

Ponoka welcomes new Ag-Event Centre

By Eraina Hooyer - Ponoka News

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After much anticipation, cooperation and hard work, Ponoka can look forward to adding a brand new building to its skyline.

The Ponoka Agricultural Society, Ponoka Stampede Association, Ponoka County and the Town of Ponoka have partnered together to form the Ponoka Ag-Event Centre Society (PAECS) to work towards building a new Ag-Event Centre.

The PAECS has taken the responsibility to design, build and operate the Ag-Event Centre and has done extensive research to ensure that the project will be beneficial to the area.

Charlie Cutforth, president of PAECS and chief administrative officer of Ponoka County, is pleased with the proposed structure and is especially impressed with the way the four different groups have come together to make it possible.

“It is very unique to have two municipalities and two organizations cooperate this well on a project,” said Cutforth. “We have proven that it can work, and the province has also expressed how impressive this joint effort is, which we have been told will be reflected in the funding as well.”

Cutforth says the society has looked at similar centres in other towns and believes that the Ag-Event Centre will attract many groups, organizations and events.

“It’s a big arena, with meeting rooms, instructional areas, etc. It’s intended to be very versatile and can be a huge benefit for the whole central region,” he said. “It will draw many people from all over and with Ponoka being horse and livestock country it will certainly be supported by local people.”

The new Ag-Event centre is designed to be a first class agricultural building with the purpose of providing a place for the equine and agricultural industry to promote recreation, education and entertainment in Ponoka.

The new Ag-Event Centre will be built adjacent to Highway 2A, south of the Ponoka Branch of the Royal Canadian Legion on about 15 acres of land donated by the Ponoka Stampede Association.

The site plans and building have been executed by Beardon Engineering and the project is estimated to be \$8.5 million. Presently the PAECS has committed over \$5 million in capital funding.

The centre is expected to be a major tourism and economic advantage for Ponoka that will attract the public all year round.

Sherry Gummow, president of the Ag Society and vice-president/fundraising committee chair of PAECS, is looking forward to having the centre in Ponoka and believes it will prove to be a useful building in Ponoka.

“It’s huge for Ponoka and an opportunity for Ponoka to be a destination for people for a good majority of the year,” said Gummow. “It really opens up the opportunities, it’s very exciting.”

Representation on the PAECS board is as follows:

Public member at large: Cutforth

Ponoka Agricultural Society: Gummow, Cec Dykstra, secretary and Greg Bowie

Town of Ponoka: Councillor Drew Dougherty, treasurer/finance committee chair

Ponoka County: Reeve Gordon Svenningsen, government and corporate relations committee chair

Ponoka Stampede Association: Terry Jones, programs and services committee chair, Danny Jones, building committee chair and Dale Olsen.

There will be a public information meeting held in the auditorium at the Legion on Nov. 17 at 7 p.m. to provide members of the community with more detailed information.