

# Riverview sets townhall committee

■ Group to study 'overdue' renovation of building, pegged to begin in 2006

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Riverview council took the first step last night toward long-awaited improvements for its town hall.

Noting the Riverview Town Hall was "way overdue" for renovations or replacement, Deputy Mayor Ann Seamans named the committee that will investigate options with regard to the best solution for achieving that goal.

Seamans was pinch-hitting for Mayor Clarence Sweetland who missed the meeting after learning his brother had been killed in a car accident on the weekend in Florida. He is to leave for Newfoundland today to attend the funeral.

The deputy mayor will chair the ad-hoc committee, which will also include Sweetland, Coun.-at-large Charles Broderick, town manager David Muir, finance director Sharon Santalucia and economic development director Brenda Orchard.

Prior to Christmas, Seamans said she promoted the idea of setting up such a committee to determine the municipality's options for the town hall which she says is outdated and not accessible to the handicapped.

"Personally, I think we should put our priorities right and have a good look at replacing it."

The older part of the building was constructed in the 1950s and had been used as the Interprovincial Home for Women for many years. It is characterized by a peaked roof. After it was turned over to the town by the province, the new squared-roof section was added in 1987-88.

The Riverview Public Library, council chambers and the administration offices are in the new section, while all the accounting and finance people are in the older part of the structure. The latter is also where citizens pay their water, sewerage and other municipal bills.

Although library director Esther White has long cited the desperate need for more space, she says she and her staff would still like it to remain at its current location. Seamans said that is understandable, as it is right in the centre of a residential area with a great view of Metro Moncton.

"My dream has been to have a much larger town hall, with the library on the main floor, with client condos above it that could be rented out by the town as offices or as retail facilities," said the deputy mayor.

Seamans said these are the types of possibilities that will be discussed by the committee. No time deadline is being put on its mandate, except that it has to come back to council with a recommendation later this year.

She said no money was budgeted by council for the renovations or replacement of the town hall for 2005.

"It will be a project for 2006. This year, we want to get everything in order regarding which direction we should go with the town hall," she said.

Town manager David Muir said the purpose of the committee will be to look at the alternatives, how much space will be required in a new building and can the current structure be renovated to solve these problems.

If a new building is the direction eventually recommended by the ad-hoc committee, Muir said they would also look at the possibility of commercial and retail development being included, or, perhaps, make it into a complex to include condominiums.