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Editorial

Recount requests require rewind

Barring court challenges, the results of the Oct. 25 municipal election are official.

A recount, requested by Ward 3 challenger Hugo Kroon and approved by Whitchurch-Stouffville council, was held yesterday.

As expected, the recount did not change the make-up of town council for the next four years. Clyde Smith retained the Ward 3 seat he has held for two terms.

The same crew of six councillors and Mayor Wayne Emmerson will lead our municipality through 2014.

The process of requesting and granting recounts in Whitchurch-Stouffville requires finetuning, as members of council have admitted.

No offence to Mr. Kroon, who ran a solid campaign. His willingness to listen to the electorate was refreshing, voters told us following The Sun-Tribune debate in September.

What justifies a recount? Certainly, questionable election day practices at polling stations fit the bill. And while that has been the case with other recount requests, it wasn't this time in Ward 3. Councillors asked Mr. Kroon point blank at the meeting to consider the recount if there were irregularities. There weren't.

Numerically, what justifies a recount? Councillor Ken Ferdinands pointed out other recent recounts had a vote differential between candidates of about 1 per cent. In this case, the difference was about 3 per cent, or almost three times the norm.

That difference was 25 votes. It's a huge number when we're talking hundreds, not thousands, of votes being tabulated in Ward 3. Unless a box of ballots fell off a truck between a polling station in Gormley and the municipal offices in Stouffville, it's hard to fathom making up that many votes.

Being disappointed or surprised by the results isn't reason enough to grant a recount. Council should have hard evidence, an extremely tight result or some other compelling reason before granting a recount.

As Mayor Emmerson said, before voting in favour of the recount, every candidate in every ward could have legitimately request a recount, based on the Ward 3 request.

For future requests, council needs a baseline - Councillor Ferdinands' 1 per cent is a good starting point for discussions. Mayor Emmerson agreed, suggesting council deal with the issue in about three years, in advance of the next election.

Good idea.



Letters to the Editor

Speak for animals, residents

Re: *Stouffville lab helps pets pharmaceutically*, Nov. 13.

It is disturbing to hear this type of facility exists next door to a restaurant in Stouffville.

Are the dogs allowed any outdoor time or are they kept in cages 24/7? Is there an independent agency monitoring this facility to ensure animals are not suffering?

What does Jonathan Hare mean when he says, "The dogs and cats used at Kingfisher are from a specific breeder, which helps cuts down the number of subjects required." Does this mean he breeds the dogs and cats within the facility so he doesn't acquire animals from outside?

How does one find out about adopting dogs or cats from this facility?

Are the businesses in Beacon Hill Park aware there will be an animal testing facility located there? Have plans been made for an outdoor area for these dogs and cats?

I understand research is necessary but we don't euthanize people when we take part in a study. The article raises many questions. It is our duty to protect the rights of those who can not speak for themselves in our community.

CAROL KIDD
STOUFFVILLE

Just looking for lost dog

I've been a proud resident of Stouffville for six years. Last Saturday, my neighbours lost their dog. Being a dog owner myself, I joined the search without hesitation.

I drove around the neighbourhood asking people along the way if they had seen the dog, giving its name and description.

I made the rounds in the close vicinity and moved on to the new subdivi-

sion area, the thruway roads of which had recently opened. I went home after 20 minutes of searching.

By the time I got back, the dog had been found in the yard of a neighbour, stuck in a raccoon trap but safe.

One week later, while getting a coffee, a woman rushes out of a business asking if I found the dog. I let her know the dog is fine. I realize she is only concerned about verifying the truth of the story.

She tells me I "terrified" her daughters by asking them if they had seen the dog. I am surprised at this revelation because I remember the kids I as acting normally. The woman then says rudely, "FYI: maybe you shouldn't go around the neighbourhood stopping to talk to children."

The conversation ends with her declaring the world has changed and is no longer the place it used to be. She marches away self-righteously.

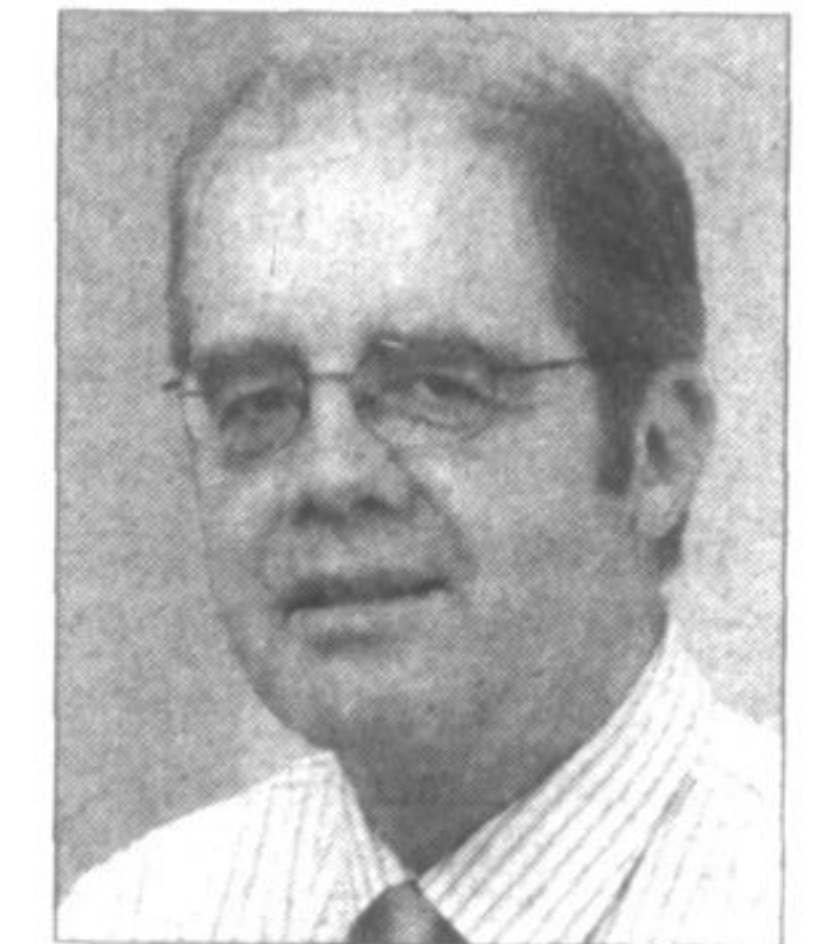
I couldn't help but feel insulted and wronged. This woman questioned my intentions and integrity based on her own unfounded suspicions. On realizing the truth of the situation, she didn't apologize for her accusations and gave her two cents on what appropriate neighbourly conduct was.

I am a father of a young daughter and a firefighter in Toronto who promotes and practises safety. Her insinuations were offensive on every level. She was rash in her suspicions, quick to judge and slow with her rationale.

I have always felt Stouffville to be a safe town with friendly and helpful people. Be forewarned: if a neighbour's dog goes missing again, I will still help search for it.

And lady, sometimes someone looking for his dog is really just someone looking for his dog.

CRAIG MCGUIRE
STOUFFVILLE



Off The Top

with Jim Mason

Where have all the hockey fans gone?

Owners of the Stouffville Spirit Jr. A hockey team hoped moving the majority of their home games from the traditional Thursday nights to Sunday afternoons would result in higher attendance.

It hasn't happened.

The Spirit ranks 15th out of 31 teams in the Ontario Junior Hockey League when it comes to putting warm bodies in cold seats.

The team is averaging 160 fans per game, tiny when you consider there should be at least 100 family members in attendance when two area teams meet.

Competing with the Terry Fox Run, the NFL and Halloween hasn't helped.

And for all of the glitzy improvements made to the 25-year-old Stouffville Arena and its grounds during the last two years, Spirit fans still have to sit on backless bleachers in one of the most frigid ice boxes in the province.

Ironically, the biggest crowd of the year was 247 - on the Spirit's only Thursday game to date.

Of note, the storied Markham Waxers, with one of the best teams in the country this season, are only drawing marginally better.

Flashback five years and the Spirit were averaging 285 paying customers per night.

It costs well over \$100,000 a season to put a solid Jr. A team on the ice. And the Spirit are just that.

After a couple of off years, they are in the upper echelon of clubs in Ontario again. NHL prospect Brennan Serville and others will move on to play at higher levels, be it big-time U.S. college hockey or the Ontario Hockey League.

There are four local kids on this year's roster, including names with fine hockey pedigree like Acton and Carrick.

But does anyone in Stouffville care? Or would you rather just sit on the couch and watch Nashville play Columbus?

Jim Mason is editor of The Sun-Tribune.