

OPINION

Stouffville Sun-Tribune
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Editorial

What to do with our old school?

What will become of Stouffville District Secondary School?

Good question.

The new SDSS will open next fall on Weldon Avenue, behind Sobey's. It will be state of the art, with multiple gymnasiums, an auditorium/cafeteria and upgraded classrooms in a variety of disciplines.

The high school students of Whitchurch-Stouffville, who have put up with a sub-standard facility for years, deserve this modern facility. So does the community, which will no doubt use it for performances, sports and adult education the way it used the old school.

But what of that old campus on Bramble Crescent where it meets Edward Street?

Both York Region school boards, the public and Catholic, have passed on using the site.

The Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville says it has not been offered the property, in the rounds of offers that follow the property being deemed unwanted by the public board.

Town council should jump on this land. This should be an election issue. Candidates are talking about it. Look for more of them to jump into the conversation.

The SDSS property is a gem, not quite of Stouffville Memorial Park proportions, but a jewel nonetheless.

The school building is in need of major repair. That's why the school board is abandoning ship.

That doesn't mean it can't be renovated and upgraded into a usable facility, perhaps even a new civic centre. The town is looking for land for new facilities, including an arena, works yard and fire department.

And is the renovation of the old town hall, with its limited size and parking restrictions, really adequate as a performing arts centre?

There is also the question of the playing fields and track complex at the school, all part of the parcel of land.

If the property falls into the hands of the private developers, as the rumour mill in Stouffville has it, will the town or school board not have to replace those facilities in the community?

As Stouffville grows, the SDSS site becomes even more central.

The cost?

With the amount of development money pouring into this town, this is a bill we can't ignore. The property is too valuable, the site too perfect as a public place.

And like Memorial Park, once it's gone, it's gone.



Off The Top

with Jim Mason

We score better with people than goats

How powerful is the local press? Depends who you ask. With goats, we don't score all that well at The Sun-Tribune.

But, we're better with people. Remember the story involving Herb Bell and the goats that invaded his Vandorf Road home last month?

Mr. Bell blamed himself for leaving a side door open that allowed easy access for the four-legged intruders. He didn't know who to thank for letting the goats out of wherever they came from in the first place.

He came to The Sun-Tribune, armed with pictures and stories of close encounters with the goats and news that they were locked up at the animal control centre in Georgina.

We ran a story that drew plenty of comments and chuckles but no news on the owners. Other area papers picked it up. Still no sign of the owner.

"Then, this guy shows up at my house looking for the goats," Mr. Bell said. "Guess you read it in the paper and tracked me down," I said.

No, was the answer. The owner was going door to door and happened upon the right house.

Robert Cilia also came to The Sun-Tribune, looking for assistance. He lives down the street from Lehman's Pond, an oasis in an increasingly urban Stouffville world.

Mr. Cilia wrote to us Sept. 20, complaining the pond area had become a dumping ground for trash and a late-night hangout for young people.

The day before the letter ran Sept. 28, the problem was solved.

"The town has finally taken quick action and cleaned most of the garbage out of the pond and taken away the makeshift campsite in the woods with the burned out furniture," Mr. Cilia said.

"I also got a call from York Regional Police and they advised me that they will be patrolling the area more and the town is looking into upgrading the lighting in the area, as well."

Good stuff. It seems Mr. Cilia copied the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville with his first letter to the editor.

Writing obviously works. Neighbours, including ward Councillor Harry Bowes, who lives but a stone's throw away from the eyesore, griped last summer, but nothing was done. Until Mr. Cilia's well-penned letter.

A cynic would thank the calendar, this being an election year.

A journalist would praise the power of the press.

Jim Mason is editor of The Sun-Tribune.

Letters to the Editor

Main Street unsafe at any time

Re: *When should police cut the chase? Sept. 30*

"Thousand-pound monsters made of steel, rubber, glass and plastic flying along streets at break-neck speeds..." How is that different than any typical day on Main Street, Stouffville?

"Main Street pursuit raises safety issues?" Main Street is a safety issue seven days a week. Poor planning, a growing population, delayed bypasses and impatient drivers have caused Main Street to become a hazard.

Absolutely no vehicle obeys the 40km/h limit, and don't bother trying as road rage tends to be the result, with drivers even passing in the right hand parking lane if someone is not driving fast enough.

A lack of crosswalks, especially between Market Street and Ninth Line, leads to jaywalkers running between breaks in the traffic and kids riding their bikes across the street.

If public safety and economic viability of the town is a concern, maybe council should find the courage to put infrastructure in place before the town is crippled by gridlock, while York Regional Police should take a little more interest in enforcing the traffic laws in town.

JEFF MORRISON
STOUFFVILLE

Don't criticize whistleblower

Re: *Enough is enough over lost contract, letter to the editor by Rick Wigmore, Sept. 21.*

I find it very disconcerting that a citizen, Julie King, who has spoken up about the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville not doing proper planning before it issued an RFP is now being accused of

wasting taxpayer dollars. Even Rick Wigmore, the successful vendor who aimed these accusations at Ms King, admits the town didn't provide much information with its website RFP. That's pretty ironic when you consider that a failure to invest in proper planning will often create enormous additional expenses later on. As a taxpayer, I applaud Ms King and Glenn Jackson for having the courage to bring these valid concerns before council. We are fortunate to have citizens who respect proper process so our taxpayer dollars are not wasted.

As a graphic designer, I also understand how important clear instructions are. A client needs to give the designer as much information as possible as to the use of the product so that the end result will suit their needs exactly. Designing a website without all the information is somewhat like preparing a meal without knowing the ingredients you have. Who knows what the meal will taste like or if it will turn out. Thank you, Ms King, for helping reduce the lack of knowledge in the design field. How insulting to imply she was only disgruntled because of a lost contract. We are fortunate to have her educating council. How can that be wasting taxpayers' dollars?

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