

**WHITCHURCH-STOUFFVILLE THIS MONTH**

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**whitchurch Stouffville this Month**

LOCAL NEWS VIEWS HAPPENINGS

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**Opinion**

**Cultural centre just one step closer**

The people of Whitchurch-Stouffville could get a spectacular collective Christmas present this year. At the last Town Council meeting of the year, or maybe the first one in 2005, the Ventin consulting group is due to deliver its report on the feasibility of turning the old town hall at 19 Civic Avenue into a cultural centre.

As the hard-working citizens who've been behind this project for years will attest, even getting Council to agree to seriously study the idea has been a long and tough slog. They weren't confident, going into the Sept. 7 council meeting, that they even had enough votes to get Council to spend the \$30,000 on the study.

So when the item came up on the agenda, citizen after citizen determinedly strode to the podium to passionately urge Council to take the next step. Some of them were professional artists, like the founders of the Motus O dance company. Some were dedicated amateurs from organizations like Music Mania, which has striven so long to entertain its audiences in, as their rep put it, "a hall built for basketball". A teacher read a touching letter from her Grade Fives. A resident who works in Toronto's Hummingbird Centre pointed out that a small investment could turn out to be a major catalyst in not only preserving the character of our community, but improving it immeasurably by returning to the original intention of the town hall — a gathering place for the people. Rarely, we suspect, has the council chamber on Sandford rung to such non-stop eloquence as it did the night of Sept. 7. And the eloquence came from both sides of the table.

Until that night, only a very few councillors had been vocal in their support of the cultural centre proposal, chief among them being the mayor herself, who made a convincing argument for the project in the pages of this newspaper many long months ago. One councillor had been fairly adamant in opposition. The majority of Council, however, had played their cards pretty close to the chest, fretting chiefly about the cost.

Imagine the shock in the room, therefore, when the vote on funding the study was unanimous. Councillor after councillor said the move was long overdue (perhaps a small slap in the face to previous councils), and praised the dedication of those who had urged the case for so long.

Perhaps we shouldn't have been surprised at the vote. Even though a couple of councillors had to be dragged along kicking and screaming, they obviously saw the writing on the wall, or, as Councillor Rob Hargrave put it, heard "the drums in the jungle". Mayor Sherban said the vote would mark this group as a "forward-moving council", and the five rookies at the table would dearly love to acquire that reputation.

One of them, Ken Ferdinands, called the project "unstoppable" — if the commitment he saw in the room Sept. 7 carries on. He's dead right. The decision made by council that night is only one small step, and if the project is to go the rest of the way, its proponents can't let up now.

Councillor Clyde Smith said the main reason he supported the study was because he was convinced the Ventin group would do the "right kind of research", and be honest with Council as to whether the project was even feasible. So that has to happen first: Ventin must be convinced the town hall will work. It will then give Council a bottom line, and a very penny-conscious Council will need convincing all over again to spend the money. What happened Sept. 7 could be an important first step in the revitalization of our downtown — but there's still a long row to hoe.

**Letters**

**Depot needs volunteers**

Dear Editor,

The Recycling Depot is experiencing serious problems recruiting volunteers. In fact, the problem is getting so serious that we may be forced to reduce the Depot's operating hours or, even worse, to close it down from time to time.

On Saturdays we have only two people — Dorothy and

Ann — who keep the Depot open and running. But they simply can't keep on doing it alone. We need three more people every Saturday morning to keep things running.

Usage of the Depot remains strong. It clearly is serving a need. People enjoy volunteering at the Depot. It is a great way to meet people and to help a good cause.

Whitchurch-Stouffville residents take note: if you want your Depot, you've got to volunteer. High school students, you can get community hours for this.

Please call 905-640-8294 or e-mail recycle@enoreo.on.ca. Thanks!

Jim Priebe, President, Whitchurch-Stouffville Recycling Group

**Sounding Off**

Our question this month, asked at the Earl of Whitchurch pub:

**"Without Hockey Night in Canada, what will you do with your Saturday nights?"**



**Allen Marlow:**

"Drown my sorrows here, I suppose. Or spend more time having conversations with my wife."



**John Oliveira:**

"I'm not really a fan of the Leafs anyway, Boston's my team, so it won't be too much of a loss. I'll be able to drive my kids to more of their hockey games."



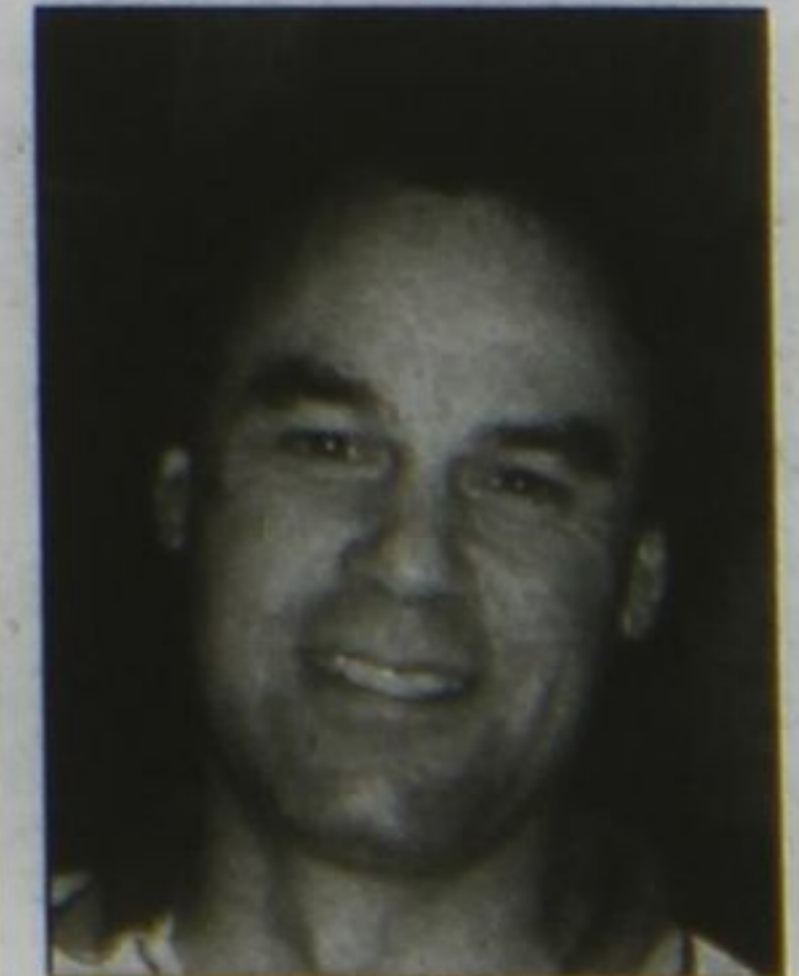
**Jason Burns:**

"I'll have to pick a new sport to watch, maybe golf. I could take up poker. Or maybe I'll come here to the pub for their bands on Saturday night."



**Kevin MacKenzie:**

"I'll probably spend more time with the ladies, and end up regretting it on Sunday mornings."



**Gordon Campbell:**

"It really makes no difference to me. I don't watch hockey anyway. My three-year-old keeps me plenty busy whenever I'm home."