

Library expansion planned for 2015

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received an 11-per-cent increase to its operating budget and hired its first full-time employee in nine years.

"It's getting the same treatment as the other (departments)," said Councillor and library board member Susanne Hilton.

"When you give \$1 million to a facility in town and you say it's underfunded, I have concerns," said Councillor and library board member Rob Hargrave. "If (it's) underfunded, why did (library CEO Carolyn Nordheimer James) set her budget at what it is?"

When contacted by The Sun-Tribune for an interview regarding the petition and Mr. Neufeldt-Fast's claims, Ms Nordheimer James replied via e-mail: "The library board, management and staff have no comment to make at this time."

"I'm disappointed the CEO has not stepped up and said 'I'm in charge of setting the budget and there's not a problem,'" Mr. Hargrave said.

Mr. Neufeldt-Fast is basing much of his case on information provided by the Municipal Performance Measurement Program and BMA Management Consulting firm.

"These numbers only represent the numbers based on the accounting procedures and they are not to be taken for comparisons. They are not apples to

apples," said Marc Pourvahidi, the town's director of finance and treasurer. "He's definitely wrong."

What the numbers do not show, according to Mr. Pourvahidi, are such things as whether or not the library's building is leased or owned or how various operating expenses are paid for by the individual municipality.

'When you give \$1 million to a facility in town and you say it's underfunded, I have concerns.'

"It's clear we've got few staff, small staff. We're falling way behind in books. ... That's why I (don't) buy his argument," Mr. Neufeldt-Fast said.

He also wants the planned 2015 library expansion brought forward. The design will be done in 2014 during the current term of council.

"On the surface, it looks like they're washing their hands of this one," he said.

Once again, the opinions differ.

"I think 2015 is a good time line for it," Ms Hilton told The Sun-Tribune. "We have to also think about our library usage — it's changing. Our relationship between electronic materials and printed materials is changing."

Electronic uses at the Whitchurch-Stouffville Public Library are one of the

highest in the area at 9.67 per capita in 2008. The provincial average was 5.08 according to the Ontario Ministry of Tourism and Culture, which oversees public libraries.

Virtual users log into the library's website to do catalogue searches, check programs, download books and use its electronic databases.

Although the actual construction of the new library will fall to the new council, that should not concern residents.

"We can't think only term by term," Ms Hilton said. "We have to look longer term. It would shock me if the next term of council would stop it. ... It's too far in the process to turn back."

As part of the recently approved leisure services master plan update, the definition of leisure was broadened to encompass more services, including the library.

"The library might do all right the way the town supports leisure," Mr. Neufeldt-Fast said.

By rolling the library into leisure services, Mr. Neufeldt-Fast said that gives the impression the library is only for leisure reading, which is a luxury, therefore, an expense that can be cut.

Mr. Neufeldt-Fast will be making a presentation to the library board Sept. 1 followed by one to council Sept. 6.

For more information go to <http://wslibrarypetition.blogspot.com>



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Children's reading is a popular program at the Whitchurch-Stouffville Public Library.

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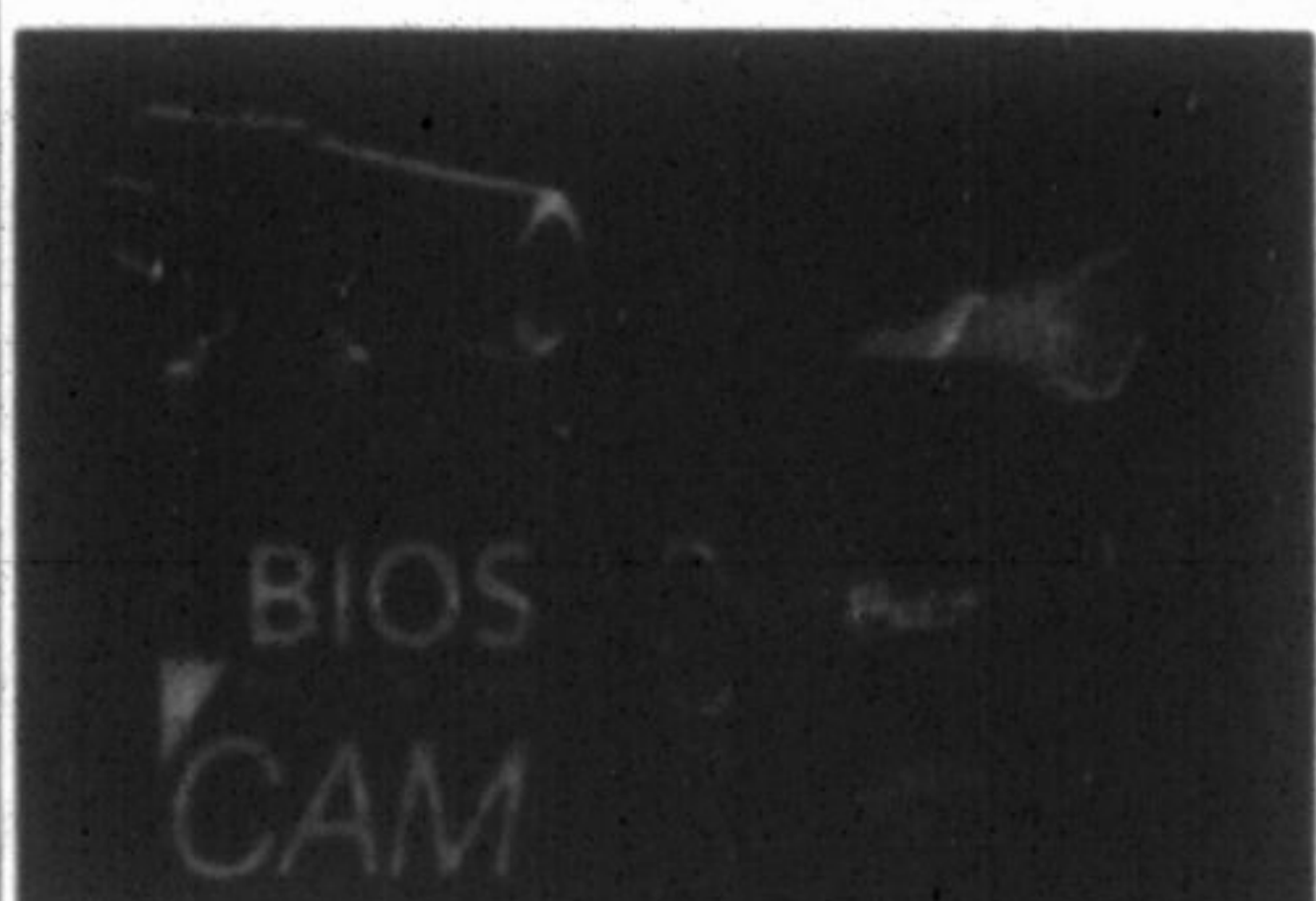
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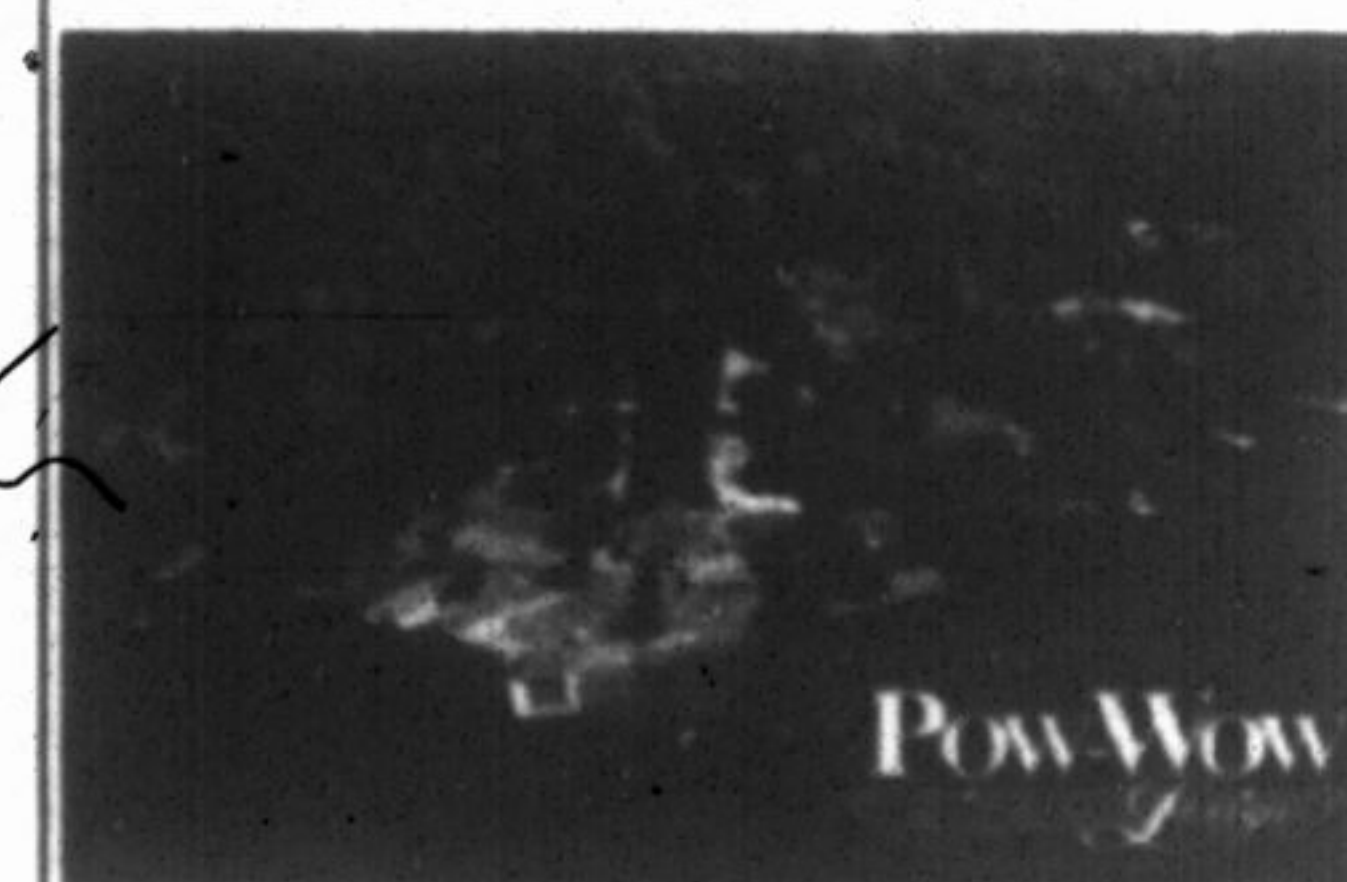
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