

OPINION

Stouffville Sun-Tribune

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 jmason@yrmg.com

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 msepe@yrmg.com

**Circulation
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 Daphne Lawrie
 dlaurie@yrmg.com

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COLUMNS

How town council can get it right next time around

Two years from now we will be on the cusp of a municipal election.

A smattering of signs that don't say 'For Sale' will have popped up on the lawns of the neighbours, one of whom will likely be running for a seat on council. Some of the signs will go missing or vandalized. Happens every election.

Wars of words will no doubt have erupted on Facebook or whatever form of social media is hip in 2018.

Will the issues that put a dark cloud over the Whitchurch-Stouffville municipal offices this year even be remembered?

That all depends on the action of the current town council.

Even if you'd need GPS to find the town council chambers, you're probably well aware of the problems.

More than 30 staff members have left employment with the town in the past 18 months. (As I spoke to a member of council for this column, another senior worker announced his exit.)

If CAO Marc Pourvahidi does not return from town-imposed administrative leave – which followed self-imposed sick leave – council will be hiring its second top administrator in just over a year.

The new CAO would be the third – not counting two interim CAOs – this council has had to work with. Councillors have been on the job for about 19 months.

Assuming Pourvahidi, who once went by "M.J.," is not back, candidates for his job would have to label it "a career-building challenge".

In normal times, municipal CAOs have about the same shelf life as NHL coaches and general managers. The expiry dates in Stouffville, which also saw Dave Cash suddenly exit as CAO in October 2013, have jumped up even more quickly



Off The Top
 with Jim Mason

in the past three years.

Council does not hire staffers, as at least one councillor told constituents in response to the exodus of people from the Sandiford Drive offices.

But council does hire CAOs, who lead the entire staff, from directors on down the chain.

And while some staffers say things are improving, they need a CAO big on team building and morale improvement. A combo of Mother Teresa, Mike Babcock and Tony Robbins.

So does council. The few who attend council meetings know of the great divides in the body we elected in 2014. The "smart-ass" exchange between Councillor Maurice Smith and Mayor Justin Altmann we wrote about too this spring often may have just been the red flag we all needed.

We're not expecting everyone to sit around a campfire singing folk songs. Nor should everyone agree with everyone else on everything. Sober second thought is good. So are devil's advocates.

A lot of what went down at town hall this term falls under "personnel", meaning almost of all of it was discussed in private.

Still, council owes the taxpayer public and its staff a general explanation for what has happened – and what will take place going forward.

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

PUBLISHER Dana Robbins
GENERAL MANAGER Shaun Sauve
EDITOR-IN-CHIEF Joanne Burghardt

Stouffville
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6290 Main St.
 Stouffville, ON. L4A 1G7
 www.yorkregion.com

Award winner grew up with music

During the past 25 years, 33 of our community's most talented musicians have been honoured at an event held in Stouffville United Church.

Staged under the banner of 'Music Town, Ontario', the 2016 concert is scheduled for Wednesday at 8 p.m. A free-will offering will be received in addition to donations to the Whitchurch-Stouffville Food Bank.

The evening will feature The Men of Note male voice choir, violinist Matthew Eeuwes and vocal soloists Susan Ryman and Vince Parry.

A program highlight is the presentation of this year's music award to someone whose abilities span all areas of the melodious arts, both vocal and instrumental.

The committee's choice is Courtney Britton, organist, pianist, vocalist and choir director at Stouffville United Church. A plaque, celebrating her accomplishments will read: "For contributing to our community's musical heritage, June 29, 2016." The presentation will be made by Eeuwes, last year's award recipient.

Courtney's growing up years were spent on a farm at Park Hill, Ont., midway between London and Grand Bend, where her parents, Edward and Linda Fox still reside. She has two sisters, Diana in Arizona and Jacqui at Park Hill.

Following graduation from Northern Middlesex Secondary School, Courtney attended the University of Windsor where she received her honours bachelor of music education degree. In 2006, she obtained an education degree from the University of Toronto.

Courtney and husband Jason moved to Stouffville from Markham in 2009 where they reside with two



Roaming Around
 with Jim Thomas

beautiful daughters, Daphne, three; Lucy, 11 months and a black Labrador dog Roxanne. Courtney is a teacher at Joseph Gould Public School in Uxbridge.

For the 34-year-old, music has long been a prime part of her life beginning with piano lesson at age six and continuing through Grade 8. Later, she added her mezzo soprano voice to a choir at Beechwood Presbyterian Church, then graduated to a 50-member mixed chamber choir known as Amabile in London. This choral group traveled world-wide including a concert in New York's Carnegie Hall and several tour trips to Europe.

Courtney comes by her musical skills honestly. Her grandmother played piano, her father, the clarinet and her mother sang in a church choir. Together, they once formed the Fox family band.

Locally, she assisted as an accompanist at several Music Mania shows and later with The Bach to Blues Company.

Currently she has a similar role with the Men of Note male voice choir. At Stouffville United Church she's the organist, pianist, soloist and music director

"How do you have time?" Courtney was asked.

"I make time," she replied. "My husband is

extremely helpful looking after the girls. We support each other."

Despite her many responsibilities, Courtney enjoys a close association with the Ballantrae Tennis Club. She and Jason have also enjoyed two memorable trips to Jamaica and The Maritimes. They hope to celebrate their upcoming wedding anniversary with a holiday in Mexico.

Her impression of Whitchurch-Stouffville?

"We love it here," she says. "Although three hours distant from my parents, this is where we're supposed to be."

Dreams for their daughters?

"We eventually hope to involve them in the arts," Courtney says, "in one form or another."

As for receiving the Music Town, Ontario award June 29, Courtney describes the honour in one word – "unexpected".

Other recipients include: Lorne Boadway and Jim Rehill, (1991); Clarion Baker and Jean Hammond, (1992); Alma Oldham and The Wright Family, (1993); Bertha Stouffer and Julia Topping, (1994); David Boyd, (1995); Lawnie Wallace, (1996); Jean Thomas, (1997); Kathi Phillips, (1998); Doris Harvey, (1999); Ann Gage, (2000); Gary Burke and Vince Parry, (2001); David and Sharon Baxter, (2002); Wanda Stride, (2003); Wayne Hill, (2004); Laurie D'Alessandro, (2005); David Duggan, (2006); Pat Wild, (2007); Susan (Brown) Ryman, (2008); Lloyd Knight, (2009); Don Quarles and Family, (2010); Bob Davies, (2011); 'The Springvale Boys', (2012); 'The Men of Note', (2013); 'The Albert St. Four', (2014) and Matthew Eeuwes, (2015).

Jim Thomas is a Stouffville resident who has written for area newspapers for more than 65 years.