

Withdrawal Management location goes in front of council

By **Dan Gray** - July 13, 2021



The building in which we have been told the new treatment centre will be housed, June 16, 2021 (Dan Gray/SaultOnline.com)

Before council even had a chance to vote, Sault Area Hospital had already started construction on the new Withdrawal Management and Safe Beds space on Old Garden River Road.

With that in mind it should come as no surprise, although concerns about safety of nearby residents and businesses was brought up, that council approved a rezoning request for the old Sault Star building.



Councillor Shoemaker brought forward the concerns he had heard from people and was looking for answers on how thorough the search was before settling on this site.

"I've received, as a constituent representative of the area, concerns from folks in the neighbourhood and neighbouring residential areas. I would say that this would have a negative impact on the on on their community as they currently know it," said Shoemaker.

Sault Area Hospital's Director of Clinical Programs, Lisa Case, was the head of the search committee. She said in the end, provincial criteria for this site was extensive. They looked at multiple locations and this is the only one that checked all the boxes.



"We know that this site has both space for future expansion that both a couple of the counsellors had mentioned, as well, being able to co-locate similar services," said Case. "Ultimately, we were looking for a site that we could turn into a campus for healthcare, and in this case, mental health and addictions health care. This site was the only one that met all of those criteria."

The extensive presentation by SAH also covered a general idea of how the programs would be offered, what the building may look like in the end and even how some of the services would work.

In the end, many councillors agreed 20 beds for all of Algoma probably isn't enough, but it's a start. To that end, Mayor Provenzano assured council he had spoken with the Prime Minister during his visit last week, about the opioid epidemic and the need for more support services locally.

"I told him, there's there's one thing that is really kind of holding us back and creating kind of larger challenges. And that's the opioid epidemic, and that the resources need to be put into the healthcare system to adjust the healthcare system," said Provenzano. "So what I would suggest is that if we determine we need more resources, if we determine we need more space, we need to be very aggressive about asking for that. And when we ask for it, we can't back off, we have to go ask for it, we have to make the case, and we need to get those resources for our community."

The centre should be up and running in no more than 12 months according to SAH.

Stay with SaultOnline as we continue to cover this and other issues coming out of council.

Dan Gray

A native of Centre Wellington, Ontario, I have worked as a freelance journalist all over the province of Ontario. Most recently I ran a local news page in my hometown of Fergus, Ontario. I look forward to bringing my experience covering breaking news, municipal matters and general interest stories to the team at Superior Media and communities we serve.

