



STAFF PHOTO/JIM MASON

The town's proposed draft budget includes \$830,000 for the library expansion design and \$20,000 for an organizational staffing study.

No sympathy for library crusader at council

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Looking at the data, the Whitchurch-Stouffville Public Library is at the bottom end of staffing levels and its operating costs are a drop in the bucket compared to other municipalities.

But the numbers don't tell the whole story.

"This library has the most dedicated staff I have worked with. They go above and beyond what is required," said Carolyn Nordheimer James, the library's CEO, adding they all have "passion" for what they do.

There is a Whitchurch-Stouffville resident who is also passionate about the library and has embarked on a one-man crusade to save it from falling further behind provincial averages.

"Our town is very far from the standard, very far from the average," Arnold Neufeldt-Fast told councillors last week during another presentation in which he lobbied for more library funding.

"Our plea is simply an average

library. Not a state-of-the-art one," he said.

"These are his own personal observations from being in the library and looking at the stats and making assumptions," Ms Nordheimer James told The Sun-Tribune.

"Neither the library staff nor the library board has provided him any information," Ms Nordheimer James said. "He is exercising his civic responsibility in making the mayor, councillors and residents aware of the deficiencies the municipality is providing to residents."

Could staff offer more programs if they received more money from the town?

"Perhaps," library board chairperson Maurice Smith told The Sun-Tribune.

"I'm the last person to complain about the money we receive from the town," he said.

Neither Ms Nordheimer James nor Mr. Smith were present during Mr. Neufeldt-Fast's council presentation.

'I'm the last person to complain about the money we receive from the town.'

Maurice Smith
library board chairperson

"The library will always welcome support from the residents for increased awareness of the library," Mr. Smith said.

Maybe not money, but physical space is what's causing a gap between servicing the community's needs and wants versus what is being offered, according to MNP's corporate efficiency review commissioned by the town.

Staff has the ability and want to provide more children's programming, for example, but there is nowhere to do it, Ms Nordheimer James said.

An expanded library is in the works.

The corporate efficiency review,

which was received last week, revealed the library compares favourably to other municipal libraries based on cost data.

The facility has the lowest annual operating cost — \$855,729 — when compared to 2010 data for East Gwillimbury, Bradford West Gwillimbury, New Tecumseth, Georgina, Aurora and Milton, which, when combined with Whitchurch-Stouffville, have an average of \$1,861,399.

"I haven't heard it from anybody else. I've only heard it from you," Mayor Wayne Emmerson told Mr. Neufeldt-Fast in response to his claims library staff are overworked.

Mr. Neufeldt-Fast regularly makes pleas for library funding in e-mails to members of council and the media. Town staff and councillors took exception to numbers he presented to them in 2011 asking for funding increases at the library.

Library board members and councillors Richard Bartley and Rob Hargrave also noted during

the meeting they, too, have never heard complaints of this nature.

The library CEO's current focus is getting the most bang for their buck.

Members of the library board decided they would defer all hirings up to 2016 in lieu of getting a professional librarian this year, which is "critically needed right now," according to Ms Nordheimer James.

Council will decide if they approve this hire in April when the 2013 budget gets debated.

"We do have a very well-run library," Mr. Hargrave told council.

The proposed draft budget also includes \$830,000 for the library expansion design and \$20,000 for an organizational staffing study.

"The purpose is to not look at how many staff we have, but organizational structure and make sure it's the most efficient structure, especially with an expansion," Ms Nordheimer James said.

The proposed budget also includes \$30,000 for a website revision.

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