

Stouffville Sun-Tribune

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3 Stouffville arts showcase
sign of things to come

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Town awaits word on old high school building

*Orchard Park school
also vacant in Stouffville*

BY SANDRA BOLAN
Staff Writer

The Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville wants to buy the former Stouffville District Secondary School building, but the York Region District School Board has yet to decide what to do with it, despite it being vacant for almost two years.

"It's in the centre of town and we feel we should purchase the property," Mayor Wayne Emmerson said.

The site, east of the Stouffville Arena on Bramble Crescent, has a variety of possible uses for the town, including a seniors' centre and office space.

"We are always looking for opportunities to cluster activities on one site, as this gives us some economies of scale," said town Chief Administrative Officer Dave Cash.

While the municipality is interested in buying the building, it has to be for the right price.

"The residents of Whitchurch-Stouffville have probably paid for it two-fold through taxes, so we're hoping the school board will be considerate of that," Mr. Emmerson said.

However, discussions about future uses by the town for the old high school may be premature as the school board has yet to deem it surplus.

See **ORCHARD**, page 9.

POURING IT ON FOR CHARITY



STAFF PHOTO/STEVE SOMERVILLE

Olympic trampoline champion Karen Cockburn pours for celebrity servers Mayor Wayne Emmerson (from left), Sun-Tribune editor Jim Mason, MP Paul Calandra and Councillor Phil Bannon during the YMCA Strong Kids charity dinner at Boston Pizza in Stouffville Wednesday.

REGION WILL TAKE \$49 MORE FROM AVERAGE HOMEOWNER

Close vote OKs regional budget with 2.5% hike

BY DAVID FLEISCHER
Staff Writer

After contentious debate and a series of close votes, regional council on Thursday passed its 2009 operating budget, including a controversial tax for hospitals.

"It's the closest one we've ever had," regional chairperson Bill Fisch said of the 9-7 vote approving the \$1.35-billion budget.

Mr. Fisch gets to vote in the

event of a tie and would have supported the budget.

The budget targeted a 2.5-per cent tax increase — equal to \$49 for a \$400,000 home — but the approved levy is slightly below that.

A last-minute amendment, tabled by Richmond Hill Regional Councillor Vito Spatafora and approved by council, asked staff to cut 30 positions, primarily vacancies that will not be filled.

Savings are estimated at about \$2.3 million, resulting in a decrease of between 0.2 and 0.3 per cent in the levy, or \$7 less on your bill.

The region targets hiring nearly 160 people and has about 100 vacancies at any given time.

Markham Mayor Frank Scarpitti long advocated for a zero-tax-increase budget and proposed a motion that would have used the region's \$21-million budget surplus to negate the proposed levy.

The surplus is typically directed to social housing and debt reduction, and several councillors said the move would only create problems down the line.

"If I did that at home, my wife wouldn't let me in the door," Georgina Mayor Rob Grossi said.

Mr. Scarpitti's proposal was shot down in a 13-3 vote.

"It's a responsible budget," Mr.

See **LOWEST**, page 9.

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