

OPINION

Stouffville Sun-Tribune
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Editorial

Will new theatre satisfy community?

It's hard to believe but Whitchurch-Stouffville may be getting a theatre. It took nine years, but council decided last week to turn the old town hall into an arts, culture and entertainment centre, including a 120-seat theatre.

It will cost about \$2.5 million to convert the building at 19 Civic Dr. The arts centre could open as early as next year.

Saving 19 Civic and building a theatre in Whitchurch-Stouffville is the right thing to do.

Those can be mutually exclusive thoughts.

A theatre of only 120 seats won't satisfy some existing potential users, including Stouffville's famed Music Mania show, let alone the needs of a fast-growing town.

Council nixed a 300-seat theatre with a 10,000-square-foot addition to the old town hall two years ago. Now, that's a theatre.

We fear Councillor Rob Hargrave is correct when he calls the approved proposal for the building "a glorified community centre."

Whitchurch-Stouffville is overstocked with community halls of this same size. We don't need another.

We do need something to happen with the old municipal building. If you're not familiar with the facility it's located behind the Clock Tower in downtown Stouffville and has seen little use since the town offices moved out eight years ago.

Called Nineteen on the Park, because it borders Stouffville Memorial Park, the renovated building could accommodate local art, culture and performance groups and others, while acting as a catalyst for the revitalization of the downtown core.

That's key. We do need something to bring new life downtown.

And a multi-purpose arts centre, not to be confused with a full-fledged theatre, may be the answer. It could house art shows, small performances, meetings and lectures. It could be the new home of the Latham Gallery.

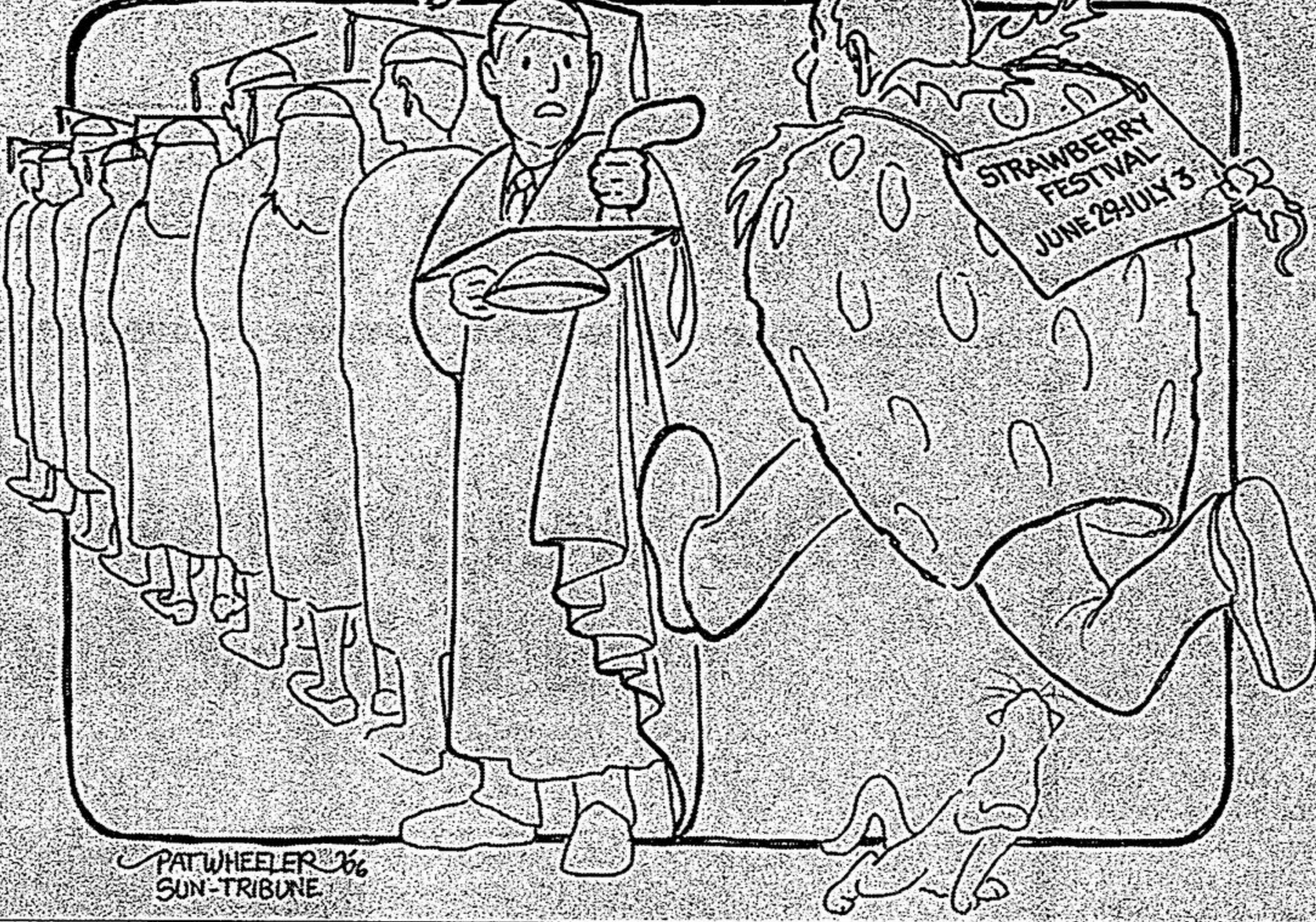
As much as we like renovating 19 Civic, cost is crucial.

Is \$2.5 million, or whatever the final cost, a good use of tax money?

Or would that money be better spent in a few years when this community is larger and can afford to build a theatre to house all local groups?

Stay tuned. We doubt the saga of 19 Civic Ave. is over.

Congratulations SDSS Graduates



PAT WHEELER
 SUN-TRIBUNE



Off The Top

with Jim Mason

The best time to call this place your home

Like the town it entertains, the Whitchurch-Stouffville Strawberry Festival has transformed during the last 22 years.

A weekend ball tournament, beer garden and craft show has grown into a full-fledged fest with a street closure, entertainment and fireworks spread over five days.

It opened last night with a music festival and ends Sunday with a guided tour of Stouffville Memorial Park, home base for the festival. (Ironically, it's a facility that could be changed considerably if the municipality, one of the festival's top sponsors, follows through on plans to remove ball parks, and run roads through.)

The adult ball tourney that once drew hundreds from across Ontario to take part is no more. The festival lives on.

The one thriving sports component appears to have been replaced by entertainment, from a church concert to a comedy show, complete with a mature rating.

Brian Roman, a house dad turned crooner with a huge following in Unionville, appears twice. He packed Roy Thomson Hall this spring and received rave reviews.

Stouffville's own Tom Pullin also performs. And the Blackboard Blues Band, a pre-fireworks tradition on Canada Day in Stouffville, is back.

There's plenty to eat, from vendors in the park or the eateries that line Main Street.

But the best part about the festival is its free. Sounds corny, but it's the people. Forget about the World Cup playoff games on television. Head for downtown Stouffville.

It's all about running into former classmates and holding an unofficial school reunion on Main Street.

It's seeing familiar faces in the morning parade. It's re-living memories with your old hockey coach or bumping into one-time neighbours.

It's sharing a picnic table over the Lions Club's famous roast beef dinner under the park pavilion tonight.

It's sitting down to a cold one with friends and listening to the blues bands in the Clock Tower garden tavern.

It's the essence of small town, the stuff you can't package. It's why people move here or remain residents.

It's what may be threatened by the building boom we are experiencing.

It's the best time of the year to be a Whitchurch-Stouffvillian. Enjoy. See you there, neighbours. *Jim Mason is editor of The Sun-Tribune.*

Letters to the Editor

Animals need all help they can get

Re: Do we need more government in animal control?, column by Dave Teetzel, and OSPCA private police force, protesters charged, story by Teresa Laichford, June 22.

As longtime animal rescue group volunteers, we know animals need all the help they can get, regardless of the source.

To not have government involvement with the protection and care of animals would be like having the Children's Aid Society become private, non-profit or self-governed. Individuals and communities need to speak up and protect those who cannot speak for themselves.

Animal overpopulation and abuse is a community problem. A non-profit organization should be a complementary service to community. There is not a serious animal rescue organization that would not welcome financial support, bylaw support, police support, improved punishments to fit crimes, resources, community support and increased collaboration in all sectors.

According to latest statistics, kittens, puppies, cats and dogs are euthanized at the rate of one every nine seconds as a direct result of overpopulation. Many individuals seem to have forgotten the golden rule of doing unto others as you would have done to you and the old thou shalt not kill.

We need shelters and government regulation that no animal can be adopted (from any source, private, non-profit or otherwise) unless that animal has been spayed or neutered and microchipped.

The cost savings of just this simple step would save the budget at all levels of animal

The Stouffville Sun-Tribune welcomes your letters. All submissions must be less than 400 words and must include a daytime telephone number, name and address.

The Stouffville Sun-Tribune reserves the right to publish or not publish and to edit for clarity and space. Write: Letters to the Editor, P.O. Box 154, Stouffville, L4A 7Z5, e-mail jmason@yrmg.com or fax 905-294-1538

services. The licensing fee of animals would then truly be the free ride home for lost or stolen pets and not just a few days of food and water locked in inadequate kennels for a few days before being killed.

There needs to be education beginning from the moment a child attends day care or school with the teaching of care and compassion. As with other community problems, that care and compassion must be lived by its residents every day.

We have child services; we need animal care services. My thanks to the Town of Markham for allowing our committee of individuals from local animal rescue groups to work with the town, Councillor Erin Shapero and the bylaw enforcement department and animal services, for recognizing the overwhelming community problem and working together to correct it.

How many helpless animals died during the time it has taken you to read this paper?

Please, contact your local rescue group and ask how you can help to be part of the solution. Hug your pets, every day.

MARY & JEFF BROWN
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Stouffville Sun-Tribune
 A York Region Newspaper Group
 community newspaper

The Sun-Tribune, published every Thursday and Saturday, is a member of the Metroland Publishing and Distributing Ltd., a wholly-owned subsidiary of Torstar Corporation. Metroland is comprised of 70 community publications across Ontario. The York Region Newspaper Group includes The Liberal, serving Richmond Hill and Thornhill, Vaughan Citizen, The Economist & Sun (Markham), The Era-Banner (Newmarket/Aurora), Georgina Advocate, York Region Business Times, North of the City, yorkregion.com and York Region Printing.