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THE AURORAN

Aurora's Community Newspaper

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FREE Week of March 28, 2019



SACRED CANOE – Students from Sacred Heart Catholic High School began the trek with their Sacred Canoe last week with a poignant performance at St. Andrew's College. Tuesday's performance was the launch of their "Canoe to the Capital" journey which saw students take the community-based arts project, inspired by Truth & Reconciliation, to Ottawa in conjunction with the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination. For more, please see Page 19.

Auroran photo by Glenn Rodger

Library Square redevelopment gets \$38 million Council green light

By Brock Weir

It is billed as a downtown revitalization project that will see positive dividends for generations to come, and when Council sat down last Thursday to formally approve the estimated \$38.2 million redevelopment of Library Square last week, proponents hailed it as a "historic moment" for Aurora.

Council, at a Special Council meeting on Thursday night, voted 5 – 2 in favour of moving forward with a new cultural

and community space in Downtown Aurora, one which will include both a three-storey addition to the historic Church Street School and a multipurpose outdoor gathering space intended to be a year-round attraction.

"This is a pivotal point in our Town's history and one that will change the trajectory of our community," said Mayor Tom Mrakas in a statement following the meeting. "Our residents are excited about this project and I am incredibly proud of Council for working together to take this

next step to move the project from concept to reality. In many ways, we are returning to the roots of our Town by bringing our downtown core back to its former glory and making it a dynamic community gathering space once again. We are investing in our community and I am confident this will encourage business to follow suit and invest in downtown Aurora."

The Mayor's comments echoed many of the positive comments offered by Council members last week, but despite

Continued on page 11



Artistic rendering of Library Square courtesy of RAW Design & The Planning Partnership

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Arab Voices to rise in “unique cultural festival”



Abdulrahman Matar is a founder of Arab Voices.

Contributed photo

By Brock Weir

The conversation between cultures is something “crucial for the betterment of human relationships,” according to writer and poet Abdulrahman Matar, and there is no better way to start a conversation than speaking up.

This is exactly what Mr. Matar, a native of Syria, hopes will take place next Saturday, April 6, at the Aurora Public

Library (APL) when they and Mr. Matar’s Syrian Mediterranean Cultural Forum, join forces for a bilingual (English and Arabic) afternoon of poetry, music and arts from the Arab world.

“The conversation between cultures is something crucial for the betterment of human relationships, and we should always be open to experience other cultures,” says Mr. Matar, speaking to The Auroran in an interview conducted over email. “We live in a unique society that is diverse and

has many cultures within it, so this is a very important opportunity to be introduced to a different culture. We welcome everyone, we can listen to each, talk, and work together and collaborate. Humanity brings us together.”

Mr. Matar came to Canada in 2015 via the United States. He requested asylum in Canada for political reasons and eventually gained his permanent residency. Now working on attaining his Canadian citizenship, he says he is “proud” to be here, enjoy freedom, and work for a living “with no threats or dangers due to writing freely, or due to the freedom of self-expression.”

A member of PEN Canada and the Writer’s Union of Canada, he says he was “born between books.”

He was raised in a family that boasted a big and diverse library and an unabashed love of reading and culture that existed prior to the advent of television and the internet.

“I used to read every book I saw passionately, then I began going to the public library before I wrote my first poem at the age of 12,” he recalls. “Then, I was allowed in an earlier age to listen and become acquainted with writers, novelists and poets that made me drown in a sea of writing, going from poetry to stories and journalism, and then to novels.

“Writing had brought me courage

and joy, but also pain and the arrest that followed my writing.”

In his writing, he finds inspiration in the lives of the average person – “their stories, their sadness, their happiness. Those who are arrested, those who are victims. In people’s eyes, their footsteps, their dreams and thoughts.”

“They create life,” he says, noting he feels quite a difference when writing poetry compared to prose and journalism. “It feels to me as I’m flying above the clouds, drifting away in a dream, faraway. I feel the letters of the words as if they were pieces of my soul, or as if it was the melody of the soul. Poetry is the greatest method for me to express my emotions and it is a beautiful melody.”

This melody will be heard wildly through Arab Voices.

This is the aim of the program, bringing together poets, novelists, short story writers, as well as creators specializing in everything from drawing, to painting, to film.

“I’ve noticed throughout the past years that the Canadian society, including writers and novelists, do not know the Arab culture well, and that includes Arab writers that have been here for years,” he says. “This is also related to the absence of events and activities that makes the Arab culture known better in Canada. By that I mean

Continued on page 3

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Arab Voices to rise in “unique cultural festival”

From page 2
the poetry, novels, stories and art.”
Mr. Matar founded the Syrian Mediterranean Cultural Forum in Turkey in 2013. It bills itself as a cultural forum, a non-profit NGO, now based out of Toronto, that is interested in “expressing the cultural aspect in its different creative sides in both arts and literature” through public activities like hosting lectures and screening films.
“The forum aims to open up to different cultures and to share ideas and activities,” he says. “It sees the important diversity behind that and aims to be a stage of cultural fertilization and debates, and it is also a forum of support for the Syrian refugees who are merging with the new societies receiving them.” Arab Voices is just one prong of this approach and the Aurora event will be the

second held locally.
“It is a source of pride and joy for us,” he says of the relationship between the group and APL. “Presenting Arab poets to society and reading poems in both Arabic and English is an entirely different cultural experience. Nothing like that has ever happened here, or at least in Aurora and the area. The audience will get to know Arab literature through these poets and writers, and it is a chance for cultural exchange.”
Arab Voices will take place in the living room of the Aurora Public Library next Saturday, April 6 at 2 p.m. Participants include poets Rula Kahil (Lebanon) and Sozan Sami Jamil (Iraq), poet and artist Nacem Hilany (Syria), artist Mwafaq Katt (Syria), poet Younis Attari (Palestine), musician Esmael Abou Fakher (Syria), and Mr. Matar.

#StudentsSayNo: Williams students plan walkout April 4

By Brock Weir

Students at Dr. G.W. Williams Secondary School are planning to make a statement next week on the Provincial Government’s changes to the education curriculum.
In a show of solidarity with teachers, students are organizing a walkout on the afternoon of April 4.
“We are walking out to protest changes to the Ministry of Education that Doug Ford has announced; mainly funding cuts, increased class sizes, and mandatory e-learning,” say students Michelle Cai and Erica Li. “These changes are detrimental to the wellbeing of students and teachers because the classroom dynamic will be impacted. The funding cuts will result in a loss of teaching positions and a lack of new school supplies. Class sizes will also increase, which will force teachers to pay less attention to individual students and schools to cut specialized courses.”
“Parents should be aware that there will be negative consequences for their children’s education. Another example of this is that four mandatory high school credits will have to be online. This method of learning does not work for every student and many students will struggle with

learning the curriculum. Ford’s policies will be harmful to not only us but others in the future.
“We are hoping to get the majority of students to walk out of class to join the estimated 100,000 students participating throughout the province. Most students at this school are opposed to these changes; it is important that we announce our opinions loud and clear. We just can not afford to stay silent and let Ford get his way.
“Through speaking with teachers, we have realized that getting this walkout organized will be difficult. Staff are not allowed to openly support the walkout. We are unable to make posters, give announcements, or host meetings. Instead, we’ve resorted to using the power of social media to spread the message to our peers. Like student organizers from other schools, we have made an Instagram account (@gww_saysno) to inform students about the issue as well as protest details. The response from our peers has been mostly positive. Many students are even reaching out to volunteer as grade representatives and student speakers. It has been inspiring seeing our school over the past few days come together to speak up. This movement will not go unnoticed. Ontario students are making it clear to Doug Ford that #StudentsSayNo.”

Kim Phuc, iconic “Napalm Girl”, to speak in Aurora

At the age of nine, the haunting photo of a young girl running naked from a napalm attack during the Vietnam War became an iconic image of international conflict.
The girl, Kim Phuc, is now an Ontario resident and a vocal advocate for providing medical and psychological assistance to child victims of war.
A recipient of international awards for her work as a peace activist, Kim Phuc brings her inspiring story to Aurora this Wednesday at Northridge

Community Church.
Northridge’s Boomers & Beyond series, a monthly group for the 50+ designed to provide inspiration and education, will present a talk with Ms. Phuc on April 3 at 10 a.m.
Tickets are \$10.
For more information, contact Northridge at 905-895-6276 or visit northridgesa.com.
Northridge Community Church, the local chapter of the Salvation Army, is located at 15338 Leslie Street, just north of Wellington Street East.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Councillor “reserves support” on Library Square

There is great excitement in the Town about Library Square.

On March 21, Council made the decision to move forward with the design for the Square and new cultural building.

I share this excitement. I have put aside my concern that the process did not have a public meeting to comment on the building design and use. (Council received the schematic of the building early last summer.) I was worried about the negative implications of building in an area with underground water so close to the surface. The Planning Partnership is completely confident that it can be done without ramifications. I am relieved to know that.

One major concern that can not be taken lightly is parking in general; and parking for the thousands who already attend our Library yearly including those with disabilities. The design does provide more than the required accessible spots for the Square and new building. However, it does not compensate for the two spots currently at the Library; and parking provided on Victoria Street does nothing to help people with disabilities access the Library. Aurora has one of the largest growing senior populations. The parking design still needs to address this reality and the needs of young families.

I wonder if we are being overly optimistic about the use of the theatre and rehearsal space. Many of our consulted community groups expressed support for use; but not did not commit to be able to pay, especially full price. Most of our community/cultural groups struggle to make ends meet. Some are subsidized by the Town. The small size of the stage was mentioned as a limiting factor. I am not sure that there is room to accommodate storage or dedicated use requests.

A word of caution: should the Town consider using this venue to expand its programming in dance, theatre or visual arts, we must be careful not to compete with our local businesses.

Do groups outside of Aurora need our space? My understanding is that the theatres in Newmarket and Richmond Hill are not fully booked. And would groups want to use a venue of this size; and with the parking constraints? Our theatre consultants are knowledgeable and experienced. They are enthusiastically expressing their support; and predicting future success. I was pleased to hear this.

I think that it would be wise though to have a financial contingency plan in place if the predicted revenues are not realized.

Council does have an initial operations funding strategy. The estimated yearly cost for Library Square is \$720,000. The initial cost would be phased onto taxes over the next three years, \$240,000 or 0.5% per year starting this year. Also approved on Thursday is a 20-year debt financing plan. It will be repaid in part by a one-time tax levy increase of 1%.

I have reserved my support for the Square until we know how much money will be received in Grants. This knowledge is necessary to form a financial investment strategy for the capital cost of \$37,908,700 + possible options.

Councillor Wendy Gaertner
Aurora

Time to come clean on SNC-Lavalin, says reader

Why is it so easy for a government to grind out political gibberish to cover up for their favoritism towards big corporations and their criminal deeds? High price to pay by losing top performing cabinet ministers and a grand sully of their previous reputation. Time to come clean, Liberals!

Agnes Kraemer
Newmarket

Machell’s Corners

Adynaton

Definition:

A way of saying something will never happen

Examples:

When pigs fly

~~When Library Square is approved~~

When Hell freezes over

SCOTT JOHNSTON

In on the ground floor



BROCK’S BANTER

Brock Weir

The old phrase, “you win some, you lose some” is just about threadbare as clichés go, but there’s a reason why it’s a saying that has such staying power: it’s absolutely true.

Whatever your circumstance, you learn this lesson hard and fast. Sometimes you learn from it, sometimes you don’t, but it’s unavoidable.

If you’re a writer, particularly a writer whose work is sent out into the world with any degree of regularity, you learn this lesson time and time again, from many quarters.

But, at the risk of trotting out another cliché, each hard lesson learned makes you stronger – well, that is, for putting forward a stronger debate, whether in the public sphere or in the close quarters at home.

But, close to home, there is one argument I’ve never been able to win – or, at the very least, make any headway in bringing people around to my way of thinking.

Not too long ago, I bowed out of a social engagement early because I had to get to bed at a reasonable hour.

“Why?” they asked. So, with some trepidation, I began explained.

Without going into too much detail, the gist was simple: I had to get to bed in good time in order to get up at the crack of dawn to watch a live news event unfold halfway around the world through the wonders of cable.

Even as I write this, I can feel you cocking your eyebrow as you read.

Indeed, I saw many eyebrows raised in real time as I unfolded my explanation.

“Why don’t you just set your PVR?” asked one thoughtful individual.

Point taken.

“You know, it will probably be on YouTube a couple of hours later, right?” asked another, doubtlessly rhetorically, as his eyebrow assumed the position.

My eyebrows stayed put.

I’d been down this road before. But, knowing what was to come, I launched into my time-honoured explanation.

“This is history,” I said. “You guys all studied history in school. Would you rather read about it after the fact, or watch it unfold as it happened?”

I was met with familiar blank stares.

Their sleep took top priority. And, I assume, it would have taken priority for you as well.

Well, I’m still dug deep in this belief and that is why Thursday night’s Special Council meeting hit so many of

my buttons just right.

“Aha!” I hear you exclaim! “There’s a point to this.”

Indeed, there is!

If you attended Thursday night’s meeting dedicated to Library Square, you either shifted to get comfortable in your seat as words like “historic”, “exciting” or phrases like “pivotal moment” were thrown around with what some might argue was close to wild abandon.

If you’re adamantly apposed to the development of Library Square, you probably thought they were each exercises of hyperbole, but if you have a vested interest in the outcome of Library Square, you were probably ready to raise your hands and shout out to the God of your choice, if you happen to be so inclined.

I stayed firm in my seat, quiet, as is my job, but if anyone actually did stand up and shout, “Hallelujah!” I would have set aside my agnostic beliefs for a moment and jumped up in spirit as well – after all, when you have been writing about a topic several times a year for nearly a decade with little or nothing tangible to show for it, you develop a vested interest in seeing something like Library Square brought to fruition.

“It was almost nine years ago that I stood in front of Council in Halifax and asked Council to approve the Halifax Central Library project,” said Bruce Gorman, CEO of the Aurora Public Library, in his remarks to Council. “And fortunately...they did. That was the day that changed the trajectory of the City of Halifax forever. Looking back now, my hopes and dreams were realised like I couldn’t have imagined... [and] right now, here tonight, the same opportunity is here in Aurora. I never thought I would have this opportunity to be a part of something [like this] again but I do.

“It is important that you realise how important tonight is here in Aurora. I come from experience; this is a golden

opportunity for everybody here in Aurora to step up and make today, this day, the day we say, ‘Aurora changed forever.’”

Well, that certainly made me sit up in my seat.

Will Thursday, March 21, turn out to be the day Aurora changed forever? It’s too early to tell, but it seems well on the way.

If anything, it is certainly the beginning of a new chapter, and I can’t wait to see how it all turns out.

People might assume that people in this profession are, by nature, jaded pessimists, but I remain – as someone who has always been a proponent of Aurora stepping outside of its relatively staid comfort zone and taking a bold move towards the future – optimistic about Library Square’s prospects.

Thursday’s meeting also prompted me to dig a bit deeper and re-read some of the earliest stories I wrote about Library Square.

Some of the briefest mentions date back to 2010, but the more substantive stuff turned up in the spring of 2012, with the story “Redevelopment ideas are in the air for Downtown Aurora.” The article, dated April 2, touched upon the bold vision of then-Councillor Evelyn Buck for the Victoria and Church lands.

At the time, Councillor Buck suggested the old homes of the Aurora Public Library and Seniors’ Centre meet the wrecking ball for something much larger, all supported by Aurora’s Hydro Reserves.

“[The sale of Aurora Hydro] was a very difficult decision to make and even now I am not sure it was the right decision,” she said. “But what will make it a right decision is if we replace the Hydro with another asset of equal or better value.”

I can’t argue with that.

An adequate replacement, she argued, was a multi-storey building (check!) with space for community groups (check), a youth space (done elsewhere, the Aurora Family Leisure Complex, in the intervening years) and multiple levels of underground parking (well, we can’t have everything).

What we’re getting in the Library Square plans now is a bit less grandiose but, in my opinion, no less exciting – and I’m excited to be in on the ground floor as an observer to see how this will all unfold.

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Deadline for submissions is Sunday at 1 p.m.



The Aurora Museum & Archives is remembering... The Royal Hotel!

For over 40 years, the southeast corner of Yonge and Mosley Streets was home to the Royal Hotel.
This image was captured sometime after 1888 when the building was extensively enlarged by a three-storey addition at the rear.



TIME TRAVELLER’S DIARY
By Michelle Johnson
Collections & Exhibitions Coordinator
Aurora Museum & Archives

Lodging with the Lemons

In 1868, the southeast corner of Yonge and Mosley Streets became home to the Royal Hotel, affectionately known as Lemon’s Hotel after the innkeeper, George Lemon (1842-1923). Lemon was born in Markham and started his career as an innkeeper in Richmond Hill, before moving to Aurora where he operated the Royal Hotel.

In 1867, he married Sophia Meek and together they had four daughters. Lemon’s Hotel went through many transformations and during the early years, a tin shop stood directly beside it.

In 1872, the tin shop was destroyed by fire along with the hotel’s stables and shed. That would not be the only time that smoke poured from the building.

In 1877, another fire severely damaged the hotel, but remarkably, Mr. Lemon was able to re-open it only three months later.

In 1888, the hotel was extensively enlarged and a three-storey addition was constructed behind the main building, which dramatically increased its size.

Before the construction of community centres, the Royal Hotel provided an important space for the community to organize. Residents would visit the hotel for club meetings, celebrations and to conduct business transactions.

The stables of the hotel also acted as a venue for horse breeding.

For example, in June of 1905, a registered trotting stallion, named The Duke 25375, stopped in at the Royal Hotel for two nights after traveling through Ballantrae, Udora, Pefferlaw, Sutton, Keswick and Newmarket.

The Duke was advertised as weighing 1,300 pounds with a race record of 2.29 and clients were guaranteed a quality colt or their bill would be waived.

During the 1880s and 1890s, the local lacrosse, hockey, baseball and football associations often held their annual meetings at Lemon’s Hotel.

Victory celebrations took place in the dining room, including one in 1902, after a friendly game of curling between the Aurora and Newmarket clubs.

The wager was an oyster dinner, which the Aurora club was treated to – on Newmarket’s tab, of course.

In 1911, George Lemon sold the Royal Hotel to Mr. Fred D. O’Leary who operated it for another 16 years under the name, The Club.

In 1927, the local paper lamented its demolition: “another old land mark on Yonge Street in this municipality is disappearing with the tearing down of the Club Hotel, formerly the old Royal Hotel” (Aurora Banner, July 15 1927). In its place, Aurora gained Cousins Dairy and Bell telecommunication offices.

THIS WEEK’S NEW POLL

Will increased class sizes have a negative impact on high school students?

Yes No Unsure
Go to www.theauroran.com to vote!

Previous poll results
Should the Province ban cell phones in classrooms?

RESULTS TO DATE March 26, 2019	YES	NO	UNSURE
	73%	27%	0%

Budget 2019



MP’s Report

Kyle Peterson, MP
Newmarket-Aurora

On March 20, 2019, the Finance Minister presented Budget 2019: Investing in the Middle Class to Grow Canada’s Economy in the House of Commons. Since 2015, hard-working Canadians have proven what has long been understood: a strong economy starts with a strong middle class.

Nearly four years ago, Canadians chose a plan to invest in the middle class and offer real help to people working hard to join it. Investing in the middle class means investing in people—with more help for those who need it. It means building a better Canada—a stronger, more connected country—and it means better opportunities for people today, and the promise of a better future, even in a world of constant change.

The Government’s investments are paying off. Canada’s economy is strong and growing, more Canadians are working, and families have more money to save or spend each month. With Budget 2019, the Government is continuing to invest to grow the economy for the long term, in a fiscally responsible way—ensuring that Canada’s federal debt-to-GDP ratio continues on a steady downward track.

In Budget 2019, the Government of Canada proposes to:

Make homeownership more affordable for first-time buyers by implementing a First-Time Home Buyer Incentive, a shared equity mortgage program that would reduce the mortgage payments required to own a home; and

by providing greater access to their Registered Retirement Savings Plan savings to purchase a home.

Help workers gain new skills with the creation of the new Canada Training Benefit, a benefit that will give workers money to help pay for training, provide income support during training, and with the cooperation of the provinces and territories, offer job protection so that workers can take the time they need to keep their skills relevant and in-demand.

Prepare young Canadians for good jobs by helping make education more affordable through lowered interest rates on Canada Student Loans, making the six-month grace period interest-free after a student loan borrower leaves school, and creating up to 84,000 new student work placements per year by 2023-24.

Help Canadians with the cost of prescription drugs by taking steps towards a national pharmacare plan, starting with creating a new Canadian Drug Agency that could lower Canadians’ drug costs by as much as \$3 billion per year, developing a national formulary for prescription drugs, and a national strategy for high-cost drugs for rare diseases.

Support low-income Canadian

Meltdown



INSIDE AURORA

Scott Johnston

The signs of spring in Aurora are all around us; birds singing, grass getting greener, and melting snow revealing cigarette butts, coffee cups, plastic bags and other unsightly debris.

I think I speak for all of us when I say that from the above list we much prefer seeing the former natural wonders over the latter unnatural ones.

But sadly, the appearance of so much garbage after the snow melts is a reality here in Town.

People have lots of opportunities for proper waste disposal other than just tossing things on the ground.

Even in the winter months, there are many municipal garbage pails on our streets and in our parks for residents to use. Except in extreme weather conditions, these are emptied regularly.

There are also trash bins in most plazas, at gas stations and in other public places like the GO station.

Or if they’re out and about and can’t find a proper receptacle, unless the item to be disposed of is melting ice cream cone, or something exceptionally malodorous, people could just hang onto it a little longer and dispose of it at home.

Although careless littering is a year-round activity, it is a gradual process, and things tend to be picked up eventually in the warmer months, so is less noticeable then.

What makes it worse this time

of year is that everything has been accumulating untouched for months since late the previous year, continually being hidden under a blanket of freshly fallen snow.

Out of sight, out of mind, at least until spring.

Then, like some sort of alternate universe Advent calendar, various surprises are unveiled by the melting snow, each seemingly more awful than the last.

Although ideally it shouldn’t have to, every year around this time the Town enlists enthusiastic volunteers to help clean things up. Provided with a kit containing bags, gloves and what I hope is litres of hand sanitizer, they’re assigned a specific public area of Town, and spend the morning bent over picking up whatever they find.

You’ll know where they’ve been working not only by the subsequently tidier appearance of the area, but also the many garbage/recycling bags and larger debris left by the curb for pick up. Shopping carts, sports equipment, tires... you never know what they’ll

find.

This year’s Clean-Up Day is Saturday April 13. If you’re interested in lending a hand, and partaking in the thank you BBQ afterwards, further details can be found at aurora.ca/cleanup.

One of the most common items casually tossed away is the coffee cup. A recent news item suggested that the government may be looking at levying a five-cent surcharge on these containers.

Making people pay a little more isn’t necessarily going to change their minds about littering. After all, by the time they’re ready to dispose of the cup, they’ve already paid the extra nickel, which is a negligible amount on top of the \$4 already spent on a tall soy mocha latte with extra foam. But presumably, the funds could go towards recycling, public education and other means of tackling the waste problem.

But that plan isn’t in place, yet, and this is a big problem. So, until such efforts begin to take effect and make a difference we will have to rely in part on our more thoughtful residents doing that one-day blitz each April to pick up after our less thoughtful residents.

Again, I think I speak for all of us when I say we much prefer and appreciate the efforts of the former Aurorans over the latter.

Feel free to e-mail Scott at: machellscorners@gmail.com

Council looks for alternatives to Aurora Heights Public School–area sidewalk

By Brock Weir

Would the Aurora Community Centre parking lot be a safer place to drop off Aurora Heights students while improving traffic and parking congestion in the streets surrounding the school?

That is just one of the questions Council is considering as they look for alternatives to a proposed new

sidewalk on Kitimat Crescent.

Following last week’s General Committee meeting, Council is poised to vote down a recommendation for a new sidewalk on Kitimat, following opposition from the community.

Money for the sidewalk -- \$100,000 – was allotted in the 2018 Budget by the previous Council, citing improving the walkability of school routes, but neighbours say this sidewalk proposal misses the

mark.

“Kitimat Crescent was reconstructed in 2001 and at that time the Town did not have a sidewalk installation policy,” said Anca Mihail, Manager of Engineering and Capital Delivery for the Town, in her report to Council. “The residents were surveyed on the construction of a sidewalk on the street and the majority of them opposed the installation of a sidewalk. As a result, Kitimat was reconstructed without a sidewalk.”

“The sidewalk construction on Kitimat Crescent was proposed by Council in 2016 as a result of the School Travel Planning Program implemented for Aurora Heights Public School, which sets out mechanisms to allow for student pedestrian priority, outside of Kitimat Crescent road construction. There is enough room to accommodate a sidewalk on both sides of the street, however staff have proposed the sidewalk construction on the north and west part of the street to minimize any impacts to existing vegetation and utilities.”

The Town hosted an open house on the proposed sidewalk last September, which was open to residents of all 41 homes on the street. 23 residents came out and two further residents sent in written comments, along with a petition signed by 38 of the 41 households opposing the plan, citing loss of parking, street trees, yard space and property values.

The only note of support came from the local crossing guard who serves the area, who said Kitimat was a popular place for parents to drop off their kids.

The community’s viewpoint was represented at the Council podium last week by neighbour James Hoyes, who said it was a sidewalk to nowhere and had “serious flaws” including challenges to users of wheelchairs, walkers and other devices as a sidewalk would slope towards the road.

Following Mr. Hoyes’ delegation, Councillor Sandra Humfries shared her own experiences in the area.

She said she observed a number of challenges while on the ground and didn’t see the Kitimat sidewalk improving the situation.

“All these parents are dropping their students on Tecumseh and in front of the school there is absolutely no stopping and no parking.” She said. “They have four volunteers there asking parents to stop and rush

the kids out and move the cars along so the kids are safe.”

Citing the newly constructed GO Transit parking lot on Industrial Parkway South, which has a set of stairs leading up to the transit station parking area, she questioned whether a similar path could be constructed between the school and the nearby Aurora Community Centre.

“I know it is a steep hill, but I would love if staff could look at engineering a path from the ACC back towards the school...so the kids can be safely dropped off by their parents and walk back out,” she said. “I believe that will eliminate all the parking concerns. This is the only way we can stop the stuff that happens, instead of investing in a sidewalk there. I just don’t think that is the right thing to do now. The parents have come here time and time again about the safety issues.”

While some Councillors said they still had questions remaining over accessibility issues, investigating alternatives in the short term and, in the long term, reconsidering sidewalks on Kitimat when the street is due for reconstruction in 2032, won the day.

“It would make sense that if we’re going to do it to do it in 2032,” said Councillor Harold Kim. “I don’t think a sidewalk is a solution just for the sake of meeting the policies. I think it is great to follow the ad-hoc rules, but it is also prudent to follow practicality. Spending \$100,000 on a sidewalk that is not going to be used on many occasions doesn’t seem like a prudent course of action for me.”

Councillor Rachel Gilliland had a similar viewpoint on the sidewalk, adding, “it may not solve all the issues we’re trying to achieve here, which is the safety of the children exiting the cars and going to school. I don’t know 100 per cent the solution and I am not comfortable moving forward with that.”

Mayor Tom Mrakas was also in favour of investigating alternatives and reconsidering the matter in 2032.

“I suggest that we go with the alternative in our report, which is to wait until that reconstruction comes and we can talk about a sidewalk at that time,” he said.

Added Councillor John Gallo: “Surely if the vast majority are not for it, there doesn’t seem to be a rationale to do it, but I would be in favour of sending this back to staff to explore alternative routes to get the kids to school.”



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Theatre Aurora puts best foot forward with Stepping Out

By Brock Weir

Everyone knows how difficult it is to take that first step out of your comfort zones, and that is exactly what the characters do in *Stepping Out*, which opens next Thursday at Theatre Aurora.

Written by Richard Harris, *Stepping Out* is a comedy about “working class amateurs attempting to overcome their inhibitions and left feet in a low-rent dance studio in North London.”

While the characters work to step outside of their day-to-day routine, *Stepping Out* is helping first-time director Judi Cragg get back into familiar territory.

Ms. Cragg, a resident of Newmarket, has always had a love of theatre. Once upon a time, she was very involved in local theatre, particularly musicals, in Ottawa. She continued her love after moving to Toronto, but life intervened. Her daughter was born, she raised her family, and her first love took something of a backseat.

Now, at Theatre Aurora, she’s back in her element.

“I really missed being involved with theatre, so I asked around and I found Theatre Aurora,” she says, noting Theatre Aurora Board Member Barb Jones helped open the door. “The first thing I did was co-produce *The Drowsy Chaperone* with Barb in the fall, but, as I was doing that, I already thought I would like to get back into directing. As I watched the rehearsal process, I kept thinking I just wanted to get back on stage.

“Although I had never directed before, I am a retired teacher with a specialization in drama, running the

drama club, putting on big musical performances, so I have that behind me.”

All the components came into place, however, late last fall when the director originally slated for *Stepping Out* had to step back. Ms. Cragg saw an opportunity and stepped up to make her pitch to the Theatre Aurora Board.

Her vision for the play struck a chord and she was asked to take the helm – and take on a challenge.

“When I read this play, I noticed that the characters are not really as developed as they could be from a writing perspective,” she says. “My first thought was, instead of seeing that as a real problem, how can I develop those characters further without changing dialogue? That was an appealing challenge for me.

“These people are in tap class every week, there’s dancing, there’s music involved and, for me, that was also a little bit of a pull.”

At the end of the day, *Stepping Out* is essentially a comedy, she says. Ms. Cragg likens it in some ways to the sitcom *M*A*S*H* that perfected comedy that could turn on a dime to the more emotional, poignant moments.

“This is a group of people who are very different from one another,” she says of *Stepping Out*. “They just come together once a week for their tap dance with varying degrees of ability, from different backgrounds and bringing with them different personalities. We, as humans, all have a chink in our armour and that is what I was looking for: some of the characters, in the writing, reveal more to the audience than others, but there are still little moments for everybody and I want to make sure the audience gets that and feels

that.”

They will be helped through the behind-the-scenes creativity of the actors as well.

As part of her directorial process, Ms. Cragg tasked her actors with coming up with detailed backstories for their respective characters. In the process, they brought in their own lived experiences and the personalities of themselves and others they’ve encountered throughout their lives. In the process, they have developed on-stage personas that will reach each and every audience member – for better or worse!

“Some of the character development is not written in the script, so we needed to look for body language and facial expressions, how

they feel about someone else,” she says. “This is a feel-good play and I want people to leave the theatre feeling good and uplifted. I want them to be able to relate to the characters in different ways. There’s one character that’s, well, that is just completely annoying and I think most people have met someone like that in their lives. Maybe they’ll even say, ‘I want to go out and take a tap class.’”

Stepping Out opens at Theatre Aurora next Thursday, April 4, at 8 p.m., and running at select dates and times through April 13. For more information, including tickets, visit www.theatreaurora.com or call 905-727-3669.

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Hope House Hospice on hunt for new home

By Brock Weir

After more than 35 years serving clients in Aurora, King and Richmond Hill – and after more than five years in Aurora – Hope House Community Hospice is on the hunt for a new home.

Last year, Hope House, which serves clients with life-threatening diagnoses, their caregivers, and those who are bereaved, supported more than 600 clients. It’s a sign that people are taking advantage of their services more and more and while some might consider that a success, it brings with it its own challenges.


Simply stated, they need more room to serve the individual than what is currently offered in the Industrial Parkway South building they share with Big Brothers Big Sisters of York, the Aurora Food Pantry and the York Region Food Network.

“When we moved here about five years ago, we had about three staff, probably all part-time at that point,” explains Heidi Bonner, Executive Director of Hope House. “Now, there are seven of us so, from an office perspective, and space-wise, we have been really jam packed. In the beginning, our program was our volunteer in-home visiting program. In the years since, we have developed some wellness initiatives and the



Heidi Bonner, Executive Director of Hope House Hospice, is pictured above at their Aurora office in 2017 when they rebranded from Hospice King-Aurora. Now, they are on the hunt for a new home.
Auroran photo by Brock Weir

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wellness programs are available to people who are diagnosed with an illness.”

These wellness programs, she says, have grown significantly since its inception because they serve all three groups of clients – the people diagnosed with the illness, their caregivers, and the bereaved.

She estimates that nearly 95 per cent of the wellness programs serve clients in each of those three categories.

They aim to build capacity in these programs because they are group programs and “bring the maximum bang for your buck.” They involve one facilitator and each facilitator can provide support for up to 10 people, supporting more individuals with less.

“Having private space for our clients and staff to meet is a bit of a challenge,” says Ms. Bonner. “We don’t have very many spots for that and those private spaces are a big piece. The current building is set up so that there may be a large amount of square footage, but the space can only be used for one program because there is no ceiling, sort of a studio area, so even though there are big spaces, only one program can happen at a time because of privacy – and the sound travels beautifully.

“A new space would give us the ability to offer more programs simultaneously and easier, and would also give staff more space to meet with clients and small groups to meet as well.”

Both government support and increased awareness throughout the community are key factors in Hope House’s growth. Community support demonstrated through fundraising endeavours have enabled them to put more programs into place, offering a menu with greater diversity for the community and, along with that, increased government support has enabled them to bring on more staff.

“With our wellness program, we’re able to serve many people and we are fortunate that because of our community and the way they support us, we’re able to offer a great variety of programs for different needs and we’re able to develop programs when the need arises. [Fundraisers like our Jitterbug Ball] have given us the opportunity to really support our community as best we can.”

So, what exactly is Hope House Community Hospice looking for in a new home? It depends on what’s available. They are asking community landowners if they might have a property available that would suit their needs, a property that could be leased “to gold star tenants on very good terms.”

“We can turn your unused space into a heart of a community,” says Leslie Hobson, Chair of the Hope House Home Hunt, in her pitch. “We are a registered charity with a stellar reputation. Do you have space to share in an existing facility for a wonderful entity that provides so much? Or a creative idea for another way for us to find a space solution? Let’s talk.”

“I’ve learned new skills, new understanding,” said client Don, who has participated in Hope House’s Picking Up the Pieces program and wellness services. “My family has benefited in so many positive ways as a distinct result from these new skills and learnings.”

Adds Lisa, a parent of a participant of Hope House’s Children’s Bereavement Program, “My son and other children who had been born in the same position as he, or experienced a greater loss than he did...I feel it has made him more aware of others’ feelings and what they have overcome. I think he is looking for answers himself on how to deal with things.”

For more information on the Hope House Home Hunt, contact Leslie Hobson at lesliehobson@sympatico.ca. For more information on Hope House itself, visit www.hopehouse.com or call 905-727-6815.



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Getting Things Done

Mayor
Tom Mrakas

What an exciting night for Aurora.

This past week, at a Special Meeting of Aurora Town Council, our community took a big step forward in the revitalization of our downtown core as Council approved the design and proposed funding strategy for the Library Square project!

We heard from a number of delegates including key stakeholders representing the Library, the BIA, the Chamber and the Cultural Centre expressing enthusiastic support for this transformative project.

We had a lively debate and discussion around the Council table. A number of questions were raised, in particular as it relates to parking and to funding, all of which were addressed by staff, architects and/or the consultants.

This is a pivotal point in our Town's history and one that will change the trajectory of our community.

Our residents are excited about this

project and I am incredibly proud of Council for working together to take this next step to move the project from concept to reality.

In many ways, we are returning to the roots of our Town by bringing our downtown core back to its former glory and making it a dynamic community gathering space once again. We are investing in our community and I'm confident this will encourage businesses to follow suit and invest in downtown Aurora. I am looking forward to our shared future of positive change.

That is all for this week. As always if you would like to get into contact with me please feel free to contact me anytime by phone 905-727-3123 ext. 4746 or by email tmrakas@aurora.ca and if you would like to sign up for more newsletters and council updates then please visit Mrakas.ca/contact to join the growing list of Aurorans that are staying informed.



GIRLS NIGHT OUT – Upper Canada Mall's Market & Co. was the place to be on Thursday night as NewRoads Automotive Group hosted Girls Night Out. The annual event, which welcomed gentlemen as well, featured music, demos, and a photo booth, with 100 per cent of the proceeds benefiting the Women's Centre of York Region. (Above) Jane Hinder, Alison Collins-Mrakas, and Arlyn, Emily and Taylor Rathke welcomed the announcement of the 2020 Women in Business Awards.

Auroran photos by Glenn Rodger

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Spring book sale ready to bloom next week with Aurora United Church

By Brock Weir

Book lovers know that neither rain nor sleet can keep you from a book sale – but ice storms? The Aurora United Church Women were not so sure. They needn't have worried; customers turned out in droves last April to stock up on their spring and summer reading while helping several local community groups in the process. This year, as they gear up for another book sale next Saturday, they're hoping Mother Nature will be back on their side. The Aurora United Church Women are once again gearing up for their fourth annual Spring Book Sale, which

will take place in the atrium of Trinity Anglican Church next Saturday, April 6, from 10 a.m. to 2 p.m. With stock based entirely on community donations, which will be accepted at Trinity on April 5 from 4 – 7 p.m., and April 6 from 8 – 10 a.m., the sale will offer a wide selection of second-hand paperbacks and children's books at low prices. "We were amazed last year because our Book Sale was on the same day as the tremendous ice storm back in April and we figured it was Game Over," says volunteer Kathie Blackman. "But we were surprised by the number of people who came in and ended up making just about the same amount that we did last year."



Aurora United Church Women volunteers Kathie Blackman and Anne Ella-Arnold are hard at work organizing this year's book sale, and will welcome your donations at Trinity on the night of April 5 and the morning of April 6. Auroran photo by Brock Weir



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"I believe this is the right risk," says Councillor Kim on Library Square redevelopment

From page 1

both Councillors Wendy Gaertner and John Gallo offering support for the Library Square vision as a whole, financing and other details gave them cause to vote against the recommendation.

Once brought to fruition, Library Square, which is located at the intersection of Church Street and Victoria Street in Aurora's Downtown Core, will boast a new public building connected to 22 Church Street, that will include a flexible performance hall for up to 250 people, studio and multipurpose spaces and archival facilities.

Outside, between the historic schoolhouse and the Aurora Public Library, plans include a refrigerated ice rink, water features, amphitheatre-style seating and a large open gathering space that planners say will be an ideal location for concerts, music festivals, public art displays, skating, food truck festivals and more.

The current capital budget for the Library Square redevelopment stands at \$38.2 million, which will be funded in a variety of ways. The final details of the funding strategy will be hammered out at a later date as over \$14 million of the funding is subject to grant approval by the Federal Government, but, as The Auroran reported last week, plans include a draw from reserve accounts, a \$3.5 million draw from the Town's Hydro Reserves, and a one-time tax increase of one per cent that could be phased in over three years.

"My problem is multifold, but my number one issue is the funding model," said Councillor Gallo, stating he was a huge proponent of the arts.

Councillor Gallo proposed a slight delay in approving the project until Aurora heard back from the Federal Government on how much money, if any, they would be receiving from the Canada Cultural Spaces grant program.

He said he was "jaded" on going forward with the funding model at this point after what he described as the "Joint Operations Centre fiasco" which saw numerous budget overruns and issues as the build continued.

"That is not an understatement," he said. "I went through it from the beginning and while I don't want to say this is the same process, my guard is up because I do not want that to happen again – and I don't think anyone wants that to happen again. To me, approving this without a solid funding plan is moving forward down that road, unfortunately."

Similar concerns were offered by Councillor Gaertner. While she said the Library Square redevelopment was "a very exciting opportunity" for Aurora and a "long time coming" there were still details to be considered.

She said she was heartened by comments delivered by planners at last week's meeting addressing the issue of underground water on the site, as well as components of the building that will have a positive impact on the environment, but parking was still an outstanding concern that had to be tackled.

"I think the taxpayers need to know there is going to be a one-time tax levy increase of one per cent [and it] looks like nobody has voted on or discussed it," she said. "It is going to cost the taxpayers more money, and hopefully they believe it will be a valuable tax increase, but I don't think we can be silent on the fact we're doing that."

But, for other Council members, there were more positives than negatives.

Councillor Sandra Humfries, for instance, said there is a "solid business plan" on Library Square that underscores the "potential" of what it will bring to Aurora and what the Town needs to do to make the venture completely successful.

"This is what we have been talking about year after year; how to truly revitalize our downtown core," she said. "It has been a constant discussion and thought process, many consultations over the years, and it is time to do something. This is probably our last chance. If we don't, then we might as well change the vision of downtown. We have gone so far; we have to continue to move forward and we have to be the one leading it."

"We have public input, we have heard the concerns on parking, soil, [and] water; but we have the right people in place to address those issues as we go along. I think it can be constantly looked at and constantly improved so it truly becomes something we're all very proud of."

The history of how long it has taken Council to get to this point was a continual theme in Council members' remarks in favour of moving forward.

Councillor Harold Kim, for instance, said the "tide has turned."

"Some believe that one should not embark on a new strategy, a new build or an endeavour unless conditions are perfect and...rarely are conditions perfect," he said. "Given this, there is always room for those who are fearful or trepidatious. I understand with a project of this scale, it can seem daunting. Consequently, there will always be those who are critical from conception to completion."

"It seems, to some, risk management is defined as avoiding risk all together as opposed to taking the right risk. I believe this is the right risk."

It has been a "long road," said Councillor Michael Thompson, and a "bit of a marathon with lots of steps to go away." While Thursday's approval is a step in the right direction, he noted there will be further steps along the way to guide the process.

"While progressing tonight, there are still other checkpoints as we go along," he said. "Keep in mind as we are making our decisions this evening there are still, as per the project schedule, two points this year whereby reports will come back to this Council and this Council will make a decision on whether or not to continue to proceed or not. Those that have concerns, those who may want to see other elements, there will be other opportunities along the way this year for you to make sure they have been addressed before we proceed to the next phase."

Added Councillor Rachel Gilliland: "I was really shocked to hear that 93 meetings later since 2015 we finally made it here. I am so excited, I know the community is so excited, there are a lot of people who just can't wait for the shovel to hit the ground. It's still a long ways to go by the time we get to completion and I know we've got some more work to do, but I am so proud of all the hard work staff [and consultants] have done. We're on our way to revitalizing the downtown core. We're on our way and it is about time."

"Once we move ahead with this," concluded Mayor Mrakas, "I think you will see the floodgates open as far as businesses and people looking to invest and our downtown core will return to its past glory."

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Final Library Square funding details will come in time: Town Hall

By Brock Weir

Final details on the full financing of the \$38.5 million Library Square redevelopment will come in time, according to municipal staff, but according to Councillor John Gallo, those details should have been on hand prior to any Council vote on the Square.

Councillor Gallo was one of only two Council members to vote against moving ahead with the redevelopment of the Library Square lands last week citing not the redevelopment itself, but that concrete details of how the funding will break down is yet to be fully solidified.

As The Auroran reported last week, the financial plan for Library Square includes a variety of components that will cover the project’s current estimate of \$38 million.

The addition to the historic Church Street School, home to the Aurora Cultural Centre and Aurora Museum & Archives, is estimated to clock in at over \$27 million, and include a 250-seat performance hall, while the outdoor elements, including a trail-shaped skating rink, is estimated at nearly \$8.4 million.

One of the first options is a cash infusion of \$1.6 million from Development Charges, along with \$2.6 million from Community Benefit Fees paid by developers, \$7.1 million in reserves from the sale of municipal lands, a 20-year debenture of \$6.7 million, \$3.5 million from Hydro Reserves, a one-time tax increase of 1 per cent to cover the cost of the debenture, and a potential \$14 million in grants from the Federal Government.

The grant submission is currently working its way through the system, and there’s no word whether the Town will be successful in its application and, until this is solidified, Councillor John Gallo said he was uncomfortable approving the plan.

“Should we get [the grant], it is an absolute no-brainer that we move forward with this project,” he said. “However, unfortunately the way these motions are worded, whether we get that or not, we still move forward with this project and we still have to somehow make up \$14 million. I have [nothing] in front of me on how to make up the \$14 million, half the cost of the addition to 22 Church Street.

“It is my understanding we will know sometime in either June or July... and my desire to move this forward is huge, but I would prefer...to support these two projects subject to receiving those funds. If we don’t do that, I need a solid financial plan on how we’re going to fund that \$14 million.”

To this end, Councillor Gallo proposed two amendments to the motions before Council, including making the final approval contingent on receiving this grant funding.

“The intent is obviously to secure the funding and obviously if we don’t have that funding to have a solid financial plan, which would include a capital campaign strategy because, as it stands, at least publicly...if we don’t receive that \$14 million we have no other plan.”

Although his motion was seconded by Councillor Wendy Gaertner, it received no further traction around the Council table as many members said that should this grant request be unsuccessful, the backup plan has always been to make up the shortfall by drawing from the \$30 million reserve fund created from the proceeds of the sale of Aurora Hydro.

“I don’t see any reason to hamstring the motion to say, ‘subject to receiving the grant funding’ at this point when there is still going to be a checkpoint in the next report and the following report,” said Councillor Michael Thompson. “We all know in the procurement process you can tender it out and if you’re not happy at

that point, still cancel a project. To me, at this point, we don’t need to be too specific on the funding. Yes, we’re certainly going to have a capital campaign to try and raise as much as we can. Yes, we’re going to try and reach out and get every grant we can and, when all that information is available, we will make a decision on whether we’re moving forward or not.”

Councillor Harold Kim agreed that Councillor Gallo’s motion could have the consequence of delaying the Library Square project further.

“It is similar to being offered zero financing for a car; why would you refuse that if the opportunity presents itself, even if you can’t pay for the whole thing?” he said. “The other source of funding, and it hasn’t been specifically mentioned, the Hydro Reserve is right there. For us to say that we’re not going to move forward unless we get free money from somewhere else, I think it is kind of cowardly on us as a municipality.

“If we truly want this, are we saying we only want this if we have free money that we haven’t worked for? We sold a very important asset (Aurora Hydro) over a decade ago to use it for a very important and critical milestone project for the Town and this certainly qualifies for a significant project.”

Councillor Sandra Humfries said she agreed, noting that Library Square was the “perfect use” for Hydro Reserve money if the grant application is not successful. Similarly, Councillor Rachel Gilliland said that whether the Feds step up, or if the Hydro Reserves have to come into greater play, she would “really, really hate to hold this up based on speculation.”

The Hydro Funds, agreed Councillor Gaertner, were meant for “something wonderful and important for Aurora,” but she cautioned that since the interest from the reserves have been subsequently used to top of reserve funds and cushion the tax rate for local property owners,

that drawing down the funds significantly could have further impacts down the line.

“I am not sure it is cowardly to want to explore the opportunity to get funding from different levels of government when that is what they have put money aside for,” Councillor Gallo concluding, addressing Councillor Kim’s comments. “I think it is a little ridiculous to suggest that’s cowardly. What I think is irresponsible, actually is, funnily enough, the smallest part of this entire 150-page report is how we’re going to pay for this.

“I am jaded because I have gone through this experience before and three of the Councillors sitting at this table went through this experience before and I feel a little déjà vu because I said in the mic [years ago] having this exact same issue and we know how that ended up with the JOC. Yet, my colleagues...it doesn’t seem to matter and I am quite surprised at that. I am happy to hear some things will be coming back and maybe there are some more opportunities to refine this and that’s great. If that is the case, why are we actually putting a number in there right now? It just doesn’t make sense to me.”

Nevertheless, Mayor Tom Mrakas said it made sense to him.

“For us to secure this Cultural Grant, we need to be firm on two thirds,” said Mayor Mrakas on the funding. “I am the one who is going to have to sit down with our CAO, our MPP and the Minister to have these conversations to...try and secure this funding. If we go in and say Council is really not sure unless we get this money, they’re going to look at [the other shovel-ready applications].

“As I have already stated, I am comfortable moving forward with the whole budget because I feel this is the right thing for the community, the right thing to do, and I am very, very comfortable in moving forward and approving the whole budget.”



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FREE Week of March 28, 2019

Lodi sisters leap onto podium at Armory Youth Championship

By Jake Courtepatte

A pair of Aurora sisters are making splashes in the sand.

Csenge and Blanka Lodi flew to the top of the podium at the recent Armory Youth Championship, held in New York, featuring track and field athletes from both sides of the border.

As longtime members of Flying Angels Track and Field Academy, home to a handful of athletes from the 2016 Summer Olympics, the Lodis came home with a whopping five medals to add to their already impressive collection.

Blanka, a student at Light of Christ Catholic Elementary School, won gold in her age category in long jump with a jump of 4.75m, good for a 0.07m reach past her second-place opponent.

She topped off her meet with a silver medal finish in the triple jump at 10.19m, all three medal recipients far above the rest of the field.

A student at Cardinal Carter Catholic

High School, Csenge took to the track with the Flying Angels relay team to take gold in the 4x200m relay, before adding a silver medal in triple jump with a score of 10.10m. She finished off her podium sweep with a bronze medal in long jump, leaping 4.75m.

Showcasing their bevy of medals and ribbons at their Aurora home, neither sister is a stranger to the spotlight at both the club and scholastic level, with numerous ribbons from the YCDSB. Both competed in the prestigious AAU Indoor Championship in Washington last March, where Csenge finished sixth in triple jump while Blanka reached her respective podium in a third-place finish.

Blanka continued to add to her collection at the recent Minor Track Association Ontario Championship, this time earning gold in the triple jump category with a distance of 10.61m.

Like all well-trained athletes, both young stars are already looking towards the future: Blanka is anticipating continuing to push herself at the high



Csenge and Blanka Lodi both recently returned home with medals from the 2019 Armory Youth Championships, held in New York.
Photo courtesy of Mariann Kovacs

Minor Tigers still vying for York-Simcoe title



The Minor PeeWee A Tigers face off against the Barrie Colts in the York-Simcoe finals at the ACC on Sunday.
Auroran photo by Jake Courtepatte

By Jake Courtepatte

Four teams are still on the ice vying for York-Simcoe supremacy in early spring.

The Atom AA Tigers, Minor PeeWee A Tigers, PeeWee AA Tigers, and Bantam AA Tigers return this week in the hopes of bringing home the YSHL championship to Aurora.

In what could be a do-or-die for either side, the Atom AAs return to the ice on Thursday to face the Markham Waxers in their first-to-five points series, after splitting the first three games in a tie, a loss, and a win.

The Minor PeeWee As will be looking to rebound from a two-game deficit against the Barrie Jr. Colts, while the PeeWee AA Tigers are locked in a

split battle with the rival Newmarket Redmen in their series.

The Bantam AA final also showcases the Tigers versus the Jr. Colts, each of whom has taken one game so far.

At the provincial level, the Minor PeeWee AA and PeeWee AE squads are Aurora's last chance at an OMHA title this year, with the Minor PeeWee Tigers just a tie away from taking the prestigious cup over the Garden City Minor Falcons. They can put the series to bed on the road on Saturday.

The PeeWees will be looking to rebound from back-to-back losses against the Halton Hills Thunder after opening the series with a win, back at it on Friday night at the Aurora Community Centre at 7:45 p.m.

For schedules, visit www.auroraminorhockey.com.

school level, adding that she “always wants track and field to be a part of (her) life”, focusing on the 5m triple jump and the 11m long jump.

For Csenge, she has her sights set on a berth in the OFSAA Championship in Guelph this June, taking on the best in Ontario scholastic track and field. With similar goals to her sister of a 5.2m triple jump and an 11m long jump, Csenge is also hoping to land a spot on Team Ontario at the Summer Games, and eventually reach the international level.

It comes as no surprise that both

Blanka and Csenge rank the long and triple jumps as their favourite events.

These lofty goals are certainly in reach: the young star siblings have a mindset well beyond their years.

“If you have a dream or goal, follow it,” said Csenge. “Work hard for it, because you never know what your limit is. Anyone can go far and become someone big, and that someone can be you.”

“Track and field is the sport for all because you will find the event that's special to you,” added Blanka. “Everyone should give it a try!”

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Junior A Tigers head coach to double as general manager

By Jake Courtepatte

The carousel continues to turn in junior hockey circles.

As is the case every year, the turnover of a junior hockey team is usually substantial: for the Aurora Tigers, notable this year are the changes in the front office.

After the Tigers were eliminated in the first round of the Ontario Junior Hockey League playoffs by the Newmarket Hurricanes in early March, both GM Dermot Anderson and head scout Jason Maslakow stepped down from the posts to take on new challenges elsewhere.

Team owner Jim Thomson was quick to fill the general manager’s void with a familiar face: head coach Rob De Fulviis.

“I’m excited to be joining the Tigers management team for the upcoming season,” said De Fulviis in a statement to the OJHL. “I’m looking forward to

building a contender for years to come.” A first-year coach with the Tigers after a professional playing stint in the ECHL, the 27-year old De Fulviis takes the reigns for the first time alongside his former assistant coach Luke McCarthy, in what they hope will make for a smooth transition.

As for taking on the monumental role, De Fulviis told The Aurored it was a “no-brainer.”

“I was fortunate to be brought on as an assistant coach last season, and I was so honoured to be named head coach a few months later,” said De Fulviis, who took over from Mario Cicchillo early in the season. “To have this recognition this early in my coaching career, I’m so humbled and I can’t say thank you enough to Jim and Rita Thomson...for them to put the brand of their business in my hands, I really can’t express my gratitude enough.”

After spending almost the entirety of the first half of the OJHL season in first place in the division, the Tigers

struggled down the stretch, something De Fulviis said he admits will need a “reevaluation.”

“Obviously we fell short of our ultimate goal this past season, but I believe we have a lot of the right pieces in place,” said De Fulviis. “It’s going to be a great summer of adding to what we have, and hopefully adding the pieces that I’ve targeted will set us up to be contenders for years to come.

“The Tigers are such a storied franchise in the OJHL, with multiple national championships, graduating players year in and year out, and I just am so excited to contribute and add to the past success this franchise has seen.”

As for Anderson and Maslakow, known around Toronto Maple Leafs fan circles as “Dart Guy”, both have joined the newly-formed Collingwood Colts franchise, which will serve as a farm system for the OHL’s Barrie Colts.

“I would like to thank the Aurora Tigers for an amazing last three years,” said Anderson in a statement. “Thank you Jim and Rita Thomson for trusting me with your brand, product, and hockey club.

“To all the players and coaches I have crossed paths with, you are all beauties....to the Town of Aurora, you have been amazing to me. You were my second home for three-plus years.”

Maslakow said it was “with a heavy heart” that he was stepping down from his post.

“This was not an easy decision as the Tigers are a first-class organization that believed in me, took a chance on me...I want to thank all the fans and the Town of Aurora, you embraced me from day

one and always made me feel like part of the city and culture in Aurora and I will never forget that.”

De Fulviis said he was “very excited” for the two as they take on the challenge.

“They are two incredibly hard-working people. Dermot and I spent a lot of time together this past season. We were always bouncing ideas off of one another, and he had an answer for any question I had for him throughout the year. He was a great help to me, and we established a pretty good friendship as well.”

As for Thomson, De Fulviis, and the rest of the staff, the show goes on: spring development camp is fast approaching in early May. More info can be found at www.auroratigers.pointstreaksites.com.

Varga, Tooke ready to join college hockey rosters

By Jake Courtepatte

Chalk up another pair of ex-Tigers for the college hockey circuits.

Both forward Jack Varga and defenseman Noah Tooke committed to play collegiate hockey in North America next season, with Varga heading to the NCAA to join the Northland College Lumberjacks, while Tooke will join the U Sports’ Wilfrid Laurier Golden Hawks.


The two new additions bring the Tigers’ 2019 season commitment totals to the second highest number for the organization since 2015, which includes 2017-18 players Chris Giroday, Anthony Romano, and Kyle Bollers, as well as Joseph Mizzi, who recently joined the Utah Grizzlies of the ECHL.

One of the smaller players on the ice throughout the OJHL season, Varga proved his worth with his tenacity and fearlessness.

“Congratulations Jack,” the Tigers tweeted. “(You’re) one of the best character players in the history of our organization, you have the heart of a champion.”

After three years with the Stouffville Spirit, Varga enjoyed a successful stint with the Tigers this past season in posting thirteen goals and sixteen assists in 47 games. The Sharon, ON native is a product of the York-Simcoe Express system, and will join the NCAA DIH program in Wisconsin.

Tooke, who served as a reserve in his one season with the Tigers in 2018-19, joins fellow ex-Tigers James Thomson and Steven MacLean, who just announced his commitment for his freshman season last week.




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Aurora Minor Hockey Association



IMPORTANT INFORMATION REGARDING 2019/2020 REGISTRATION

On-Line Registration begins:	April 1, 2019
In-House Registration dates:	April 1, 8, 15, 22, 29 (6 – 9 pm) April 3, 10, 17, 24 (6 – 9 pm) April 6, 13, 27 (10 am – 1:00 pm) AMHA Office at the Aurora Community Centre Yonge/Aurora Heights Drive

Please refer to our website at www.auroraminorhockey.com for Rep tryout policies and schedules.

REGISTRATION fees for the 2019/2020 season are:

Early Bird Registration Fee

\$625.00	Players born 1999 through 2013*
\$275.00	Tiger Cubs - players born 2014 and 2015

Registration fees increase by \$50 on June 1, 2019 and \$100 on July 1, 2019 **for returning players only.**

\$ 60.00	Non-Resident Fee (for players born 2013-1999 only)
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*New players with Aurora Minor Hockey must submit a copy of a birth certificate or passport and proof of residency.

A 10% discount applies to families with 3 or more players.

Refunds will be issued to anyone withdrawing prior to September 1, 2019 (less a \$25 admin fee).

Players MUST be registered PRIOR to any tryouts for AAA or any AMHA rep team. AMHA tryouts begin April 23, 2019. Tryout passport information is available online.

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We will not add teams in September to accommodate late registrants.

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Peaceful portage departs on path towards Truth & Reconciliation



Cedar and Suzanne Smoke participate in Tuesday night’s launch of the Sacred Canoe.

Auroran photo by Glenn Rodger

By Brock Weir

A peaceful portage, bringing together the artistic talents of dozens of local students, set out for Aurora on Tuesday night on the path towards Truth & Reconciliation.

The Sacred Canoe, a multidisciplinary art project spearheaded by students of Newmarket’s Sacred Heart Catholic High School, was launched in a spectacular fashion last Tuesday at St. Andrew’s College.

The Sacred Canoe itself is twofold, both a spectacularly painted 19-foot-long vessel and a three-part dramatic project, but before the canoe began its journey to Ottawa to be presented to Chief Kirby Whiteduck of the Algonquins of Pikwakanagan First Nation in a ceremony hosted by Newmarket-Aurora MP Kyle Peterson to coincide with the International Day for the Elimination of Racial Discrimination, both took centre-stage at SAC.

The Sacred Canoe is a multidisciplinary art project launched in 2017 to answer specific calls to action from the Truth and Reconciliation Report, say project organizers. It included over 150 watercolour landscapes, dry-point etchings and spirit animals designed by the Newmarket students, under the

guidance of teachers and Indigenous Community members who acted as mentors.

The designs were inspired by photographs taken at Webequie First Nation Reserve, its surrounding areas, and stories that were told from students at the Innulik School in Quebec.

Integral in the performance aspect of The Sacred Canoe were Aurora teacher Dawn Ellis-Mobbs, Department Head of Arts at Sacred Heart, and Newmarket Musician Glenn Marais.

“The canoe is travelling to Ottawa and that was a dream that sort of came from the first time this was presented two years ago,” said Ms. Ellis-Mobbs. “Many of the partners are still in place, so that is a great testament to the dedication that these kinds of projects have because everyone feels like they are part of it and, from that, great relationships have developed. We have the honour of presenting the canoe in Parliament to Chief Kirby Whiteduck and it is a beautiful honour and a great tribute.”

Mr. Marais explained the evolution of the four-part play that highlights the importance of reaching Truth & Reconciliation.

“The first part of it speaks to the early relationship between settlers and indigenous people, where they first worked in harmony, running in parallel

paths without interfering in their culture and sharing in trade and helping each other to thrive in the early stages of Canada’s history,” said Mr. Marais. “The second part tells the story of colonization and the Indian Act, when things changed after the War of 1812 for indigenous people dramatically. The third act illustrates and speaks to the Residential School system and the impact it had on indigenous communities and their children.

“The final act of the play is the Truth and Reconciliation and the journey of the canoe in the spiritual sense, replicates the physical being of Canada geographically in the first part of our history. It is our hope that this Sacred Canoe opens up conversations and actions for people to continue to work together in Truth and Reconciliation, to re-open and reconnect Canada in that sense of working together in harmony and not interfering with each other’s cultures. Working together.”

Among the participants in last week’s ceremony were Suzanne Smoke of the Alderville First Nations, who spoke about the relationship of the Indigenous Peoples – and indeed all peoples – to the water, Newmarket Mayor John Taylor, who spoke about the history of local indigenous settlements, and Mayor Tom Mrakas, who delivered video greetings due to a conflict with that evening’s Council meeting.

“I want to congratulate the project team...and the students of Sacred Heart for their work on this incredible project,” said Mayor Mrakas. “The painting on the canoe sends a very moving message; a message which must be heard across our country. Reconciliation can only happen when two cultures walk together, side by side, in harmony and peace.

“Peace requires that we open our hearts and minds to the incredible history and stories of indigenous people. The Sacred Canoe is a beautiful example of how history can be brought to life as a tool for education and

inspiration. The power of art, theatre and music crosses all cultures and speaks to who we are as human beings and the connection we have to each other. What a wonderful learning experience the Sacred Canoe project has been for the students of Sacred Heart and the entire community. I wish you all the best of luck as the Canoe travels to Ottawa. I have no doubt it will serve as an inspirational reminder of the work that still remains as we journey towards truth and reconciliation.”

Student leader Julia Mallory drove this point home, paying tribute to the Sacred Heart student body’s “incredible ideas, awesome leadership skills and outstanding teams behind them really pushing them to do remarkable things.”

“The community is fractured,” she said. “There isn’t that one family feeling that you get when you see Sacred Heart and you will see that tonight.”



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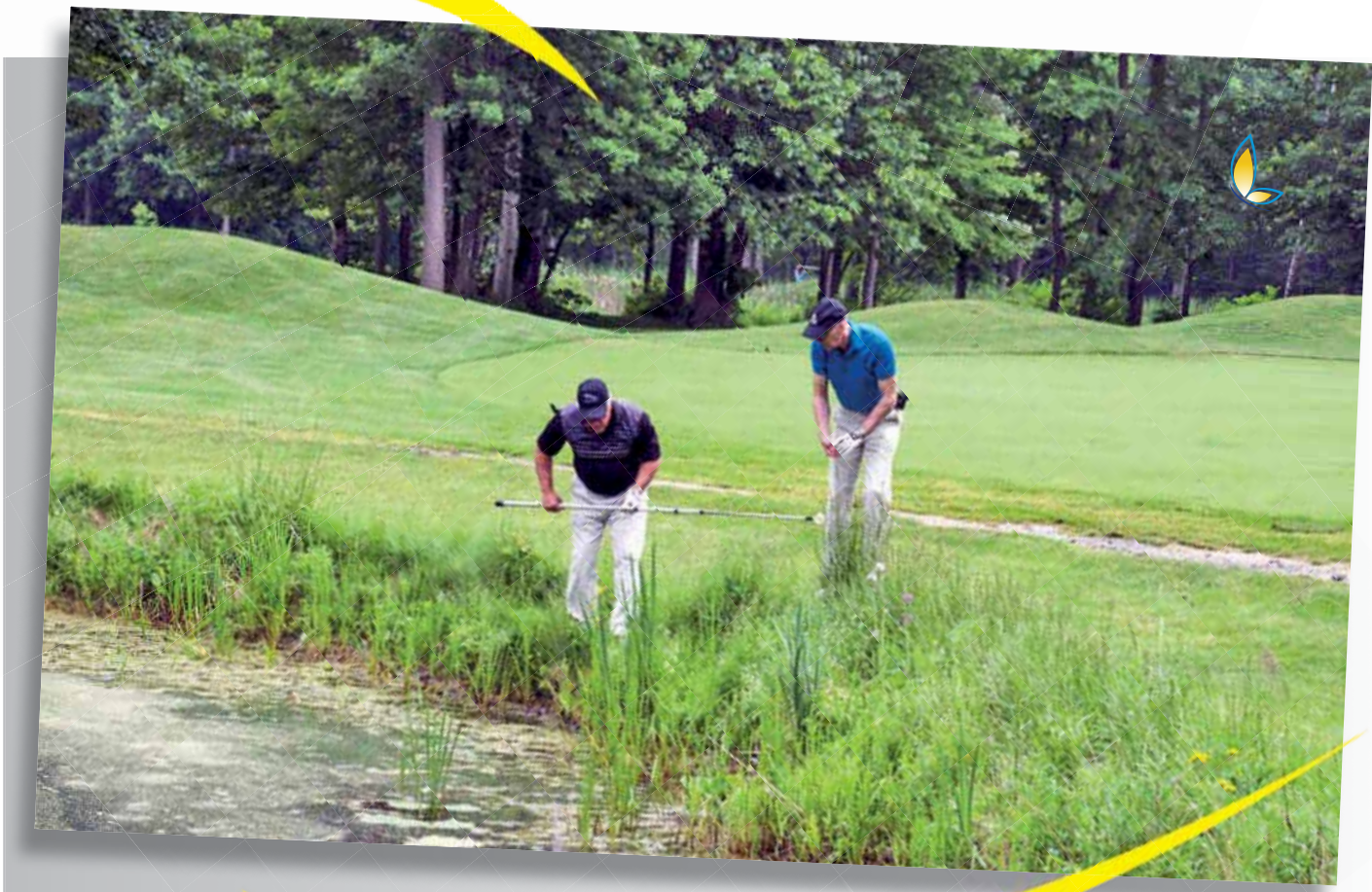


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Baseball players warm Hearts on a Cold Day

Story by Brock Weir

The Aurora Minor Bantam Rep A Baseball Team braved the cold weather for a can and bottle charity drive to benefit the Heart & Stroke Foundation.

The team encouraged the community to bring all beer, wine and liquor cans and bottles to their event, held in the parking lot of Starsky’s Fine Foods, and despite the -16 degree cold, they surpassed their goal of \$1,000.

“The energy from the boys was fantastic and there was lots of evidence of teamwork off the field, which will in turn transfer into great teamwork on the field,” said Coach Irene Skanderis. “It was amazing to see the boys working hard. Great work everyone. We should be proud!”



Photo by Glenn Rodger



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MP’s Report

From page 5

life for First Nations, Inuit, and Métis Peoples in Canada and advance self-determination with investments to improve water quality; preserve, revitalize and promote Indigenous languages; improve the quality of education and health care for Indigenous children in a culturally relevant way; and promote Indigenous entrepreneurship and business.

With the new investments in Budget 2019, combined with lower taxes, more money in their pockets each month and more good jobs, there is good reason for middle class Canadians to feel more confident about what the future holds for themselves and their families.

Over the past four years, the Government has focused on strengthening and growing the middle class, and offering real help to people working hard to join it, so that everyone has a real and fair chance at success. Under the Government’s plan, hard-working Canadians have created over 900,000 new jobs, most of them full-time, driving the unemployment rate to its lowest levels in more than 40 years. This includes especially strong employment gains by women. The Canada Child Benefit is helping families with the high cost of raising children by putting more money in the pockets of nine out of ten Canadian families, and helping to lift nearly 300,000 children out of poverty. More than nine million Canadians are benefitting from the Government’s middle class tax cut, which gives them more money to save or spend on the things they need. An enhanced Canada Pension Plan, which will raise the maximum CPP retirement benefit by up to 50 per cent over time, is giving todays and future Canadian workers greater income security when they retire. Historic investments in infrastructure, including the National Housing Strategy which is helping more Canadians find a safe and affordable place to call home.

Around Town

The 2019 annual Aurora Winter Blues Festival was another fantastic success. I was happy to attend the Blues Bash Kick Off event which featured the Bywater

Blues Band, who provided energetic performances for the sold out crowd. It was a memorable night in our community.

I look forward to Aurora’s Annual Community Clean Up Day, being held on Saturday April 13, 2019. Town staff, residents and volunteers will help clean up litter throughout our community. To register, please email: cleanup@aurora.ca. All registered participants will receive a clean-up kit at check-in on Saturday, April 13. Please remember to wear appropriate clothing and footwear. Participants are invited to attend an appreciation barbecue from 12 noon to 2 pm at the Aurora Town Park.

Recently, both Newmarket and Aurora held community vigils to remember and honour the victims of the New Zealand Mosque terrorist attacks. I was appalled to hear of the attacks on the mosques in New Zealand. This was an act of Islamophobia that killed and injured many men, women and children. Fathers, mothers and children gone far too soon.

My deepest sympathies and condolences go out to their families. It was not that long ago that a similar attack happened in Quebec. We know too well the devastation that these attacks have on all victims and their families. My heart also goes out to all Muslims in Newmarket and Aurora. I have had the honour of visiting your mosque and meeting with you many times. We are fortunate to have you in our community. Please know that you are in my heart and my mind. These attacks on Muslims come from hatred. There can be no place for such hatred in our community or in Canada. I condemn these attacks, and we must all stand against violent terrorism. We must all strive for a community where all feel safe and secure. Please know that I will always stand with you.

As a reminder, you can reach out to my Constituency Office and my staff at any time. Please do not hesitate to contact us should you require information or assistance on any Federal matters. We are located at 16600 Bayview Avenue, Suite 202. You can reach us at Tel: 905-953-7515 or by email at kyle.peterson@parl.gc.ca

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GRAND FINALE – The Aurora Winter Blues Festival program series came to a close on Saturday night at the Aurora branch of the Royal Canadian Legion. The “Raise the Roof Rhythm and Blues Dinner and Dance” was the capper on a month-long celebration of blues, this time featuring a performance from the Aurora-based band Soul Benefit. Proceeds from the dinner and dance went towards the Legion’s ongoing “Raise the Roof” campaign. Soul Benefit returns to the Legion on Saturday, April 13, for a fundraiser benefiting the Aurora Lions Club.

Auroran photos by Glenn Rodger





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CLUES ACROSS

1. Joint

6. A group of countries in special alliance

10. Stone

14. Move with a splashing sound

15. Can be fixed

17. Giving human characteristics to the nonhuman

19. Other side of yang (Chinese)

20. Consume

21. Gave it a go

22. One point north of due east

23. Fat used to make puddings

24. Turfs

26. Not awake

29. Not nice

31. Frighten

32. Political action committee

34. Skin problem
35. Type of music

37. Intestinal pouches

38. Eight

39. Emerald Isle

40. Interpret characters

41. Abandon

43. Felines

45. Energy and enthusiasm

46. Resembles a pouch

47. Relating to sense of smell

49. Swiss river

50. Bradley Int’l Airport

53. ___ yonder

57. Tarred and ___

58. Boyish

59. This (Spanish)

60. Male parent

61. Lounge chair

CLUES DOWN

1. Sports award

2. Monetary unit of Angola

3. Some animals live here

4. Former CIA

5. Global health group

6. Male given name

7. Opposite of right

8. Open Payment Initiative

9. Desert plants

10. A bird that cannot fly

11. Off-Broadway theater award

12. Lump of clay

13. Barbie’s pal

16. Seldom

18. Noses

22. Denotes past

23. Selling at specially reduced prices

24. ___ Claus

25. Comes before two

27. Fencing swords

28. Nocturnal rodent
29. Chinese revolutionary

30. Electronic counter-countermeasures

31. Enjoyable

33. Villain

35. Discussed

36. Waterfall (Scottish)

37. Old television part (abbr.)

39. Roughly chipped flint

42. Helps change channels

43. ___ Sagan, astronomer

44. Cooling unit

46. Uttered words

47. Small integers

48. Type of data

49. Inspired

50. France’s first Jewish PM

51. Famed sci-fi novel

52. Body parts

53. Nigerian City

54. Amount of time

55. Coloring material

56. Type of constrictor snake

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Cultural Centre touts “purpose built” space at Library Square; others outline parking concerns

From page 13
Chamber members still have many questions, primarily about the amount of traffic that will come into the Downtown Core as a result and the impact this might have on vacant businesses.

“Vacancies in business environments are never a good thing,” said Ms. Ferri. “Revitalization and improvements to the Downtown Core of Aurora to increase and draw more people to the downtown core and to Aurora in general is beneficial to all businesses in Aurora. The Aurora Chamber of Commerce is excited about this initiative as improvements to the Downtown Core are sure to increase traffic to the businesses and improve economic development in Aurora.

“While we are excited about this initiative, we are also cautious of the increased expenses associated with this initiative and request that the Town continue to provide updates on taxation, operational implications that the Chamber can share with its members.”

Joanne Russo, representing the Downtown BIA, said they too were “excited” about the plan and offered nothing put positives.

“We, as a Board, feel the development of Library Square will build and revitalize the Downtown Core and bring a stronger community,” she said. “We are excited to be part of the new transformation to our Town as we feel it will bring residents, visitors and businesses together, not only today but for generations to come. Together with the development of Library Square and the BIA, the Downtown Core will become the jewel of Aurora once again, while embracing our heritage and celebrating the future ahead.”

During her time at the podium, Suzanne Haines, Executive Director of the Aurora Cultural Centre, said that during the planning process for Library Square, the Cultural Centre submitted a letter outlining in broad strokes where the organization currently stands and where it intends to be in the future,



Artistic rendering of Library Square courtesy of RAW Design & The Planning Partnership

including the “cultural infrastructure” needed to realise those goals.

Purpose-built cultural space, she said, was important, along with studies to ensure that such space is viable. Much of the work in this regard was in the report before Council, she said.

Although their letter did not indicate the importance of food service, Ms. Haines told Council that she was pleased to see culinary services are still in consideration as part of the Church Street addition.

“A glass of wine, a good dinner and desserts after are part of a fulsome experience as consuming art is a social activity where discussion is often sought after,” she said. “Also, other users will want to be able to get a quick lunch or snack as they use the facility for classes or wait for kids in the sunshine of the piazza. Ideally this space could be leased to a commercial food entity and provide a supportive revenue source

that compliments the overall plan for public-private activation in the whole of downtown and throughout the BIA district.

“Our hope is to help make this project something the community can be proud of and make excellent use of. As we have seen in many other communities where there is an investment in cultural infrastructure, it has a positive ripple effect on the quality of life in a community. We look forward to seeing this project move forward and will continue to work with our cultural partners, community stakeholders, project consultants and Town Council and staff.”

Last up to speak was local heritage advocate David Heard, who said the residents and business owners in Aurora’s Downtown Core still had lingering concerns over the Library Square plans.

“This is no slam dunk, I can tell you that right now,” said Mr. Heard. “The concerns were, of course, parking. The

concerns were the costs running forward, what is it going to cost to run, will it run at a deficit? The cost was shocking to a lot of people in these economic times. The other thing was I heard the other day there were two committee members who spoke about this build and one of them, I’ll call him an expert who did a historic building on Mosley, he spoke of concerns about the water in the area. We know there is Niagara Falls going under that area.

“In 2011, I spoke about a possible godsend to this area for parking was an adjacent property, approximately 80 steps. It takes less than a minute to walk to this property. The shocking thing that happened today was I got a phone call from the owner of that property and there is an interest to make the property available. So, if the public has any concerns about parking, I think the problems may have just gotten completely wiped out.”

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