

Only Markham has lower tax rate than Whitchurch-Stouffville: town

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'The best part ... is the residents will continue to get services ... and we'll be able to meet the demands of the new population.'

Marc Pourvahidi
treasurer and director of finance for the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville

Markham, at 2.9 per cent, had an anticipated tax rate lower than Whitchurch-Stouffville.

"When you look at a budget, you want to be fair to all parties. Fair to the town, fair to the future and fair to the taxpayers," Councillor Rob Hargrave told The Sub-Tribune.

In order to drop 1.5 per cent from the town portion of the tax levy, a planning department commercial policy study was deferred to 2012, as was the fire protection contract with Markham Fire and Emergency Services, which would have serviced the

Gornley area.

The hiring of a person to handle seniors' community programming was not approved and pushed to at least 2012, according to Mr. Pourvahidi.

One hire that was approved was the corporate communications officer.

"We need to find out how we're going to get the information out that (residents) think we're hiding," said Mayor Wayne Emmerson.

The mayor also noted residents are confusing private websites for the town's and some of the information on those sites is inaccurate.

"They seem to think we're hiding things and we're not," Mr. Emmerson

said.

The position is expected to be filled Oct. 1. Its impact to the 2011 budget is \$16,800.

The corporate communications officer will help the town become more proactive in its dissemination of information, not reactive, which it currently is, according to Dave Cash, CAO for the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville.

"We don't have the resources to go beyond the reaction mode right now," Mr. Cash said. "It's a much more challenging role for us to get out in front."

What also helped to keep the hike relatively low, was the town's higher than anticipated increase in new

homes being assessed by MPAC, which was about 6.2 per cent.

"Which is by far leading the region, more than doubling anyone," Mr. Pourvahidi. The 3-per-cent hike includes 1-per-cent being deposited into capital reserves.

"The best part ... is the residents will continue to get services ... and we'll be able to meet the demands of the new population," Mr. Pourvahidi said.

The 2010 fiscal impact study recommended an annual tax hike of 2.8 per cent from 2010 to 2014, just to keep services status quo. That increase did not include the additional 1-per-cent contribution to capital reserves. However, the 2011 hike of 3 per cent, does.

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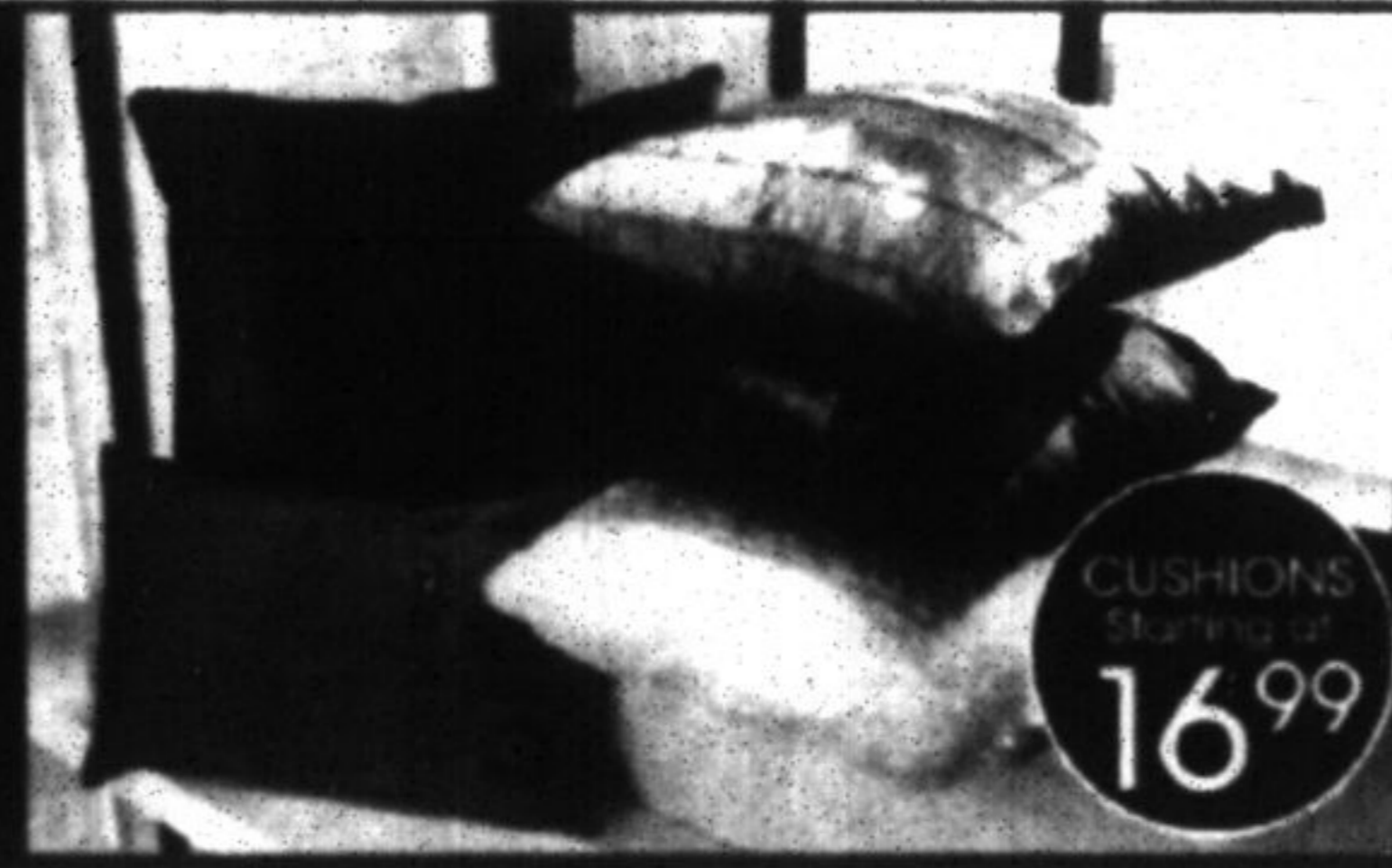
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Mayor Wayne Emmerson
on the hiring of a corporate communications officer by the town

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