

Stouffville Free Press

Whitchurch-Stouffville's Independent Community Owned Newspaper

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A formidable challenge

Now that the election is over, it's time to look ahead at what the next four years hold for Whitchurch-Stouffville.

We desperately need to find solutions to traffic congestion and the preservation of green space. We hope that the arts will finally receive a fair share of support from the town, after years of under-funding and reluctance to acknowledge their importance to a well-rounded community.

Outgoing mayor Sue Sherban was a strong proponent of the arts in general and actively sought to establish a performing arts centre in the old town hall at 19 Civic Ave., both as councillor for Ward 6 and as mayor.

Before the election, council voted to support a scaled-down version of the theatre in that location, but incoming mayor Wayne Emmerson has said he favours a larger venue. Unfortunately, that would mean yet another long delay and the probable loss of York Durham Academy of the Performing Arts to a more welcoming municipality with the foresight to provide its own arts venue.

If Whitchurch-Stouffville is serious about catering to the needs and interests of all its residents and encouraging people who live here to spend their disposable income in town, not to mention bringing in visitors from out of town, council must make it a priority to support the arts.

We have a wonderful, but woefully under-funded, facility in the Latham Gallery, which is slowly being starved to death. We have community groups ranging from Music Mania, YDAPA and several fine dance studios to choirs such as Men of Note and Bach to Blues, who have to rely on the availability of local churches, schools or Latham Hall to put on performances.

We have a dance collective, Motus O, whose original and unique work has led to national and international performances, but whose appearances in their home town are limited to school gyms or their own backyard. Like sports, the arts do not appeal to everyone, but both are important for quality of life in a vibrant community.

The challenges for the new council are formidable. Many long-time residents and newcomers have chosen to live in this community because of its traditional, small town ambience, but now that the big pipe is a reality, the pressures of growth mean we can take nothing for granted.

Whitchurch-Stouffville is still a great place to live. It's up to us and our elected representatives to make sure it stays that way.

Readers Write

Concert raised over \$5,000

To the Editor:

The 14th annual Student Music Scholarship Concert, hosted by St. James Presbyterian Church and held Nov. 3 at Stouffville District Secondary School, proved very successful.

More than 500 young people took part, representing six Whitchurch-Stouffville schools.

Receipts totalled \$5,261. Over the past 14 years, more than \$50,000 has been raised with all monies divided among participating schools to assist their music programs.

The committee appreciates financial support from local businesses, service clubs and individuals, also assistance from school music directors, parents, high school office administrator Doris Jackson, high school custodial staff and others whose participation made for an enjoyable evening.

Congratulations to Jennifer Thunem, recipient of the St. James Church scholarship 2006. The committee's looking forward to next year's concert in Stouffville's new secondary school now under construction on Weldon Road.

Jim Thomas, Gayle Atkinson, Stewart McElroy
Concert Committee • Stouffville

Free Thoughts

Yes folks, it's the mayor of Christmas Presents...



Word from the Web

Want to praise, protest or pontificate on issues facing our town? Our online forum is growing and we want to hear from you. Here's a sampling of recent posts:

GO TO
www.stouffvilleonline.com
and join the discussion.

"There is a right way and a wrong way to build up a town's residential and commercial infrastructure. I have talked to a lot of residents that feel that this growth is too fast too soon. If you talk to business owners they will tell you that the customers are just not there. They will be, but not until the homes are occupied and people become familiar with their new surroundings. Plus think of the impact on the downtown core, there will be serious impacts. And as far as people using the retail stores in town, think again, over 68 per cent of our town's retail purchases (not groceries) are purchased outside of town. This is bigger

than having access to the downtown core. Plus people moved to this town to be outside the city not to have it come to our doorstep."

"I own a service business here in Stouffville and I can tell you it is a VERY hard town to do business in. A good chunk of my clientele are from here but a very small portion of my profits are generated here. I can only imagine how the retail stores downtown are going to be affected. Yes, there is potential with all the incoming people to form a bigger client base, but if they are like the folk in say, Georgetown or Brooklin, they are

just going to sleep here. And they will see the big blue Wal-Mart sign and head there every Saturday. That's a worry."

"I believe our infrastructure has fallen behind because spending taxpayer money is not a popular thing to do, and generally infrastructure projects take longer than council/mayor office terms. So we (and council) end up having endless debates (like this forum) and consultants and delays."

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