

Gordon roadwork avoided as 'dirty job'

Contractors stay clear of work like downtown-area project that got one bid: engineer

BY STEPHANIE MACLELLAN
MERCURY STAFF

GUELPH

While it's rare for the City of Guelph to award construction contracts when they've only received one bid, it's becoming more common across the country, according to a national construction group.

City council voted Monday night to proceed with construction on a busy stretch of Gordon Street leading into the downtown, even though the city only received one bid for the work — and it came in \$1.5 million higher than the city expected to spend.

City engineer Rick Tolkunow said he couldn't think of any other occasions in the last two years when the city received a single bid when it put out a tender for construction work.

But Jeff Morrison of the Canadian

Construction Association said it's becoming more common as the construction industry booms and there aren't enough skilled workers to do the work.

"A lot of companies are saying, 'We're so busy now, we can't handle it,'" he said.

This is also the busiest time of the year for road construction in Canada, so many companies may have already had projects lined up by the time the tender closed in May, Morrison said.

The project will reconstruct the stretch of Gordon Street from the north side of the Speed River to Waterloo Avenue, adding bicycle lanes, improving the streetscape and replacing sewers and water mains.

Tolkunow said there seemed to be some hesitation from contractors to get involved in a "dirty job" like this one.

"You've got to maintain traffic,

there's a lot of underground work, there's commuters, there's pedestrians, it's a high-profile location," he said. "All those things make it a challenging job."

The city's consultants originally estimated construction would cost less than \$5 million. The single bid, from Drexler Construction Limited, gave an estimate of \$6.5 million.

Engineering staff recommended the city re-tender the project this fall to get a better offer, but a majority of council voted to proceed anyway, saying the work needed to be done.

Most of the funding is coming from current revenues, capital reserves and a provincial infrastructure grant.

Council also resolved Monday to add a right-turn lane from Gordon to Macdonell Street. That extra work will add about \$25,000 to the project, Tolkunow said.

Beth Cosentino, who owns the Wild Rose consignment shop on Macdonell Street, said she is pleased with council's decision to include the turn lane.

"If you have easier access to the downtown, it's better for everyone," she said. "It's better for the shoppers and the retailers and it makes a more friendly accessible city."

She said she's not fazed by the prospect of a summer of construction on a busy chunk of Gordon Street. Neither is Mark McMullen, general manager of Mark Wilson's Better Used Cars at Gordon and Wellington Streets.

"We have access from the side streets. . . . We'll just have to re-direct people with advertising," he said. "It will be a bit of a nuisance, but that's fine. It needs to be done."

Construction could start in a couple of weeks and will probably wrap up in the spring, Tolkunow said.

The contractors gave a mid-December estimate for completion, but that didn't account for weather delays.

"The reality is, we're going to have inclement weather, so we're going to do work in the spring," he said.

Tolkunow said there will be traffic delays, as lanes are closed to allow construction crews to work.

The intersection of Gordon and Wellington streets will remain open with lane reductions and no left turns allowed, but smaller intersections might be closed completely as construction is completed, he said.

He urged city residents to be patient with the construction.

"We're really looking forward to everyone's patience while we're doing the job, because at the end of the day, it's going to look beautiful," he said.

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LOCAL BRIEFS

GUELPH

Father charged with assault after baby taken to hospital

A Guelph father has been charged with assaulting his seven-week-old son after the infant was rushed to hospital Sunday night.

The man's name is not being released by police because it would identify the child, who remained in critical condition yesterday.

Guelph Police were called to a city residence at 8:50 p.m. Sunday after the infant's parents reported their son's vital signs were absent, said Inspector Russ Malcolmson.

Paramedics rushed the baby to Guelph General Hospital, he said.

Malcolmson said doctors believed the infant had a medical condition, and the child was transferred to Victoria Hospital at the London Health Sciences Centre.

Malcolmson said doctors at the London centre identified suspicious injuries and notified local children's aid officials.

Four investigators with Guelph Police went to the London hospital Monday afternoon to speak with staff.

They returned to Guelph and spoke with the infant's 22-year-old mother and 21-year-old father.

The father is charged with assault causing bodily harm.

GUELPH

Machete, hatchet used in robbery of youth

Guelph Police are looking for the public's help after two people brandishing weapons robbed a student yesterday.

At 1 p.m., three youths were in Bullfrog Park when a male wearing a bandana around his face and wielding a machete, and another male with a nylon over his face and carrying a blue-handle hatchet, approached and stole one of the student's backpacks.

There were no injuries. Police are looking for witnesses.

The suspects are around 17 or 18 years of age. The person carrying the machete is five feet 11 inches tall and the male with the hatchet is five feet five inches tall.

Anyone with information is asked to call Constable McCord at 519-824-1212, ext. 285, or Crime Stoppers at 1-800-222-8477.

GUELPH

Man exposed himself to female jogger in park

Police are looking for a man who exposed himself to a female jogger early Monday morning.

A man, travelling by bicycle, exposed himself to the jogger in Riverside Park at 6 a.m.

The man left the scene on his bike. The man did not speak to the woman.

The suspect is described as white, 35 to 40 years old, five feet eight to five feet 10 inches tall, with a thin build and dirty blond hair. He was clean shaven.

He was wearing a red baseball hat, red shorts and a blue or black sweatshirt. The suspect was riding an older style 10-speed bicycle.

Anyone with information regarding this incident is asked to contact Constable Jason Ridout at 824-1212, ext. 7126, or Crime Stoppers at 1-800-222-8477.

GUELPH

Jewelry taken from stall at city farmer's market

Jewelry was stolen from a display at the Farmer's Market over the weekend.

Sometime between Friday and Monday, the jewelry was taken from a stall belonging to Sandi's Kitchen.

There are no suspects. It was the only stall at the market that reported a theft.

Anyone with information regarding this incident is asked to contact Guelph Police at 824-1212 or Crime Stoppers at 1-800-222-8477.

• Mercury staff



TONY SAXON, GUELPH MERCURY
Mat Buntin is one of the creators of Speare: The Literacy Arcade Game, an online game aimed at testing and improving knowledge about the works of William Shakespeare. It was developed at the University of Guelph.

The Bard breaks into video games in city professor's literacy project

BY THANIA DHARMARAJAH
MERCURY STAFF

GUELPH

Trap on your seatbelts and take a ride on a futuristic space ship to a faraway galaxy on a quest for Shakespeare's missing knowledge.

A University of Guelph professor has used William Shakespeare's Romeo and Juliet to create a futuristic storyline in a computer game to interest young minds and improve literacy skills.

"We've tried to create a learning environment that's not in your face that you're learning," said Daniel Fischlin, an English and theatre studies professor.

"We know that gaming is a huge part of popular culture and what kids find fun. It is bigger than Hollywood."

In Speare: The Literacy Arcade Game, players navigate through the Prosperian Galaxy in their chosen spaceship to capture knowledge spheres that have been stolen by the Iagans from the planet of Verona.

The players fire at the rival

spaceships to release these spheres containing Shakespearean-era words. The mission is to collect the appropriate words that form a phrase displayed at the top of the screen such as, "Two households both alike in dignity."

Fischlin said he wanted to break away from the traditional video game, which is "to wreak havoc and break things," when designing his game.

He said in this game, children are exposed to Shakespeare and forced to make distinctions between homonyms and synonyms and to watch out for misspelled words.

Players are also fed tidbits of Shakespeare history and facts throughout the game, which they are tested on.

Once all the words are collected and the trivia test is passed, the player can move on to the next act.

Fischlin plans to test the game on a class of Grade 6 French immersion students from Edward Johnson Public School on Monday.

Olivier Cutz, the Grade 6 teacher, said the game will introduce chil-

dren to the "nitty gritty" language of Shakespeare.

"That's what is daunting to the kids," he said. "It feels like a different language."

The students will play the game, fill out response surveys and discuss the game in small focus groups.

Fischlin said based on their responses, the game will be tweaked before being launched online on the Canadian Adaptations of Shakespeare Project website. Created by Fischlin, the site at www.canadianshakespeares.ca provides adaptations of the writer's works since pre-Confederation.

Mat Buntin, one of the game's creators, said the game is designed to attract males and females between 12 to 19.

The game doesn't focus on violence and encourages children to strategize and think creatively, he said.

"It's less about shooting things and making things explode."

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Gladstone Mowatt got the job done

Funeral today for long-time volunteer

BY ALAN FERRIS
MERCURY STAFF

GUELPH

Gladstone (Glad) Mowatt got things done.

When he passed away Friday at the age of 86, he left a legacy of community service that earned him recognition from his city, his province and his country.

His funeral takes place today at 10 a.m. at the Dublin Chapel of Gilbert MacIntyre Funeral Home, 252 Dublin St. N. His death came after a fall as he fought a prolonged battle with Parkinson's disease.

He is survived by his wife Evelyn, who was also his best friend and constant companion for 50 years.

"I have nothing but good stuff to say about Glad," said Jack Ingram, owner of the Guelph Ingrams Inter-City fastball team when Mr. Mowatt was the general manager in the 1970s and '80s.

"He was the greatest guy to get along with and you knew if Glad was doing it, it would get done right."

"He put all his efforts behind the team when he worked with us."

Mr. Mowatt was a founder and life member of the Guelph Minor Hockey Association where he held every executive post over 58 years.

"To those who loved me, don't grieve for me. I will live forever in the hearts of my loved ones."

GLADSTONE (GLAD) MOWATT
FINAL MESSAGE TO FRIENDS

The Ontario Minor Hockey Association also made him a life member for his work as secretary of the association in its early years.

"I was the first president of the Guelph Hockey Referees Association and he was with the Guelph Minor Hockey Association," Bill Devorski said. "When it came to getting things done, he was No. 1. He was also a very, very good speaker."

Mr. Mowatt was a veteran of the Second World War, serving in the armed forces from 1942 to 1946 as a staff sergeant and acting company sergeant major. He then took up a career in correctional services, including a position as deputy superintendent at Guelph's Hillcrest Training School for Boys, which became the Wellington Detention Centre, from 1960 to 1980.

"Glad and Ev didn't have kids, but they paid as much attention to us as if we were family," said John Kentner, who was a catcher with the Ingrams.

"Glad and I go back a long way. When I broke my arm (playing hockey) I had to deal with Glad for the insurance. He was a true gentleman in everything he did. He always wanted us to play by the rules. When we moved up to the higher competition, he made us feel like we were part of a family. They were always there when we needed help."

In 1988, Mr. Mowatt received the national Olympic 88 medallion in the volunteer category for his contributions to amateur sports. In 1994, he was inducted into the Guelph Sports Hall of Fame.

To his many friends, he left a final message: "To those who loved me, don't grieve for me. I will live forever in the hearts of my loved ones."

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