

Mayor backtracks on criticizing candidate no-shows

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Five of six candidates vying for the MPP post in Oak Ridges-Markham were too busy Tuesday night to present their platforms to Whitchurch-Stouffville council, Mayor Wayne Emmerson told a meeting in the municipal offices.

Only Green Party candidate Trifon Haitas took the mayor up on his invitation, he said.

"Never too busy to address any concerns," he told the councillors and handful of residents sitting in the gallery prior to the start of the council meeting.

"Even if there were only one person here, I would show up," Mr. Haitas said.

Mr. Emmerson got the idea from Port Perry. Candidates were invited

to present their platform, prior to the start of the council meeting, for five minutes. There would be no questions asked of the candidates.

Mr. Emmerson, in an e-mail to The Sun-Tribune yesterday, said it was his fault the candidates did not come.

"I made a mistake on the time we sent the notices," he wrote. "I know they are all very busy, however, I thought we should ask."

The invitations were mailed Sept. 21 to the campaign offices of incumbent Helena Jaczek (Liberal), Farid Wassef (Progressive Conservative), Joe Whitfeld (NDP) and Mr. Haitas, according to Tamara Carlson, the mayor's executive assistant.

Candidates Ruida Lu (independent) and Karl Boelling (Libertarian)

were unintentionally left off the invite list, according to Ms Carlson.

"That was definitely an oversight on my part," she said.

"I was available last night. Although I am busy during the campaign period, I always make myself available to community events relating to election campaigns," Mr. Lu said yesterday. "I understand that it is always difficult to run as an independent and I expect those difficulties, such as not being notified about events."

Mr. Wassef and Mr. Whitfeld said they did not receive the mailed invitations. So when Ms Carlson sent out follow up e-mails Monday morning, they said it was the first they had heard of the invitation.

Mr. Wassef and Ms Carlson

exchanged e-mails regarding the time and only a few hours before the council meeting did the PC candidate discover he was to speak at the beginning of the council meeting, he said.

Mr. Wassef was already committed to an event with party leader Tim Hudak but asked if he could speak at the end of the council meeting. He said he did not receive a reply from Ms Carlson.

"In the midst of a campaign, when you're trying to reach voters, I wish we were given a little bit more notice," Mr. Wassef said.

Ms Jaczek did not return The Sun-Tribune's calls yesterday.

In explaining why Mr. Haitas was at the meeting, Mr. Emmerson also noted he thought the Whitchurch-Stouffville Public Library would

have held an all-candidates meeting.

"The library has never done that. It's not part of (our) mandate. We do the municipal ones," said Carolyn Nordheimer James, CEO of the Whitchurch-Stouffville Public Library. "The board feels it should be the chamber or some other group in the community."

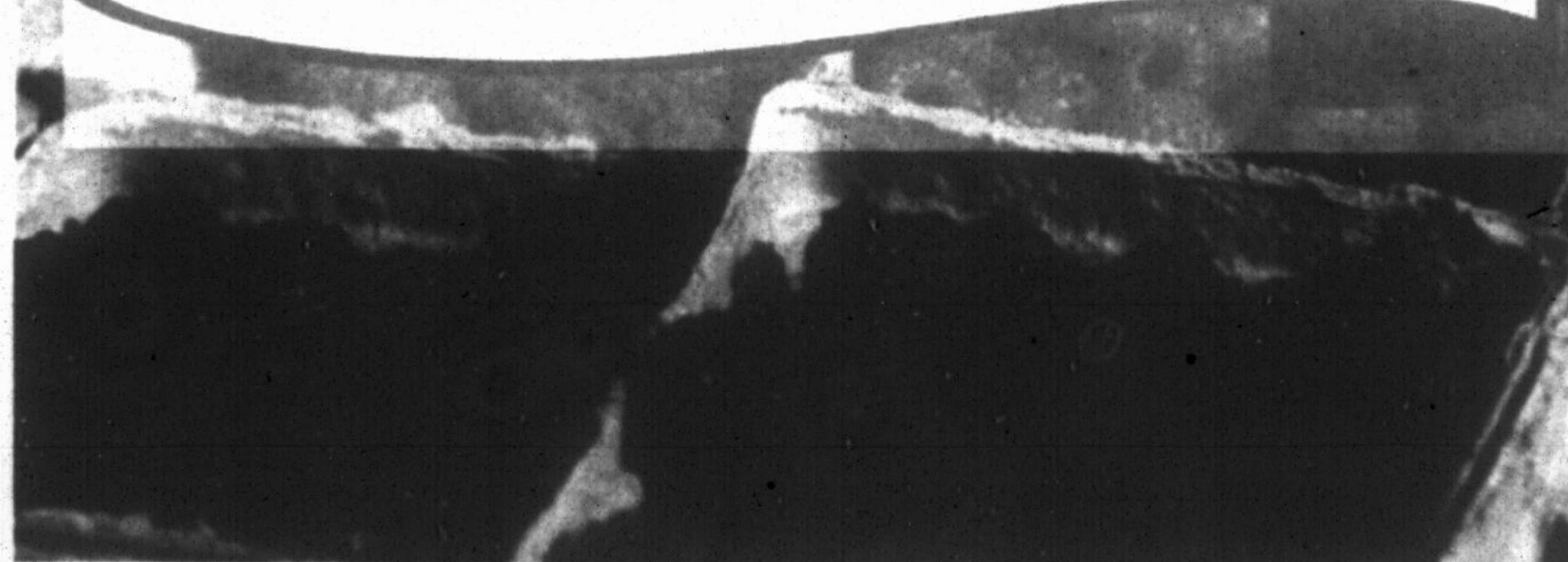
The Whitchurch-Stouffville Chamber of Commerce did not hold its own all-candidates meeting because of the overlapping chamber boundaries within the riding, according to Mardi Taylor, executive director of the Whitchurch-Stouffville Chamber of Commerce.

The only one to take place was Sept. 24 at the Angus Glen Public Library in Markham. The event was hosted by the Markham Library.

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