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Weekend Edition

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Ground-breaking week in Fort Erie

Civic Centre work begins in two weeks

Mike Robinson
Times-Review

After almost a year of planning, debating, and revising, ground was broken Tuesday for the new town hall on Garrison Road beside the E.J. Freeland Community YMCA.

In a two-part ceremony beginning at 11 a.m., papers were signed to officially transfer the land title from benefactors E.J. Freeland and the YMCA, to the town of Fort Erie, after which silver-coloured shovels were used to break ground for the \$4.7 million project.

A host of dignitaries showed up for the ceremony including Erie MP John Maloney, regional councillor Stella Ziff, six of eight town councillors, project architects and builders, about 50 children from the YMCA daycare program, and most of the town staff working out of the Jarvis Street town hall.

Niagara South MPP Shirley Coppen was scheduled to be part of the festivities, but did not show, prompting Mr. Freeland to remark that he expected her to drive up in an armoured truck at any time—a reference to a \$2.4 million JobsOntario grant the town is waiting for word on for the Leisureplex. The 35,000-square-foot civic centre will replace the combined office space of the old town hall (built in 1922), the treasury office, the administration offices, and the fire department office trailer.

Actual construction will begin in about two weeks according to Dave Harvey, a partner at Merit Contractors of Niagara, the firm that won the three-way bidding war for the construction contract.

The town, in a press release, said it expects a significant return on its investment in the new civic facility. Construction will generate the equivalent of 100 full time jobs for one year, it is expected that between 10 and 15 per cent will be saved on heating and air conditioning, and the new town hall will be barrier-free for the physically-challenged.



NEW TOWN HALL

Mayor John Teal, E.J. Freeland, YMCA board chairman David Hutton, town staff member Dolly Evans, CAO Ken Zurby, architect Julian Ryder, and Dave Harvey of Merit Contractors officially broke ground for the new town hall Tuesday afternoon. Work begins in two weeks.



NEW SUGAR BOWL PARK

Councillor Henry Rempel, director of parks and leisure services Emile McIlvenna, councillor Anne Marie Hudak, Mayor John Teal, and Fort Erie Lions Peter O'Brien and Keith Rothney dug in Tuesday for work to begin on the Lions Sugar Bowl Park.

\$400,000 facelift begins at Sugar Bowl

Stephanie Freeman
Times-Review

In a couple days, workers will be invading the Sugar Bowl with bulldozers and trucks to begin the first phase of a \$400,000 facelift for the 60-year-old parkland.

The official ground-breaking ceremonies took place Tuesday. Plans for redevelopment of the Sugar Bowl began in 1988 with town council setting aside \$10,000. Now, with sufficient funding in place, which includes \$260,000 from the town, \$150,000 from the Fort Erie Lions and \$25,000 from the Fort Erie Tennis Club, the work is about to get underway.

The park will be re-landscaped and fully accessible with lighted walkways, a natural pond, an upgraded playground as well as various other amenities.

"Sir Harry Oakes saw beauty in this spot and created for us this park and gave it to us for our use," said Mayor John Teal, "and now, some 60 years later, the Lions Club, who since their inception has served our community, have come forward in what is really a massive development of this park to make it a park for the nineties, to make it a park for many more generations of the inhabitants of Fort Erie to enjoy."

Keith Rothney, Lions project chairman, spoke on behalf of the local club. "We certainly did our best to make sure this park has come to fruition and it's really a joy to see it finally happening," he said. "We look forward to seeing what it's going to look like in the future."

The park will be officially re-named Lions Sugar Bowl Park in recognition of the club's donation and involvement.

The first three phases of the four-phase project are expected to be completed by September. There are some adjustments to be made to the final phase, which includes a splash pad and entrance way to the park.