

## COLUMNS

### Returns to glory forecast for Stouffville entities

**W**e're no Kreskin or Mike Mandel, to butcher an old Goddo lyric.

But we think we can see the future. And it's all good.

Thus, things we trust will happen in 2016:

- Goodwill on Whitchurch-Stouffville council. Emergency meetings, with supporters waiting outside closed doors, make for front-page headlines and letters to the editor. But we'd prefer to write about decisions over distractions.

- A return to the glory days of 2011-12 for the Stouffville Spirit. Another Ontario Junior Hockey League title appears a long shot in 2016, but could a long playoff run be in their more distant future?

- A return to glory days for the Stouffville Farmers' Market, too. Downtown was abuzz with folks when the market launched with multiple fresh food and baking vendors. That's dropped to a trickle during recent summers.

- Our town council doesn't have a social media star like Toronto councillor Norm Kelly. But at least we have some Tweeters and Facebook fans on this edition of council. Who will go viral in '16, councillors?

- The sight of the toboggan hill rising from its ashes in Stouffville Memorial Park. There are other contenders, but its removal will go down as one of the worst political decisions in Stouffville history. Its promised return could soothe the wounds of sledders who are approaching voting age, council.

- The park bandshell was a big hit during the evening the Pan American Games torch was run through town last summer. We'd like to see a concert series in the venue this summer, similar to the very popular Friday night movie series it already hosts. See Markham, Richmond Hill, Ajax and other GTA municipalities



**Off The Top**  
with *Jim Mason*

for the blueprints.

- May 2016 be as inspiring as this past year for Smiley. Born blind, the Whitchurch-Stouffville service dog has captured the hearts of everyone he has met. May you get that opportunity in 2016.

- A sweet '16 to the Lebovic Centre for Arts & Entertainment – 19 on the Park. There have been stumbles, including the dismissal of its entire board of directors by the current council. And we probably paid too much to turn the former Stanley Theatre/pool hall/municipal offices into our arts centre. But it's gorgeous and should be the focal point for our downtown core. We'd hoped to see Marc Jordan or Tom Cochrane play it this year. But we'll settle for The Fortunate Ones (March 23), Randy and Mr. Lahey from the Trailer Park Boys (March 30) and two blues offerings next fall.

- Will the wait for a town team to inhabit the ball diamond in Memorial Park end? No offense to the current players, but spending \$1 million to renovate the field for house leaguers and beer leaguers was too extravagant.

May your garbage always get picked up on time and never a parking ticket defile the windshield of your car. Happy New Year, Whitchurch-Stouffville.

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

### Justin, Nadine topped 2015

**J**ust over a year ago Justin Altmann, then a 32-year-old market gardener and a twice-defeated municipal candidate, rocketed between veteran councillors Phil Bannon and Richard Bartley to win Whitchurch-Stouffville's chief magistrate's job.

While those closest to the Altmann camp confidently pegged him a front-runner, the end result sent shock waves through the mind-sets of pro-Bannon and Bartley supporters. They felt certain one or the other would grab the gold ring.

But not on this night. The mayor-elect defeated his nearest rival by 357 votes. With the exception of two re-elects, Ken Ferdinands and Rob Hargrave, recognizable faces behind the bench would radically change.

That was then. This is now.

Counter to some people's predictions, the wheels of local government are still turning with little signs of slowing down.

Town population currently stands at 46,000 with our mayor working 15 hours a day, six days a week, he says. And loving it, so much so he has every intention of defending his mayoralty position in 2018.

At the risk of losing a few friends, but on the basis of an amazing rise to power and resultant achievements, Justin Altmann remains my carry-over choice for 2015's "Man of the Year".

So what's been accomplished?

Looking back over the past 12 months, Mayor Altmann honestly admits 2015 has been "pretty challenging" with "a lot to learn". He's met these challenges squarely and learned his lessons well by talking with



**Roaming Around**  
with *Jim Thomas*

people, attending events and keeping an ear to the ground. At the same time he's attempted to maintain a balance between home life and political presence.

"I found myself wearing a lot of different hats," he notes.

With respect to the town's place at the region, he claims Whitchurch-Stouffville's share of the regional budget is only 2.8 per cent with "heavyweights" like Markham, Vaughan and Richmond Hill claiming the largest share.

Within his own council, Altmann admits to a couple of blips along the way "but right now all's going well".

Looking ahead, the mayor sees the Latcham Gallery being moved to the leisure centre and replaced by the 55-Plus Club currently using Latcham Hall. The shift in sites is targeted for 2017, since major renovations are required at both locations.

Fourteen million dollars is targeted for expansion of the public library and leisure centre, far less than what some residents and groups requested.

The wish list would have increased tax requirements by 10 per cent, Altmann said. "We just don't have that kind of money."

Two other proposals include a toboggan slide

and an open-air natural ice rink in the area of Stouffville's Memorial Park.

"Along the way there will always be disappointments," the mayor concluded, "but all in all, we're headed in the right direction."

If this week's column dares to select a Man of the Year, then an esteemed member of the fairer sex should also be recognized. Agreed?

In bringing balance to the gender scheme of things, one need look no further than Stouffville's Glad Park Public School where an 11-year-old Grade 7 student, by her own dedication, literally lit up the pages of this newspaper and other media by displaying a form of perseverance never before experienced.

Nadine Carter's historical disclosure related to the bravery of First World War Royal Air Force Captain Arthur Roy Brown, so stirred the conscience of this community and indeed this country, it resulted in her appearance before the mayor and members of town council, an address on her behalf by former MP Paul Calandra and a guest invitation to the induction ceremony for Capt. Brown at Canada's Aviation Hall of Fame.

As a result of Nadine's labour of love, the Montreal executive of the Last Post Fund has placed a marker, emblazoned with an RAF crest, at Capt. Brown's plot in Toronto's Necropolis Cemetery.

Currently, Nadine hopes the town will soon locate a dedicatory plaque at either the former Brown family farm in Bethesda or in Stouffville's Memorial Park.

*Jim Thomas is a Stouffville resident who has written for area newspapers for more than 60 years.*

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