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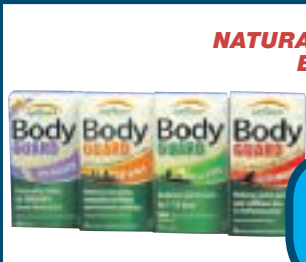
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Church needs buyer before making move

BY SANDRA BOLAN
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If patience is a virtue, the leaders and parishioners of Stouffville Pentecostal Church have it in spades.

Almost two years ago the church had its request approved to re-zone four acres of land in the Beacon Hill Business Park on Hoover Park Drive so members could build a new church.

The problem now is selling their current site.

The church can't relocate without money from the sale of its current east end Main Street location, according to Rev. Jeff Laird.

Interest in the 14.4-acre property isn't the problem. There's been quite a bit and church officials have accepted the offers. The problem has come when the purchasers have delved into such things as sewage and water capacities or zoning and they did not match the new needs, according to Laird who added "several times" offers have fallen through because of this.

When they do move to the new location, the plan is to construct not only a church but a facility that will provide daycare, youth and adult programs, as well as have community meeting rooms, a gymnasium and banquet facilities.



SUN-TRIBUNE FILE PHOTO

Stouffville Pentecostal Church on Main Street.

'I think churches are trying to stay linked into the community and provide services that are relevant and needed.'

Jeff Laird,
Pastor

Housing the Whitchurch-Stouffville Food Bank in the building is no longer part of the plan.

Laird said the food bank board members were not sure they wanted the space and then late last year town councillors stated they wanted the food bank in the Municipal Offices. However, that fell through and the food bank board and town officials found space on Ringwood Drive.

The new church would be what town staff refer to as "big box" places of worship in a June 2015 report to council, which also noted there has recently been "considerable interest" in constructing places of worship on employment business park lands because those lands are somewhat inexpensive.

The town is growing and changing and "I think churches are trying to stay linked into the community and provide services that are relevant and needed," Laird said of the change.

"It's a vastly superior building that has many advantages over a traditional building," he said.

There are already two big box-like churches in Whitchurch-Stouffville – Tenth

Line's EastRidge Evangelical Missionary Church and Springvale Baptist Church at Stouffville and Kennedy roads.

Laird also noted there is interest in the employment lands because there aren't any other pieces of land available that are suitable.

Despite interest from places of worship to potentially build on employment lands, re-zoning has only been granted to the Stouffville Pentecostal Church.

A year-long moratorium on new builds on employment lands has currently been put in place while a planning study on places of worship within Stouffville, with

'Places of worship don't create employment and they don't pay taxes.'

Justin Altmann,
Mayor

emphasis on the employment business park area, is conducted.

The study is about finding the best uses for the land, according to Mayor Justin Altmann.

Just because the land has been vacant for forever, it does not mean they won't one day be developed, he said.

"We've got to stick to the plan. We can't just give it away because there's no demand today," Altmann said.

"Places of worship don't create employment and they don't pay taxes," Altmann said.