

Council OKs expansion over pleas from residents

BY SANDRA BOLAN
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Whitchurch-Stouffville's mayor did not like hearing people are "afraid, pressured, beat down, worn down, not heard," during Tuesday night's council meeting, where once again the library/leisure centre expansion was up for discussion.

Mayor Justin Altmann directed those comments to Brian Puppa, director of the Legacy Center, who presented a request to council on behalf of more than two-dozen prominent residents, to defer approving the \$12.825-million project.

I just feel like there is this underlying current that the town is not satisfied with the services that we're offering and I don't know if that's actually true.

In reality it was former Whitchurch-Stouffville Citizen of the Year – Diane Ward, who said, in part "none of council seem to listen or hear any of us on December (first) making us feel controlled and not important."

Two weeks ago was the last time the expansion came before council for discussion. Ward, a senior, also spoke at the meeting in favour of putting a seniors' centre back into the plan.

During this week's delegation, she claimed the executive of the 55 Plus Club approved their move from Latcham Hall to 6240 Main Street "only because they felt pressured to agree."

Council did not discuss deferring the expansion for a month, as requested by Puppa, but instead, unanimously approved the revised concept design.

Among the more than two-dozen people to put their name to the request was former federal NDP candidate Gregory Hines, who also

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works for Community Living York South; 2014 mayoral candidate Arnold Neufeldt-Fast; Buckingham Manor's general manager Michelle Hanson, as well as former town councillors Wilf Morley and Jim Sanders.

No one from the full gallery spoke in favour of the expansion.

"I just feel like there is this underlying current that the town is not satisfied with the services that we're offering and I don't know if that's actually true. I realize that we don't have the ability to be all things to all people," said Ward 5 Councillor Iain Lovatt.

He cited a 2008 quality of life survey, which found 93 per cent of respondents were satisfied or very satisfied with municipal government services, with the greatest satisfaction for the library, leisure centre and swim programs, along with fire/emergency services and waste collection.

He was not sure if a more recent survey was available, it was what he could find during the meeting.

Brian Hathaway, whose Rose Avenue home backs onto the facility's north side, doesn't think a new library is needed.

"That building is not worth attaching another building to," he told councillors.

Another resident – Warren Brubacher – wasn't in favour or against the expansion, but noted libraries have always been a refuge for him.

Every time he moves to a different town, the first place the 58-year-old looks for is the library.

What he did note about the Stouffville library, however, was there were no quiet zones.

"It's very difficult in that library to find a place to study," he said, noting a library is "not a daycare centre."

Construction is expected to get started as soon as possible in 2016, with a completion date of early to mid-2017.



STAFF PHOTO/NICK IWANYSHYN

SNOWBALL STRINGS

Deborah LoPatriello checks out one of the silent auction items during the The SnowBall Gala at Lebovic Centre for Arts & Entertainment – Nineteen on the Park Friday night. The annual sold-out event benefits the downtown Stouffville arts centre. See more photographs on yorkregion.com under 'Photo Galleries'.

MP, MPP could move into municipal offices

Municipal, provincial and federal offices could all be under one roof in the new year.

Markham-Stouffville MP and Health Minister Jane Philpott's proposal to move into the municipal offices was approved by council Tuesday night.

The MP's staff will move into a repurposed boardroom adjacent the lobby and customer service area.

Philpott is currently set up in former Conservative MP Paul Calandra's old office on Main Street east of Ninth Line.

Some councillors, however, were concerned about having to pay the leasehold improvements if Philpott were to only be in office for one term. They suggested the renovations be paid off within her first term.

It was also noted Oak Ridges-Markham MPP Helena Jaczek is interested in moving her constituency office into the town hall.

"That is not a rumour. ... Helena Jaczek was here Friday and we had a good tour of the building. The interest is there," said Marc Pourvahidi, CAO for the Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville during Tuesday night's council meeting.

There was no discussion on where her constituency office could be located.

The CAO said they would know in January if Jaczek will also move into the municipal offices.

For the 2018 provincial election, the ridings will be re-aligned to match the federal ones.

—Sandra Bolan

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