

OPINION



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COLUMN

Your new mayor will be on steep learning curve, Stouffville

Meet the new boss. Same as the old boss.

The Who

Supporters of Wayne Emmerson and Justin Altmann will likely bristle at the suggestion. But you have to admit there are similarities between the outgoing and incoming mayors of Whitchurch-Stouffville.

They'll perform a hand-off of the chain of office Dec. 2. It won't be as warm and fuzzy as if Richard Bartley or Phil Bannon, both councillors under Emmerson during the past eight years, had won Monday night.

But both Emmerson and Altmann are born-and-bred Stouffvillites. Emmerson never left. Altmann did somewhat briefly, to attend university and work on the Alberta Oil Patch.

And while their circles of friends differ, thanks to almost 30 years difference in age, both attract that homeboy support.

Altmann is big with the Kinsmen and the Strawberry Festival. Emmerson in the softball and hockey crowd.

Altmann lacks what no other mayor in my 32 years of watching Whitchurch-Stouffville council has — experience on that council he must now lead.

Sorry, mayor-elect, but you've got a large learning curve ahead of you. If you haven't yet, I'd get audio copies of the Municipal Act, town bylaws and other pertinent documents and play them 24/7 during the next month. Cram hard.

Then there's the matter of leading a council that includes four councillors who are also brand spanking new to municipal politics.

Councillors Ken Ferdinands (Ward 1) and Rob Hargrave (Ward 6) represent opposite corners on the map of Whitchurch-Stouffville. But their combined 22 years on council should be relied on heavily during the next four years.

It's all you've got.

Bartley and Bannon must be rethinking the logic of both



Off The Top

with Jim Mason

running. The rearview mirror doesn't lie. Together they amassed 57 per cent of the vote to Altmann's 33 per cent.

They, too, are similar, representing the old guard, if you will.

If you didn't like the handling of the downtown Rogers' cell tower, the redevelopment of Memorial Park or the \$40 million addition to the library/fitness centre, you may have voted for a challenger. Like Altmann.

I heard that chorus loud and clear. "We need change."

Then there was the wholesale trade centre, the red herding of this whole campaign. Four years ago, it was the town debt that was trotted out and pumped up into an election issue. Nice try, but it didn't resonate with voters.

The trade centre did, despite claims many of the concerns were racially motivated. Why was it important to continually call it Asian, eh, candidates? We should be trying break down walls as our community becomes more multicultural by the day, not building more.

Numbers of anticipated visitors were inflated by some. Sadly it was called "another Pacific Mall" by others — as recently as last weekend.

Now, it's Altmann's turn. What and how will he do during the next four years, residents are now asking.

Over to you, Altmann.

Jim Mason is editor of The Sun-Tribune. Follow him on Twitter @stouffeditor

LETTER OF THE WEEK

Town did right thing with Memorial Park park 'monument'

Re: War memorial deserved better, letter to the editor by Bryan Millsip, Oct. 16

It disturbs me when a damning editorial is submitted without first searching all the correct facts.

Mr. Millsip, in his rant about the town's leisure services department and in particular director Rob Raycroft, lists the removal of the "memorial" in the park as the third time the town has not followed the proper procedure.

The other two were the removal of the toboggan hill and the outdoor pool. He claims the residents were not consulted.

I attended two public sessions at Eastridge Church arranged by the town under then-mayor Sue Sherban's watch when all residents were invited to hear about the proposed changes to the Memorial Park and express their comments/changes.

At both of those meetings, we were informed the toboggan hill and swimming pool would be removed. It is unfair to say the residents were not informed. Their absence simply showed a lack of interest or

an "I don't care" attitude. If you want to be informed, get involved.

On the same vein, the Memorial Park plan has been discussed by the members of council on many occasions. Council minutes show the dates when discussion occurred.

As for the "monument", it was a slab of cement. There was nothing memorial about it. If there had been any memorial significance, the legion would have included it in their Remembrance Day services.

I have lived in Stouffville since 1956 and I don't ever recall the legion placing any importance to the slab of cement (and yes, I remember the gun that used sit on top of it). The plaque was removed and saved and will be placed in a more significant site/location acceptable to the legion and all residents.

What good does a slab of cement situated in the centre of the park do?

Leisure services did the right thing by removing it for safety reasons. To fence it would only make it more unsightly.

WILF MORLEY
STOUFFVILLE

Links Panel should hold meetings again in 2018 – in bigger venues

First off, I would like to congratulate the members of The Sun-Tribune's Links Panel for bringing awareness to the Big 5-0.

I would like to press forward, however, my concern following the Ward 5 candidate information night at Nineteen on the Park last week. I am a Ward 6 resident and have attended the Ward 2, 4, 5 and 6 information Q/A nights as well as the mayoral information session, plus countless council meetings this year. I am a stakeholder in this community as I pay taxes and have an invested interest in this town as I have been here since I was four.

While trying to raise a family, I am trying to be informed about the everlasting political candidate race.

I would suggest to the Links Panel the following for the 2018 election: Hold all the meetings in larger venues, as I have seen countless seniors standing for two hours to be informed.

Secondly, allow all residents to have a voice. I find it appalling that I was asked to sit down and my question about a particular building in Ward 5 was not going to be answered because I do not live in that ward. I thank the Ward 5 resident who stood up and re-stated the question.

If you want to promote the vote, take into account all elected council members have a vote for what goes on in all wards.

Not only did I wait for there to be no one

in line before attempting to ask my question, I also checked the time to make sure there was enough time for closing statements, as I am not new to the flow of these meetings.

If ward councillors are allowed to vote on all town issues, then everyone in town should have the right to ask fair questions.

SHAWNA KELTERBORN
STOUFFVILLE

Parkview residents will miss Santa

Re: Shorter route for Stouffville's Santa Claus parade this year, Oct. 23

Every year my family and I enjoy the annual Kinsmen Santa Claus Parade in Stouffville. One of our favourite parts has been enjoying seeing the residents of the Parkview Home for seniors on Weldon Road enjoying the parade from their windows.

Often, residents are not able to venture outside, especially during colder months and they seemed so thrilled to see not only the parade but the children watching it as well.

I know that change is sometimes necessary, but I am not sure why cutting the parade those few blocks really makes a difference?

I know it will make a difference to those residents who now will never be able to experience the amazing parade again.

BETH CULLINGTON
STOUFFVILLE

Send your letters to the editor to Jim Mason via jmason@yrmg.com