

Councillors not convinced by online voting

BY SANDRA BOLAN
sbolan@yrmg.com

Add online and phone voting to the advanced polls and you may lose residents who like to vote old school — by marking a box on a piece of paper with a pencil.

Don't add Internet and phone voting to the advanced polls and you may lose the young, tech-savvy do-everything-online voters.

That is the conundrum facing council right now, who voted old school 3-2 Tuesday night — by raising a hand — to defer making a decision on how residents will cast a ballot in the 2014 municipal election's advanced polls.

If the town were to go high-tech for the next election's advanced polls, as recommended in this week's staff report, simultaneous in-person voting would only be able to take place at the town hall as real-time Internet access is required to ensure someone doesn't vote on their tablet, then try to cast another ballot in person.

The traditional in-person locations, such as Ballantrae's fire hall and the leisure centre in Stouffville,

cannot be used because they do not have appropriate Internet access, according to Michele Kennedy, the town clerk.

The municipality's northern and older residents may not vote because of the distance they have to drive and methodology available to them, according to Councillor Phil Bannon.

"I'm not prepared to leave them behind," Mr. Bannon said.

The councillor is also not convinced online and phone voting are better than in-person balloting.

Another councillor not in favour of online voting is Ken Ferdinands.

"I don't believe any other system out there today can offer that guarantee of a private and non-influenced vote, he said Tuesday night.

However, he did admit something has to be done to increase voter turnout, which was 43.96 per cent in the 2010 municipal election. In the 2006 local election, 45 per cent of eligible voters cast a ballot.

"The numbers we are getting



KEN FERDINANDS: Councillor says turnout in recent municipal elections was "embarrassing low".

now are embarrassing low," he said.

Cost and security were Mr. Ferdinands' main concerns.

"For every election, the cost of running a parallel Internet system is \$3 a voter," he said, noting to install the technology it will cost \$90,000.

And when it comes to security,

"I'm sure there are 12-year-olds out there who can crack into a system and create a denial of service."

Advocating for the use of online and phone voting during the next municipal election's advanced polls was Sun-Tribune editor Jim Mason, who spoke on behalf of the newspaper's Community Links' panel.

He called online voting "the way of the day".

Mr. Mason also noted that while online and phone voting are not a "magic elixir" to increasing voter turnout, they do boost inclusiveness as it gives another option to the disabled, students studying out of town, the busy single parent and commuter.

Before council was a report recommending online, phone and in-person voting via an optical scan tabulator be used for the advanced polls next year. Only the in-person voting via the optical scan tabulators would be utilized on voting day.

Council voted 3-2 to defer the decision to next month.

Councillor Richard Bartley

and Mr. Ferdinands voted against the deferral, while Mr. Bannon and councillors Clyde Smith and Susanne Hilton wanted the decision delayed.

Councillor Rob Hargrave was not at the meeting and did not vote.

"I'm sure there are 12-year-olds out there who can crack into a system and create a denial of service."

"I do believe the system we have in place now will be fine for 2014," Mayor Wayne Emmerson said. He did not vote on the decision.

When the report returns to council Oct. 15, information on the viability of using the Whitchurch-Stouffville Museum for the advanced polls will be re-evaluated, as per the request of council.

That meeting begins at 7 p.m.

save.ca

Save \$1.00 on any Buitoni Pizza



Get your coupon at www.save.ca

facebook.com/savedotca

a division of metroland inc.

yellowbrickhouse
Rebuilding Lives
Empowering Abused Women & Children

Emergency Shelter
905.727.1944

24-hour Crisis Line
1.800.263.3247

yellowbrickhouse.org

Yellow Brick House offers confidential support to abused women and their children in York Region. To learn more please, visit our website.

Celebrating our 35th Anniversary!

UNIONVILLE THEATRE COMPANY
PRESENTS

SHREK THE MUSICAL

AUDITIONS

INFORMATION SESSION
SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 8th, 2013
2:00 PM

CHOSBY MEMORIAL ARENA
1000 SHEPPARD AVENUE EAST, SUITE 100, SCARBOROUGH, ONTARIO M1B 4Y7

FOR MORE INFORMATION
EMAIL: info@unionvilletheatre.com

Girls Incorporated[®]
of
York Region

girls inc.®

Volunteer Today!

Call
905-830-0776

www.girlsincyork.org

United Way
of York Region
Member Agency

This message brought to you as a community service of The Stouffville Sun Tribune

Please recycle this newspaper