the DelaFosse or construction of a new facility is not feasible or practical at this time, there are innovative solutions that exist which would provide enhanced service delivery to the Peterborough community such as mutually beneficial partnerships with other libraries and community facilities, the use of kiosks, as well as pop-up programming events to name a few.

## Next Steps

The cost to renovate the DelaFosse Branch has been clearly determined in the consultant's report. To make an informed decision on the future of the branch, staff are recommending that a further report be prepared to compare service delivery options. It is anticipated that this report would compare renovation costs versus the costs to either rent or build a new similar facility as well as to provide alternative programming or service options without a physical branch location.

## Summary

This report provides an update on the building condition assessment completed and the state of services at the DelaFosse Branch Library. An architectural, structural, and mechanical and electrical study of the DelaFosse facility was completed to assess the extent and approximate value of upgrades necessary to bring the DelaFosse to today's accessibility and energy efficiency standards. Initial cost estimates provided by the consultants indicate that costs would exceed \$3 million to renovate DelaFosse in its current state. Until the issues with the undersized floor structure can be remediated, it is not safe to open the building for public use. Library staff will explore alternative models for service delivery and outreach to serve the Peterborough community and report back to the Board on service delivery options.

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## Attachments:

Appendix A – Lett Architects Inc. Report  
Appendix B – DelaFosse statistics 2019  
Appendix C – DelaFosse Library 2016 Accessibility Audit Form