

## Talk of the Town

# Taking Stock At Town Hall

By Ben Embiricos

The start of a new year is usually a time to take stock and get an overview for the year ahead.

On the surface, 2013 may look like it will shape up to be a relatively quiet year at town hall with no new construction projects being discussed and no election taking place until 2014. But like a duck swimming across a pond, it may appear calm but there is a lot going on below the waterline.

For vocal library supporters such as Arnold Neufeldt-East, the lack of a big building project is a cause for concern. They would like to see a significant addition to the library floor space as well as the replenishment of library materials. Mr. Neufeldt-East refers to a relatively low number of books per head of population as evidence that the library extension is badly needed.

I spoke recently with Mayor Wayne Emmerson about the year ahead. On the subject of the library, the mayor said, "The library CEO says that the expansion would cost over ten million dollars. We don't have the money for that at the moment." He went on to point out that the current library was only built ten years ago. He hopes that the library expansion can take place at the same time as an expansion of the leisure centre.

He predicts that this year will mostly be about consolidation. He noted that, "We will be finishing the town hall with more programming space going in there and with the policing centre being added." Mr. Emmerson said the construction on the Ninth Line jog elimination, which has been a long time in the pipeline, would go ahead this spring.

I also spoke with Councillor Phil Bannon, who said, "There won't be a lot of big building projects for the next two years. We are in management mode right now, seeing what we can do with what we have got."

In October 2013, the town is due to re-take occupation of the space currently leased by the Care and Share thrift store. Mr. Bannon said that this will help with what the town has identified as a facility space deficit of some 20,000 square feet. He anticipates the

space could be used for programming for all age groups.

It is hoped that the Care and Share will find suitable replacement space in town. In Mr. Emmerson's words, "The store is a major asset to the community which I would not like to see leave the town."

On the subject of the library expansion, Mr. Bannon shares the mayor's view. "Each area has its champions - the park, the library, the seniors and the leisure centre and we come under pressures from all these groups," he said. "If we expanded the leisure centre and library in stages we would face six to seven years of constant construction." He would prefer to carry out all the construction work in one go so that "we can make space for everyone, not just one group."

This year should see the completion of a privately owned indoor soccer facility near Hoover Park and Mostar which the mayor anticipates will offer the town and the soccer club some programming options.

On the election front, 2013 will be a crucial year for anyone who wishes to become Whitchurch-Stouffville's next mayor. Current Mayor Wayne Emmerson has publicly stated that he will not run in 2014, ending a long stint in the top job. This leaves an opportunity for one of the current councillors to run for mayor. Of the six, my educated guess is that as many as three or more are contemplating running.

For members of council, though, the decision is a tricky one. To run for the top job they have to give up a relatively sure thing, as they can't run for both positions. I would expect that there will be a good deal of discussion this year between members of council as each tries to predict who they may be running against. There will also be campaign fund raising efforts.

By the end of 2013, most of the mayoral candidates, and probably quite a few of those running for council, will have decided their next moves, with candidates being able to put their names forward for election starting in January next year.

All in all, 2013 may not be the quiet year that it appears to be on the surface.

## An Impressive Stance



Joe Buick, who runs Buick's Karate in Stouffville, celebrated his 40th anniversary in the sport on Jan. 24. His students, seen here demonstrating a stance, presented him with a plaque to mark this special occasion. Joe is a fifth degree Black Belt in Shorin Ryu, and has Black Belts in Goju Ryu and Jiu Jitsu and a Red Sash in Tai Chi. His Stouffville studio is also celebrating its first anniversary in the community.  
Bruce Stapley photo

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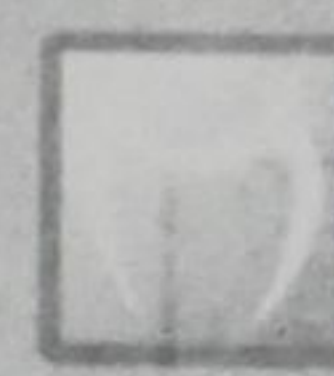


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