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THE AURORAN

Aurora's Community Newspaper

Vol. 20 No. 38 905-727-3300 TheAuroran.com **FREE** Week of July 9, 2020 



CANADA DAY FUN – Lambert Willson Park and the Aurora Family Leisure Complex are usually a hub of activity each July 1 as the Town marks Canada Day. But, after events to mark the 153rd anniversary of Confederation were brought into the virtual realm this year as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic, it was up to Gianluca, Ethan, Malik, Malcolm, Lucas, and Juliano to take over the nearby skate park on Wednesday morning and make Canada Day memories of their own. For more on how Aurora celebrated the holiday, see Pages 14 and 15.

Auroran photo by Brock Weir

Aurora marks Canada Day apart, but virtually together

By Brock Weir

Lambert Willson Park, usually the scene of more than ten hours of revelry each July 1, was unseasonably quiet on Canada Day as Aurorans marked the 153rd anniversary at home or in their social bubbles due to the global pandemic.

But the party rolled on in a virtual way thanks to the Department of Canadian Heritage, the Town of Aurora, and the

Aurora Museum & Archives.

Virtual fun included a host of returning favourites that have become a hallmark of local celebrations, including family-friendly craft activities, a performance from the Fire Guy, and a virtual fireworks display, while the digital platform allowed for the development of new activities such as interactive cooking demonstrations.

While a parade down Yonge Street was hard to replicate in a digital environment, some of Aurora's proud traditions

continued online, including a reaffirmation of citizenship, led by local leaders, including area Members of Parliament, Mayor Tom Mrakas and Council members – and a Council-led rendition of O Canada.

The morning kicked off with words from Mayor Tom Mrakas, who took a moment to recognize the present situation.

"As we celebrate our proud nation's birthday, I would like to take the time to celebrate our essential service workers and

Continued on page 15

*Experience will
help steer Canada
through COVID
economic recovery:*
MacKay

By Brock Weir

As the country looks toward a new normal, an experienced voice is needed to ensure Canada is best positioned to come out the other side, according to Conservative leadership hopeful Peter MacKay.

A lot has changed at home and

Continued on page 16

Conservative leadership hopeful Peter MacKay speaks with editor Brock Weir earlier this week.

Photo by Jason Ransom

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TOWN OF AURORA
PUBLIC NOTICE

NOTICE OF COMPLETE APPLICATION

The Town of Aurora is in receipt of the following Complete Applications under the Planning Act.

APPLICATIONS: A proposed Official Plan Amendment, Zoning By-law Amendment and Draft Plan of Subdivision to facilitate the development of 40 Single-Detached Homes, 209 Townhouse Units and a 6 Storey Seniors Building with 86 one and two bedroom apartment units and 120 seniors care units.

The Official Plan Amendment proposes changing the “Business Park” Designation to “Low-Medium Density Residential” and “Medium-High Density” Residential Designations under OPA 30.

The Zoning By-law Amendment proposes changing the existing “Business Park (H) (E-BP (313)) Hold Exception Zone” and “Business Park (E-BP (313)) Exception Zone” to two (2) “Detached Fourth Density Residential (R4-XX) Exception Zones”, four (4) “Townhouse Dwelling Residential (R8-XX) Exception Zones”, one (1) “Second Density Apartment Residential (RA2-XX) Exception Zone” and two (2) “Private Open Space (O2-XX) Exception Zones”.

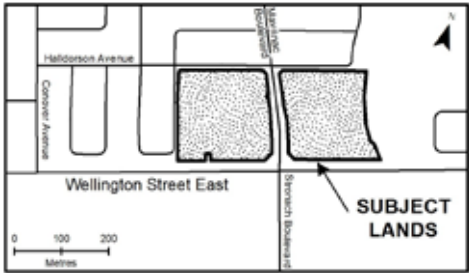
The Draft Plan of Subdivision Application proposes the creation of lots and blocks to accommodate the proposed development which consists of residential uses and additional amenity space including two parkettes.

PROPERTY: 20 & 25 Mavrinac Boulevard

LEGAL DESCRIPTION: Plan 65M-3852, Blocks 1 & 2

APPLICANT: Malone Given Parsons Ltd.

FILE NUMBERS: OPA-2017-01, ZBA-2017-03 & SUB 2017-02



ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

Town Hall is currently closed to the public and additional information and material regarding the proposed Applications can be requested by e-mailing planning@aurora.ca. The Planner for this file is **Sean Lapenna** of the Planning and Development Services Department. He may be reached at 905-727-3123 extension **4346** or at slapenna@aurora.ca.

Should you wish to provide comments, they may be provided by mail to the Planning and Development Services Department at the same address below, by fax to 905-726-4736 or by email to planning@aurora.ca prior to the meeting. Please quote the File Name and Numbers.

A Statutory Public Meeting to obtain input on the proposal will be scheduled in the future. Notice of the Public Meeting will be provided in accordance with the Planning Act, R.S.O. 1990, c.P.13.

INFORMATION ABOUT PRESERVING YOUR APPEAL RIGHTS:

Official Plan Amendment, Zoning Bylaw Amendment and Draft Plan of Subdivision

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DATED at the Town of Aurora, this 9th day of July, 2020.

Town of Aurora 100 John West Way, Aurora, ON L4G 6J1
aurora.ca/publicnotices • 905-727-1375

Aurora Heights area sidewalks move forward

By Brock Weir

New sidewalks intended to help increase pedestrian safety around Aurora Heights Public School have received the formal thumbs-up from Council.

After months of debate, local lawmakers formally approved a sidewalk for Kitimat Crescent, one which will be installed directly adjacent to the curb on the north and west side of the street. The planned location of the sidewalk, according to Town Staff, is to “preserve as much driveway capacity as possible” in the area.

Maintaining driveway capacity was one of the many sticking points residents opposed to the proposal brought to Council’s attention over the past year. Their concerns sparked no shortage of alternative ideas to increase pedestrian safety, including a proposal to temporarily turn Kitimat into a one-way street until layby parking for the nearby school could be completed under a wider raft of safety measures. But safety ultimately won the day.

The sidewalk project is budgeted at \$192,700, an increase from the previous \$100,000 originally earmarked at budget-time, but more than \$50,000 of this is for “optional extra work” including the removal of catch basins and infrastructure repairs, if deemed necessary over the course of the construction.

For crossing guard Suzanne Lytle, the cost to get the job done was a small price to pay to increase children’s safety.

“Each September, I look forward to seeing my little friends after summer break. I also look forward to making new friends. Each year, I find at least half of the children who are driven to school and park on Kitimat are in kindergarten. Some are as young as three when they start,” said Ms. Lytle in a written delegation to Council. “Parents and carers drive the children for all different reasons. Many of them are working parents, primary parents, parents who have children in multiple schools, new moms with little ones and grandparents. They are all good people; they are just trying to go about their day and get their kids to and from school safely. They

deserve a safe route to school, they deserve to be off the road.

“Families parking along Kitimat is not exclusive to just the morning and afternoon rush. Parents pick up and drop off at all different times throughout the day due to appointments and whatever. Some children go home each day for lunch. There are parent-teacher interviews, award assemblies, art nights, holiday celebrations, Welcome to Kindergarten, graduation and sports teams coming from other schools who park on Kitimat. There are many little feet travelling along Kitimat throughout the day, not just during the rush.

“I love my job and I love these kids. It would haunt me forever if a child is ever hurt on my watch. I can’t even imagine what it would do to the motorist. Children are compulsive, easily distracted, unpredictable and completely unaware of the dangers that are around them. It only takes a second to change a life forever. Restricting parking along the side of Kitimat or making Kitimat a one-way street is not going to eliminate all the dangers of having children walking on the road with cars travelling past them. The Police may be able to help control and enforce the laws of the road, bylaw may be able to control where people park, parents can try and control their impulsive children, but no one can control Mother Nature. Accidents happen.”

Council ultimately agreed, approving the project’s budget unanimously.

“I know I have received quite a bit of communication over the last several weeks and have had a few people accuse me of trying to make residents happy and not doing what is right, which is a little disappointing, but I can take it. I have been a politician for a while now,” said Councillor Sandra Humfries.

“What I have in my heart is the good of the community. I do believe the safety issues are still going to be there. The sidewalk may help, but it is not going to alleviate what we see there day to day. I do look forward to getting this moving forward, hopefully addressing the residents’ driveways that are going to be compromised by this, but we will work through it, I am sure.”



AURORA’S ANNUAL
COMMUNITY CLEANUP

SATURDAY, JULY 25 | SUNDAY, JULY 26

REGISTER TODAY TO PARTICIPATE
Sign up by emailing cleanup@aurora.ca and receive a cleanup kit (while supplies last)
Registration deadline is Monday, July 20

Cleanup kits are available at the Joint Operations Centre (JOC).
Pick up times are:
Tuesday, July 21 to Friday, July 24
12 p.m. to 2 p.m.
Saturday, July 25
8 a.m. to 10 a.m.

Cleanup kit includes:

- Two garbage bags
- One clear recycling bag
- One pair of nitrile gloves
- Instructions & safety tips

Bags will be collected on Monday, July 27.
Please email cleanup@aurora.ca or call 905-727-3123 ext. 3447 to indicate the location for pick up.
For more information and details on target locations, please visit: aurora.ca/cleanup
Let’s keep Aurora safe and beautiful.





Region debates mandatory masks as Aurora sees slight uptick in COVID-19 cases

By Brock Weir

York Region residents will find out this week whether wearing masks in public will be mandatory as part of continuing efforts to flatten the curve.

Regional Councillors, including Mayor Tom Mrakas, will be meeting Thursday morning, July 9, to discuss the issue.

Should Regional Council vote in favour of making mask-wearing mandatory, their decision will be in line with York Region Transit, which made mask-wearing compulsory on all transit vehicles effective last Wednesday, July 2.

“Regional Council remains committed to the health and safety of everyone travelling, living and working in York Region,” said York Region Chairman and CEO Wayne Emmerson following the transit-related decision. “As we are re-opening and more people have come back to our transit system, it is more important than ever for everyone to play their part in keeping our families and communities safe.” Exemptions have been made for children under the age of two, those unable to wear a face covering because of a medical condition and passengers needing assistance placing or removing a face covering.

The Region’s debate comes as Chief Medical Officer of Health Dr. Karim Kurji warned residents about an increase in cases of COVID-19 on York Region farms.

“We have one large outbreak at a farm and a few cases each at several farms in York Region,” said Dr. Kurji in his Monday briefing. “These have been proactively identified with the help of our hospital partners, in particular Southlake Hospital. Our Public Health inspectors have been

into these farms in order to give infection prevention and control advice to the farmers, as well as to ensure that the living conditions are adequate.

“We at Public Health continue to be actively involved in identifying several other outbreaks in a multitude of settings and to move in very quickly in order to control these and put out the fires before they spread.”

Cases are also on the rise, he added, amongst youth between the ages of 15 and 19.


“We don’t know what exactly is causing this and we’re still investigating this,” he said.

By press time Tuesday night, Aurora was grappling with 13 active cases of COVID-19, up from just 8 at the same time the previous week. Of the active cases, 12 are related to local transmission and 1 is attributed to an institutional setting outside Aurora.

To date, Aurora has experienced 120 confirmed cases of COVID-19, with 92 cases now marked resolved. 15 residents have lost their fight with the virus.

The Region of York surpassed 3,000 total cases over the last week. As things stand, there have been a total of 3,104 cases, 247 cases of which have proved fatal. 2,494 cases are now marked resolved.

“I would like to remind you that we do need to be very vigilant,” said Dr. Kurji. “It is so easy for this outbreak to get out of control again. Please ensure that you physically distance by two metres or more and if you’re unable to physically distance then to put on a mask, particularly when you are indoors. Also, please wash your hands frequently and be vigilant for any signs or symptoms of COVID-19.”



TOWN OF AURORA
PUBLIC NOTICE

NOTICE OF COMPLETE APPLICATION

The Town of Aurora is in receipt of the following Complete Application under the Planning Act.

APPLICATION: A proposed Official Plan Amendment and Zoning By-law Amendment for an industrial building and gas bar along St. John’s Sideroad, and an office building and retail building on Leslie Street. The Official Plan Amendment proposes a gas station as a permitted use. The Zoning By-law Amendment proposes changing the existing “Rural Zone (RU)” to “Business Park Exception Zone (E-BP-XX)” and “Environmental Protection Zone (EP)”. A related Site Plan Application has also been submitted to the Town of Aurora.

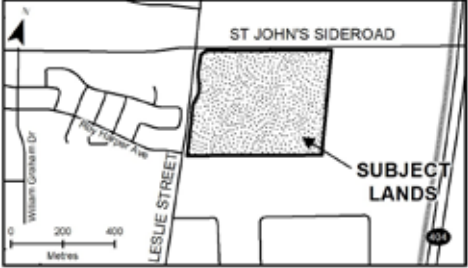
PROPERTY: 1675 St. John’s Sideroad

LEGAL DESCRIPTION: Whitchurch Con 3 Pt Lot 25 RP 65R36629 Parts 1 to 3

APPLICANT: Humphries Planning Group Inc.

FILE NUMBERS: OPA-2020-05, ZBA-2020-05

RELATED APPLICATIONS: SP-2020-04



ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

The Town Hall is currently closed to the public and additional information and material regarding the proposed Applications can be requested by contacting the Planner for this file, **Carlson Tsang** of the Planning and Development Services Department, at 905-727-3123 extension **4349** or at ctsang@aurora.ca.

Should you wish to provide comments, they may be provided by mail to the Planning and Development Services Department at the address below, by fax to 905-726-4736 or by email to planning@aurora.ca. Please quote the File Name and Number.

A Statutory Public Meeting to obtain input on the proposal will be scheduled in the future. Notice of the Public Meeting will be provided in accordance with the Planning Act, R.S.O. 1990, c.P.13.

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Official Plan and Zoning Bylaw Amendment

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TOWN OF AURORA
PUBLIC NOTICE

NOTICE OF COMPLETE APPLICATION

The Town of Aurora is in receipt of the following Complete Application under the Planning Act.

APPLICATION: A Proposed Official Plan Amendment and Zoning By-law Amendment applications to re-designate and rezone the southeast portion of the property to permit the development of a six (6) storey residential building containing 79 units, comprising a total gross floor area of 8,012.4 square metres. A total of 119 parking spaces are proposed to support the development, including 10 at-grade visitor spaces and 109 underground spaces.

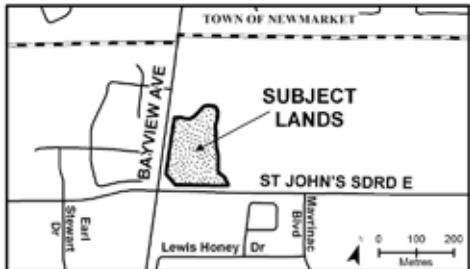
PROPERTY: 16005-16055 Bayview Avenue

LEGAL DESCRIPTION: Whitchurch Con 2 Pt Lot 26, RP 65R32530 Part 1

APPLICANT: RCG Aurora North GP Inc.

FILE NUMBERS: OPA-2020-04 & ZBA-2020-04

RELATED APPLICATIONS: N/A



ADDITIONAL INFORMATION:

The Town Hall is currently closed to the public and additional information and material regarding the proposed Applications may be requested by contacting the Planner for this file, **Matthew Peverini** of the Planning and Development Services Department, at 905-727-3123 extension **4350** or at MPeverini@aurora.ca.

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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

Library Square project shouldn't be halted: reader

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on the “Letters to the Editor” regarding Library Square.

They are both well written by two well-respected, long-standing members of our community. Both letters discuss whether now is the right time to continue with the Library Square project within the context of economic concerns stemming from COVID-19.

Yes, COVID-19 has affected our local, provincial, federal, and world economies. Yes, we will be recovering from these effects for the foreseeable future.

In my opinion, halting projects that create creative and cultural infrastructure within the Town is not the way to move forward. Hunkering down and not progressing through economic hardships will only further and lengthen the effects of said hardships. We need to be proactive in our approach as a Town as we build our economic future.

Typically in times of economic downturn, all levels of government invest in infrastructure projects. They create jobs, bring workers into a community, and provide a long lasting return on investment which I firmly believe Library Square will do for Aurora. A facility such as Library Square and the planned rejuvenation of the historic Aurora downtown core will, without doubt, bring an increase in interest to our Town.

We are fortunate in Aurora. Our Town is in a very solid financial position with all the resources needed to weather the fallout from COVID-19. It is imperative at this time that we continue our growth as a Town so that we can support our small and local businesses by bringing in more and more people that will spend their time and hard-earned money in our community.

Library Square is a project that can help to accomplish this goal.

Daniel Koffman
Aurora

Demolition of Old Library was destruction of our history: reader

Images of our Mayor proudly hoisting the flag in honour of being Canada’s Birthday Town and the Museum and Archives releasing a documentary on how Aurora became known as such conjure another image: the old Aurora Public Library, a 1963 Centennial gift to the residents of this Town.

53 years later, in 2016, Council voted to demolish the gift and, along with it, a part of our heritage. With so many in this Town purporting to cherish and continually reflect on how important our history is, why did this happen? Truly, one realizes that our history is a book that is continuously written and not just rooted in a time between 1795 and 1945.

The elegant, yet modest mid-century building at 56 Victoria Street may have been worthy of heritage designation, yet it was never given the opportunity to be considered.

Many historians may argue that the building was dated, but that is exactly why we protect buildings of heritage value. They are considered of their time and contribute to the collective story of a community.

The old library was purely of its time; love it or hate, it

Response follows on page 19

Machell’s Corners



Our own Heritage Minutes

At first, I tried to see the bright side of things.

I wouldn’t have to get up at the crack of dawn after the busiest workday of the week. Hey, that sounds like a bonus! Nor would I have to go through at least two festively-curated shirts due to sweat and the blazing sun. Bonus! Nor would the day be particularly harried, trying to get from one place to another, sometimes in very narrow timeframes, and then, after a few minutes on the ground, packing up and darting to the next locale. That’ll give my shoes a couple of extra days of wear.

And yet, I woke up Wednesday at the crack of dawn anyway.

It’s hard to break years of routine – and I’ve always liked to do it up a bit.

One of my earliest memories is waking up one Canada Day and, not yet two minutes out of bed, rushing around my bedroom trying to find a red pen. My objective? Rattling off a few lines for a Canada Day poem.

The poem, alas, does not survive, but the sentiments do. As does the thrill – now, keep in mind, I was a unique kid – of taking in all the Heritage Minutes that punctuated the morning cartoons each Canada Day. There was lot to learn, and I marvelled when historical events just a few years removed from where I was at that moment made the cut. After all, what might be considered a Heritage Minute in the years ahead?

As I lay in bed this past Wednesday morning, the body waiting for the regular Canada Day routine to begin, the relief was punctuated by missing what once was. Thankfully, I still had to grab the camera and document how we, as a collective, were celebrating this very unique commemoration of the anniversary of Confederation.

As I made the rounds, I found families spending the day having their own private moments at neighbourhood skate parks and splash pads, while also finding ways to beat the heat. There were kids, their families close by, licking impressively stacked cones outside of ice cream and frozen yogurt shops. There was even one group who were simply sitting in lawn chairs in front of what was, perhaps, the biggest Canadian flag I’ve ever seen off a pole.

The festive spirit was still there, but I couldn’t help but wonder what their abiding memories will look like when regular festivities hopefully resume



BROCK’S BANTER

Brock Weir

next year, not to mention what their lasting memories and lessons might be when the country celebrates 163, 183, or even 203 years of existence. What will ultimately be their own personal Heritage Minutes?

I considered this while watching the lead-up to the Canada Day noontime show, traditionally beamed from Parliament Hill.

By design, it is a celebration of all things Canadian but I am always interested in hearing what our leaders – typically the Governor General and Prime Minister – have to say.

In some cases, depending on who is delivering the words and the circumstances of the year, they can occasionally veer close to platitudes or, at worst, stump speeches. But they can reflect the pulse of the nation and predict the tone for the rest of the year.

Given what we have been going through since March, I suspected their words – delivered remotely this time around – would lean closer to the latter than the former.

“This year we have been tested,” said Governor General Julie Payette in a message posted online. “We are just now carefully emerging from months of fighting a deadly invisible enemy with unprecedented measures [thanks] to the tireless work of those who helped slow down the virus and kept the country running.”

The virus, she continued, necessitated physical distancing and isolation, “pain and death” and economic woes, yet Canadians “chose compassion and solidarity” as their response, she said.

Illustrating her point, Her Excellency pointed to examples of children playing together. They can be competitive over a toy, but if one starts to cry, the “basic instinct” is to console and protect – instincts which we have seen kick in through myriad ways over the last few months.

“The pandemic also forced us to look beyond ourselves, because we love each other even at a distance,” she said. “It has forced us to make sure we leave no one behind, that we support workers, families, and businesses, that we stand for the most vulnerable, the less fortunate, that we ensure the security and wellbeing of all, and that we denounce hatred and violence in all its forms because the inequalities and the racial divides of our society resurfaced in a fury, exposing again the flaws and shortcomings that we so need to address.

“Our diversity is one of our greatest assets. There would be no creativity, no freedom, if we were all the same. What makes us unique, our differences are the strength of our nation’s fabric. So just [as] the toddlers grow into adults did a mature 153-year-old Canada grow into a caring nation.

“Will we remember the lessons of the 2020 pandemic, of the unspeakable shooting in Nova Scotia, of the importance – more than ever – of reconciliation? I am confident that we have and that we will not remain indifferent. That will build on our ability to act collectively, to act as one for the good of all.”

I hope the many people who were left with nothing else to do on Canada Day took the time to consider the Governor General’s words and look for ways to apply this point of view in their every day lives.

The cancellation of many Canada Day events was a gift of time; time to forge new memories in very unique circumstances and time for introspection.

As you spent time with your kids watching virtual fireworks from the comfort of your home, poring over a board game instead of waiting outside, being riddled by mosquitos, for flashing lights in the sky; reconnecting during the day with quiet family barbecue, or simply spent the night talking, did you take the time to think about how you’re going to remember the day? How the up-and-coming generations might recall this particular Canada Day? What wholly personal Heritage Minutes you were going to hold dear in the years to come?

If not, now is the time to do so while the memories are still fresh – and consider how our takeaways from July 1, 2020, will help inform the commemorations of tomorrow.

THE AURORAN

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Deadline for submissions is Sunday at 1 p.m.



Welcome to Library Land

By Reccia Mandelcorn

On a weekly six-foot social distance walk I enjoy with my daughter, a question we ask that tells us what's occupying our time and headspace is what we are reading. I live amongst books; I raised a reader and we both write. So, the question comes as no surprise. But this time, in the midst of pandemic reading lists, I considered my response in more depth.

My preference for reading format has definitely been co-opted by the virus. No longer able to select print for in-bed reading and ebooks for travel and mealtimes, I have moved exclusively to the digital format after devouring the remaining unread print books on my shelves. Perhaps this is a temporary shift due to access, or alternatively, a canary in the mines for future collection development.

The cost to libraries for ebooks has been a subject of great contention. Libraries have been advocating for more reasonable prices and terms from multinational publishers, who charge us as much as three to five times more for ebooks than the consumer price, while caps and time limits on use cause havoc for librarians managing collections.

During the pandemic, several publishers have lifted their embargo on the number of copies of new titles libraries can purchase as well as lowering costs. Living in Library Land, I wonder what will emerge when we enter a new normal and entertain different purchasing models with the publishing industry and changing preferences by consumers.

As an avid reader, ebooks have been my salvation during this pandemic. But when we are back to a new normal, what will this mean for my reading habits? Will the shift be to a preference for digital? And as studies consistently show that reading on screen differs from reading on paper, I wonder about the changes in how our brains will interpret and process narrative and poetry.

When sheltering at home, I had great expectations for my pandemic reading list. I knew that at this stage of my life, I would not be conquering James Joyce's Ulysses, but I had hoped to immerse myself in complex literary works and political treatises that I always said I would read "if only I had the time."

I have learned that working from home doesn't mean more time; it means different time. So days and hours blend, and I find myself unable to concentrate on heavy reading. In fact, reading for me has become a welcome escape from the daily headlines. I have made room on my digital shelves for mysteries, memoirs and historical fiction. I have rediscovered favourite Canadian authors like Mordecai Richler and enjoyed new finds like Cherie Demiline and Laisha Rosnau.

I know when I am back at work, I will be asked what I was reading during the great pandemic. I will say that my reading taste has been surprisingly eclectic. I found myself exploring the perspectives of disability activist, Amanda Leduc, and Indigenous author, *Alicia Elliott*. And I will also say how grateful I am for Louise Penny and Elizabeth Gilbert, whose fiction transported me to alternate landscapes that got me through this most challenging time.

Reccia Mandelcorn is the Manager, Community Collaboration at Aurora Public Library. The opinions expressed in this column reflect her personal thoughts about the engagement of community with their public library.

THIS WEEK'S POLL

Should it be mandatory to wear masks in public?

Yes No Unsure
www.theauroran.com

RESULTS TO DATE July 7, 2020	YES	NO	UNSURE
	80%	13%	7%

The Aurora Museum & Archives is remembering...

York County's Reception for Returned Soldiers! (July 9, 1919)

York County's official welcome home to soldiers who fought in World War 1 took place on July 9, 1919, in Aurora's Town Park. The event featured a full day of sports and attendees were encouraged to participate in the track and field events, as well as the baseball and football games. This lapel ribbon would have been proudly won by a member of the event's Sports Committee. Over 8,000 people filled Town Park to welcome home their loved ones.



COVID Chronicle – Part 5

Some continued personal and local observations regarding the ongoing COVID-19 situation, picking up where I left off last time.

June 8

Supplies on grocery store shelves, including the until recently elusive cleaning/sanitizing products, baking ingredients and toilet paper, seem to be back to pre-COVID levels. From casual observation, the vast majority of supermarket customers now seem to be wearing masks.

June 10

I took advantage of a newly-opened golf course. There were a few procedural tweaks for safety, such as pins remaining in the holes, and the removal of potentially COVID-carrying rakes from the sand traps. None of the changes impacted (or helped) my golf game any. It's certainly easier to social distance when you have acres of space per person.

June 11

The Town announces that it is still too dangerous to allow hundreds of people to assemble in Town Park this summer for Concerts in the Park, despite allowing a thousand people to gather there for the Solidarity Walk the previous week-end.

June 15

York Region residents, still stuck in Stage 1 status, look wistfully over the municipal fence as our Simcoe-Muskoka neighbours enjoy the benefits of Stage 2, such as haircuts and open restaurant patios.

On the plus side, the ability as of today to obtain 90 days' worth of



INSIDE AURORA

Scott Johnston

prescription drugs (up from 30 days) reduces trips to the pharmacy, and associated dispensing fees, considerably.

June 17

I had another doctor's appointment by phone. He said he's continued to work from the hospital (Sunnybrook) throughout the pandemic, and despite it having had a number of COVID cases, he feels safer there than he does at his local grocery store.

June 19

Aurorans rejoice now that the Town has finally entered Stage 2.

However, despite having access to more services, most people waiting anxiously for haircuts will have to hold off a little longer, as salons are booked solid for weeks.

June 22

Another odd sign of the times: I attended a retirement party for a friend held via Zoom. With participants being in 30 different locations, only the retiree and her family were able to have the celebratory cake. As for the rest of us, since we were all already home and driving was not an issue,

more participants seemed to have adult beverages at hand than they would if we were all together.

June 26

With our support of local restaurants having been restricted to take-out for the past few months, we enjoyed our first meal out in Town. The patio we tried had shade, a gentle breeze, an unobstructed view of life on Yonge Street, excellent service, and we were the only customers in that section the entire time we were there. Social distancing accomplished!

June 30

Based on the numbers of cars on the road and in retail store parking lots, and the increase in pedestrian traffic, it seems a lot more people are venturing out in Town.

July 1

On a beautiful summer's day, Canada's Birthday Town holds low-key and mostly virtual celebrations for our nation's 153rd anniversary.

July 3

Despite local health officials' warnings to stay vigilant, and a huge upswing in COVID cases in the U.S., a visit to the hardware store shows a surprising number of people maskless and exhibiting minimal efforts to social distance.

Is this an anomaly? Are Aurorans getting too complacent? Or have they just had enough of three months of isolation, restrictions and bad news?

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



Getting Things Done

Mayor
Tom Mrakas

As many of you know, in past years, I have visited residents "door to door" on spring and summer weekends to hear directly about the issues and concerns that are important to you.

I believe listening is not only something that should happen during election time and feel these informal meetings are essential to staying connected with people in our community.

Unfortunately, due to COVID-19, this year I am unable to continue this tradition. However, I refuse to let COVID-19 stop us from connecting and that is why I will be arranging "virtual coffees" each weekend to listen, learn and answer questions.

Each session will have a maximum of 10 people for up to one hour so we can have a meaningful discussion.

I will also meet with residents individually if that is preferred. (30mins) Please let me know in your email if you would prefer one on one or a group coffee.

If you are interested in joining me, please send a message to tmrakas@aurora.ca.

Sessions will be booked on a first come, first serve basis.



Aurora ride-share driver faces sexual assault charges

A 55-year-old Aurora man is facing charges following a sexual assault that occurred in Newmarket.

York Regional Police have charged ride share driver Naser Rajabi with two counts of sexual assault following an incident in Newmarket.

“The incident occurred on Thursday, July 2, when five female youths were picked up by an Uber driver in Holland Landing shortly before 1 a.m.,” said YRP Sergeant Andy Pattenden in a statement. “They were driven to the Newmarket area where the driver sexually assaulted two 16-year-old youths.

“With assistance from Uber, the driver was identified and on Friday, July 3, he was placed under arrest at his residence.”

Police have released an image of the accused to ensure there are no additional victims.

The charges have not been proven.

“A sexual assault includes any non-consensual contact of a sexual nature,” said Sgt. Pattenden. “York Regional Police would like to encourage anyone who feels they may have been a victim of a sexual assault to come forward and report the incident to police. There is no statute of limitations for sexual offences and offenders can be prosecuted well after the date of the offence.”



Rainbow Crosswalk at Yonge & Wellington will celebrate community’s diversity: Mayor



An artist’s concept on how the Rainbow Crosswalk at Yonge and Wellington would look if approved by Council next week.

Contributed photo

By Brock Weir

A Rainbow Crosswalk will celebrate Aurora’s place as a community that celebrates diversity, according to Mayor Tom Mrakas.

Mayor Mrakas has put forward a notice of motion to be discussed July 14 which, if approved by Council, will transform the crosswalk on the south side of Yonge and Wellington into a sea of colour.

“Aurora and other communities across the Province have shown their support for Pride and the LGBTQ+ community by raising a Pride flag in June every year,” said Mayor Mrakas in his motion. “The permanent installation of a rainbow crosswalk is a symbol of the Town of Aurora’s acceptance of, support for, and commitment to diversity and inclusiveness. The intent of this initiative is to show vulnerable people in our community that Aurora is a Town where everyone is welcomed and accepted.”

Mayor Mrakas first floated the idea of a Rainbow Crosswalk in Aurora’s Downtown Core and hoped to have it complete by the end of Pride Month in June. Some logistical issues, however, got in the way of that end goal and if Council approves the idea next week it could be done by the end of July.

“We were discussing it for a while,” the Mayor tells The Auroran. “Unfortunately, from a logistics standpoint with some of the construction timelines, it just wasn’t going to be feasible.”

The first thought, he says, was to have the Rainbow Crosswalk on Yonge Street at Mosley, but that area already has stamped concrete and the material necessary for the Rainbow Crosswalk is unable to adhere to such a surface.

Crosswalks at Church Street, near

the Aurora Public Library and Aurora Cultural Centre, were also examined.

Eventually, it was decided Yonge and Wellington would be the perfect location and the Rainbow Crosswalk would serve as another gateway to delineate Aurora’s historic Downtown Core.

“I think especially with some of the changes within the Downtown Core that we’re looking at making, creating a more vibrant gathering space that is going to have more and more people come to visit the area... I think that there is no better place in Town than right centrally located to have something that speaks to the fact our Town is inclusive, diverse and welcoming to all.”

The Rainbow Crosswalk, once approved, will be completed with pre-formed thermoplastic pavement markings that are non-slip and in keeping with requirements under the Accessibility for Ontarians with Disabilities Act (AODA).

The project comes with an estimated price tag of just over \$12,000.

“We have discussed this idea with York Pride and Pflag York Region and they said it was [good to have this installed outside Pride month] because it allows for the continuation of discussion outside of regular Pride month,” says Mayor Mrakas. “I am glad they feel that way and are happy about that.”

As York Pride’s Digital Pride Month celebrations came to an end, they said the motion for a Rainbow Crosswalk was “extremely exciting” for the Town.

“What better way to end Pride Month than with a symbol that will represent our community 365 days a year in one of Aurora’s busiest intersections!” said York Pride’s Jacob Gal. “This is the type of leadership from Tom Mrakas and Council we need in our community.

Continued on page 10

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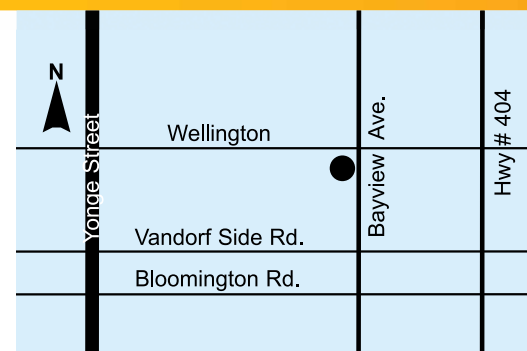


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Local business owners share Stage 2 reopening concerns, questions with Finance Minister

Preparing for
“new normal”
and future part of
Minister’s roundtable
with Chamber

By Brock Weir

As the Province keeps a close eye on numbers before moving parts of Ontario to Stage 3 of its re-opening plan, the Government wants to keep momentum on its side.

This was the message delivered to Aurora Chamber of Commerce members last week by Finance Minister Rod Phillips at a virtual roundtable for local business owners and officials hosted by Aurora-Oak Ridges-Richmond Hill MPP Michael Parsa.

The roundtable was a way for the Province to check in with local businesses as they settled into Stage 2 and all the new realities the re-opening plan has presented so far.

“We have been trying very hard to take opportunities to check in through this pandemic,” said Minister Phillips. “In the middle of March, I was just getting ready to

present our annual budget. It was a typical five-year budget, the kinds of plans we normally make.

“In March, I set out a one-year plan because we really didn’t have the opportunity then to have the kind of perspective we need. In November of this year, we’ll lay out a multi-year plan that will include a lot of the things we want to do around recovery.”

Last week’s session was an opportunity for the local business community to sound off on what they would like to see addressed this fall – as well as right here and now.

Among the chief concerns brought to the table were making sure measures were well in hand should a second wave of COVID-19 hit Ontario.

According to Sandra Ferri, President & CEO of the Aurora Chamber of Commerce, members have expressed “concern about moving forward”, how a second wave might be handled, and whether alternatives to Stages 1, 2, and 3 are being explored.

“We are looking very closely at what we learned through the first wave and...those of us in government have to be kind of humble about what we can and can’t do and know what’s



Finance Minister Rod Phillips, centre, is pictured last year at the Aurora Cultural Centre with local MPPs Christine Elliott and Michael Parsa. Last week, Minister Phillips and MPP Parsa met with local business owners through a virtual roundtable hosted by the Aurora Chamber of Commerce.

Auroran photo by Glenn Rodger

possible,” he said. “The objective of the staged process we have been going through...has been to not have to retreat and take steps backward in order to manage the process.

“There are two things that happen everywhere when the economy has been reopened. There are flare-ups and things like what happened in Kingston [with the virus outbreak at a nail salon] and we have to be able to handle those flare-ups [so] we don’t go backwards in time.

“The second thing we know that is happening everywhere in the world is fewer people come back initially, whether that is businesses that could open and choose not to, or employees that come back to the businesses because there are things like the CERB and other factors, but also just people being concerned about coming back to work and fewer customers come back initially. Our hope is that when we have a second wave, and I don’t say that because I know there will be one, but I think it is prudent that we plan for it, we would be able to on a case by case basis respond to those impacts.”

Some of the re-opening impacts, however, are smaller-scale and business-specific.

To that end, the Chamber fielded a question about whether or not Personal Protective Equipment (PPE) required to keep employees safe can be considered part of a business’ regular operating expenses or treated altogether differently.

The treatment of PPE, said Minister Phillips, is something that is being “looked at” for the November budget.

“In terms of direct subsidy for it, right now we’re really focused on making sure that the health system, which in this case includes the broader health system of long-

term care, [has] access to PPE,” he said. “We have made some great steps with that. One of the things we’re looking at is whether there is the opportunity for the Province to become an aggregated buyer of PPE to reduce some of the costs, even if it is going to be... a cost that has to be born by business. Because of the volumes we’re having to buy for the public health system, the prison system and all of those areas, whether or not there is an ability to drive some real discounts so the private sector can take advantage of that, those are areas we’re looking at right now.”

Top of mind, however, is building up consumer confidence once again.

This was a theme Newmarket-Aurora MPP Christine Elliott, who holds the dual portfolios of Deputy Premier and Minister of Health, told The Auroran last month, and this was reiterated last week by Minister Phillips.

“One of the realities of every place that has reopened is fewer people come back initially and, over time, in the places that have been successful, people see the combination of health statistics, maybe they drive by a patio a couple of times...it is about people’s confidence.”

Added Mr. Parsa: “You can see that when businesses open slowly, they are seeing their clients are returning...and more and more people will follow suit. We have to get out there and support these local businesses. These local businesses truly make our local communities. They are the ones who support our local sports teams, they are the ones who support our local Legions and Chambers and fundraisers that we have. They are truly what makes our communities and we have to support them.”

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The Road Ahead helps businesses develop reopening plans



Contributed photo

By Brock Weir

It has been a long road to get to this point, but as businesses look at further ways of adapting to this “new normal” as they re-open, the Aurora

Chamber of Commerce is helping its members get back on their feet.

The Chamber last week launched “The Road Ahead: Developing Your Reopening Plan,” a booklet designed as a resource to answer many of the most common questions they have fielded from local businesses since the start of the pandemic.

“Over the course of the last few months, the Aurora Chamber of Commerce has been present and available to support all businesses in the Town of Aurora with COVID-19 information, updates and training sessions on government supports, and we have continued to highlight our businesses to keep them front of mind with consumers,” said Sandra Ferri, President & CEO of the Chamber.

“We at the Chamber have fielded hundreds of calls from businesses who are either preparing to re-open or have just re-opened and are dealing with a new way of doing business.”

The business advocate wants to

“ensure the health and wellbeing of our community, customers and business associates while ensuring the viability of our businesses.”

The Road Ahead is intended to help businesses develop new operation plans that account for post-pandemic precautions, as well as new expectations from customers.

It outlines the development of communications plans for employees and clients, measures for personal hygiene, health screening, personal protective equipment (PPE), tips to maintain physical distancing, cleaning and surface decontamination, proper signage and new forms of barriers, ways to maintain physical and mental wellbeing for employees, possible liability factors, and how businesses should develop a financial preparedness plan.

“As you prepare your reopening operation plan, you should consider the following: communication plans for employees and clients; revised post-pandemic operation plan; safety protocols for employees and clients;

liability exposure related to the pandemic; a financial preparedness plan that incorporates the extra costs associated with safety measures and the potential for a second wave of COVID-19,” said Ms. Ferri.

“I know that every business in Aurora is intent on keeping their employees and clients safe, and until there is a vaccine available, adherence to strict safety measures will be the key to success. As a business owner, you will want to meet and perhaps exceed the requirements set out by government and sector-specific guidelines set out by your associations to ensure your employees and clients feel safe.

“This document is not meant to replace any of the requirements set out by government and sector associations, but rather a thoughtful approach to items you should think about as you reopen and revisit your operation plan.”

For more information, visit aurorachamber.on.ca.

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However, many people are hesitant to have surgery given its invasive nature. It is important to know that although surgery is sometimes necessary, it is considered a last resort in most cases.

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Home Is Where the Art Is brings Cultural Centre summer camps to a tablet near you

By Brock Weir

For many of us lately, our homes have been an all-purpose hub to live, work and play during this time of social distancing. Now, thanks to some clever re-thinking from organizations like the Aurora Cultural Centre, home is also the setting for new kinds of summer camp experiences. Home Is Where the Art Is, the Aurora Cultural Centre's new Virtual Summer Camps program, launches this week with what is billed as a "dynamic blend of live-online and offline learning, along with games, dance parties and virtual snack times together."

"This isn't just crafty things you can find on YouTube!" says Leanne DiMonte, Education and Outreach Manager for the Aurora Cultural Centre. Working with counsellors Amanda, Cassandra, Madison and Nicole, Ms. DiMonte helped develop Home Is



Suzanne Haines, Executive Director of the Aurora Cultural Centre, right, and camp counsellor Cassandra display maple leaf rubbings, one of the virtual activities the Centre led for Canada Day this year. This week, Cassandra, along with Amanda, Nicole and Madison, and Leanne DiMonte, the Centre's Education and Outreach Manager, launched Home Is Where the Art Is, a new virtual summer camp program.

Auroran photo by Glenn Rodger

Where the Art Is as a brand-new virtual program based on feedback from patrons and parents. Their feedback was clear: as circumstances surrounding the global pandemic threw cold water on facilitating in-person camps in a safe and healthy way, they wanted a "virtual program that is active and engaging and not just more screen time."

"That is really what we're trying to achieve with this," she says. "The program features a blend of what we call our 'live-online' and offline learning. Offline learning features instructional video tutorials that get posted daily for campers to access and they are essentially step by step guides on how to create an art piece while encouraging tactile learning. Some of the projects are messy, so we want you to go into your yard or take it to the park! Parents want something that actually gets their kids up and moving."

"The live-online learning is really a place where campers can log on each day

and interact with their fellow counsellors. There will be an art technique that is discussed, but it is also a time to play games. There might be a virtual dance party, a drama game, or maybe they will just have snack time with their friends. Some of the feedback we got from parents, too, was that sometimes it is just nice for them to talk to each other and maybe have a little show-and-tell on what they have created so far." Adding to the virtual fun, "special guests" will be introduced throughout the summer, including some current and former gallery artists, musicians who have performed at the Aurora Cultural Centre or for Cultural Centre programs outside of 22 Church Street, and more.

"We wanted to make something that is really fun and we pulled from the various themes that we had already created; we have Artistic Imaginations, which is learning how to create mythical creatures like unicorns and dragons; we have Arts Through the Ages, which is like an art history week; there's Sculpt It, which is all about clay and model magic. There's lots of different tools and materials that can get used throughout the summer and we are providing the art supplies."

The Cultural Centre's curbside pickup program for camp materials is already underway, with the first batch prepared for pickup from the Stronach Aurora Recreation Complex. Aside from a couple of further at-home supplies, all you need to take part in the program, once registered, is a computer or tablet and a good internet connection.

"We wanted to make it really accessible for parents because we recognize you might not be able to source out clay on your own and things like that, and that is why we decided to create the Art Kit and curbside pickup," says Ms. DiMonte. "We

have been running ever since we decided to launch this. There are lots of new logistical challenges, but we have an incredible team and they have really developed great skillsets. We're doing a lot of video editing, we're learning a lot of new technology, but what we have created does respond to what parents were asking for, which is something fun, active, engaging and safe – because it is done from the comfort of your own home, you can guarantee the safety of your child.

"As we develop this new normal, I think we may continue this virtual learning. We are looking right now at offering virtual learning for our adult patrons, likely in the fall, depending on what the world looks like then, but we may offer some adult programming that is online, or maybe it is a blend of both online and in-person. It has really been a very interesting learning curve for us and next week we'll learn a lot more once parents react to [the camp program]."

Home Is Where the Art Is camps are on now and will run each week through August 28. For more information, including registration, visit auroraculturalcentre.ca or call 905-713-1818.

Rainbow Crosswalk considered

From page 6

"This will be the first ever permanent 2SLGBTQ+ art installation to be installed in York Region. This is a bold step forward in bringing visibility to York Region residents that Pride is for everyone and that building vibrant, healthy and accepting communities starts with the simplest gestures. For the last 20 years, York Pride has been working very hard to positively change how people view the 2SLGBTQ+ community, through our family friendly events and outreach to our growing region of 1.2 million residents. This will be a great opportunity for families to teach their kids about respecting others, regardless of their differences. Soon, families, friends and residents can go for a walk and make a day full of meaningful memories in the downtown core of Aurora."

Pflag York offered similar sentiments. "For LGBTQ2+ people, their lived experiences often involves repressing their true authentic self out of fear: fear of being disowned, fear of being attacked amongst other concerns," says Tristan Coolman of Pflag York Region. "We, unfortunately, still live in a world and a community that is not always affirming or respectful of these lived experiences. A Rainbow Crosswalk serves as a visible sign of support from our elected officials and for LGBTQ2+ people. It's a sign to anyone who feels different to, quite frankly, educate themselves."

"As many of us have learned over the last few weeks, social literacy is a skill many of us are lacking. It's in a way a new currency for how we measure our engagement with others. Agencies like Pflag York Region can support with those journeys and this rainbow crosswalk may be the start of that for many residents."

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Week of July 9, 2020



Aurora Barbarians introducing “non-contact” rugby for COVID-19 play



The Aurora Barbarians are pictured in a 2019 game at Fletcher's Field.

Contributed photo

By Robert Belardi

The Aurora Barbarians will introduce non-contact rugby post COVID-19, says senior women's head coach Khalil Ajram.

Following a club review surveying parents, players, staff, alumni and future players, it was deemed this is a safe and necessary alternative for multiple age groups.

“That’s something we are going to establish when we return. We’re going to have touch leagues,” Ajram said.

“That’s what our club’s new premise will be after. We’re still going to run our programs.”

The club is thinking of hosting contactless matches Sunday afternoons and evenings. For those travelling on the weekends up north, it might be ideal to run the programs then.

Contactless rugby, via flag or touch, is one of the major development tools used

in New Zealand and Australia for youth.

Since the inaugural season of OZTag in 1992-93 in Australia, the league has grown significantly in the country.

Currently, there are over 80,000 participants nationally.

“What I see happening with rugby, is the rugby 7s, which is the Olympic sport, might grow in popularity. You can have seven people playing seven people in a way bigger area.”

“I feel non-contact rugby, will gain a lot of traction following all of this.”

The Town of Aurora, Rugby Ontario and Rugby Canada have all been working on a return to play model. The Town of Aurora has avidly been discussing protocols and measures on a weekly basis.

Ajram says Rugby Canada has lifted their national suspension of the sport as of June 19. Rugby Ontario is currently creating their policies to initiate a return to play model as well.

Once the model is finalized and the

Certificate of Insurance (COI) is reopened, Ajram says there will be a five-step process to return to play, each step to be evaluated two to three weeks at a time.

In Stage One, players are not permitted to share equipment but are allowed to train six feet apart. Here, there will be plenty of individual training modules in place.

“After that step is done after two to three weeks, then step two is pass-ball, remaining in the social distancing area. Step three allows for touch and flag rugby. Stage four will be a return to practice as we knew it before so we can have contact and stage

five is full out games,” Ajram explained.

Practices will be scheduled for approximately 45 minutes at a time. Ajram has ordered sanitizers, cleaners and personal protective equipment on Amazon.

Heading into what reports are indicating as “the new normal” Ajram believes organized sports will not resume until April of 2021.

He is hopeful this is not the case. From now until the winter season, Ajram is also hopeful some rugby training would be able to move indoors to a dome.

Council renews vision to turn Hallmark lands into baseball hub

By Brock Weir

Council has formally renewed its vision to turn the Hallmark lands into a hub for community baseball.

On a vote of 5 – 2 last month, Council voted to nix a proposed indoor baseball training facility for the land in favour of their original vision of two full-size baseball diamonds to address Town-wide diamond shortages being weathered by local baseball teams and organizations, including the Aurora King Baseball Association (AKBA).

Work on the two baseball diamonds was originally slated to begin this year after considerable Council debate on whether the land, secured by the 2014 – 2018 Council to address field shortages, would be best used for two soccer fields, two baseball diamonds, or one of each.

A late in the game pitch from baseball proponents on a public-private partnership for a baseball dome, however, caused a re-think of these plans, but after staff deemed resulting proposals unfavourable to the Town and heard from user groups that such a facility wouldn't help them get in more diamond time, lawmakers were back where they started.

The matter was revisited at the June 16 General Committee (GC) meeting where the majority of Council voted to wipe the slate clean and go back to the original plan for two diamonds.

“While I would still like to see multi-purpose, while I still think the more value you provide to the majority of our residents the better... at this point, I am in favour of moving forward and going forward with what the majority of Council decided to approve at the time,”

Continued on page 19

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York9 FC manager Jimmy Brennan hopeful for return to action soon

By Robert Belardi

One year ago this Friday, July 10, York9 FC made history. The club became the first Canadian Premier League team to take on a Major League Soccer team. At that very thought, York9 FC was galvanized to take on the Montreal Impact in the third round of the Canadian Championship in front of 5,252 raging fans; the highest recorded home attendance.

“It was a great moment especially for our players to test ourselves against a big club like Montreal and I think it’s a moment that will last in their minds for a very long time, especially considering we should have won that game,” said York9 FC head coach Jimmy Brennan.

A defensive error and conceding two penalty kicks ultimately led the Nine Stripes to their exit, falling 3-2 on aggregate.

The memory of a competitive match blanketed with the sounds of blaring fans in the stadium seems like it was just yesterday.

Now with COVID-19, Brennan says it’s difficult to sit out the season when other leagues in Europe have resumed, but he knows the league is working diligently to put a safe plan in place.

“We’re expecting some news, hopefully in the next week or two, as to where and when we’ll start up and get this going.”

Last season, York9 FC were off to a slow start in the Spring Competition with a 2-5-3 record.

Brennan says the beginning was an adjustment. Players have to develop chemistry and buy into the system.

That’s exactly what his boys did. In the Fall Competition, the club posted a 7-2-9 record, potting in 30 goals in the process and defeating the eventual champions, Forge FC, 4-0.

“We finished off well and it’s about building that squad – now that’s going to carry over into next season,” Brennan emphasized.

“We felt we have built a good squad and we have the right pieces in place. Obviously, our momentum is halted, but I think overall we’re very happy with the squad that we have.”

The Nine Stripes have brought in Valour FC midfielder Michael Petrasso, former Ottawa Fury midfielder Christopher Manella and brought back winger Ryan Telfer on a permanent deal for veteran leadership.

The club has purchased a handful of South American forwards such as Brazilian talents Gabriel Vasconcelos from Corinthians and Jaco to bolster the attack.

The Nine Stripes have also signed their 2019 CPL-U Sports draft pick from Cape Breton University, Isaiah Johnston, to a deal until 2022. Johnston becomes the fourth U-20 signing this summer along with Max Ferrari, Ijah Halley and Julian Altobelli.

Brennan says all senior players on the roster that are part of the nucleus of the club will play a vital role in nurturing younger players heading into their first year in the league.

Already in July and with a return to play format being worked on, Brennan says every game will mean something.

“Every game, one game at a time, win, win, win. It’s getting into a competitive mindset and having the



Jimmy Brennan

Photo courtesy of the Canadian Premier League

players understand there’s no room for error.”

The club is currently practicing at limited capacity.

Brennan, who became the first CPL head coach to obtain a UEFA Pro Licence following an eight-year process this past week, says fitness levels are of the utmost importance for the players. Every training session is set with objectives and all of his players are currently following the guidelines.

According to Concacaf president Victor Montagliani, the CPL surpassed expectations in its inaugural season. Despite the shortened year this year, a good first step might prove a lead to a prosperous future.

“I think it surprised a lot of people. When you start a league from scratch you’re not sure what the quality is going to be. What I

was really impressed with was just how professional and dedicated and talented these young Canadians are.”

And, in turn, the professionalism and dedication from clubs is also something to note. York9 FC became a club of the “firsts” this past year, introduced their first women’s supporters’ group “The Dames of York,” and the first club to sell a player (Emilio Estevez) to a top-flight league in Europe (Eredivisie).

Just like last season, Manuel Aparicio will lead the club as captain. Brennan has known Aparicio since his days with Toronto FC.

The Nine Stripes were supposed to kick-off their season at the tail-end of the Easter weekend against the Halifax Wanderers. There is no telling if that will be the first game of the year when the CPL introduces their plans, hopefully, in the coming weeks.



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Former Citizen of the Year honoured by Governor General



Brian North, Centre, is pictured at the 2018 Run for Southlake with participants from Aurora – including Councillor Sandra Humfries, then-mayor Geoff Dawe and incumbent Mayor Tom Mrakas. Rideau Hall announced Mr. North as one of more than 100 “remarkable Canadians” who will receive medals for their services to the country over the coming year. He will be honoured for his work with Southlake Regional Health Centre and the Aurora Chamber of Commerce.

Auroran photo by Glenn Rodger

By Brock Weir

Aurora resident Brian North will receive the Sovereign’s Medal for Volunteers. Mr. North was one of 123 “remarkable Canadians” whose honours were recognized by Governor General Julie Payette to mark Canada Day last week. Mr. North, who has been instrumental in the development of the Nature’s Emporium Run for Southlake and numerous other community initiatives, including the rebuilding efforts of Aurora United Church, will receive the medal “for his volunteer service to his

community since 2001, notably with the Aurora Chamber of Commerce and the Southlake Regional Health Centre Foundation.” The Sovereign’s Medal for Volunteers recognizes the remarkable volunteer achievements of Canadians from across the country in a wide range of fields. As an official Canadian honour, the Medal pays tribute to the dedication and exemplary commitment of volunteers. Recipients will receive their honours at ceremonies when present circumstances surrounding the global pandemic permit.



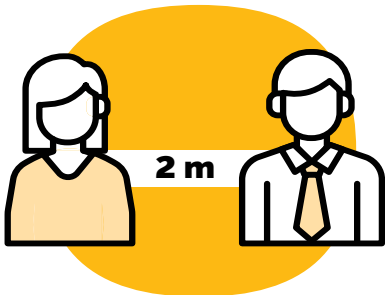
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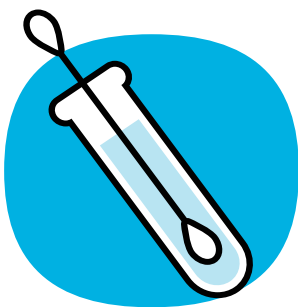
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Canada’s Birthday Town hosts virtual celebration



Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, Aurora’s Canada Day celebrations were held virtually this year – but there was no shortage of fun to be had. (Top Row) The morning events, which were broadcast by the Town through its social media channels, included words of welcome from Prime Minister Justin Trudeau, Lieutenant-Governor of Ontario Elizabeth Dowdeswell, Premier Doug Ford, Aurora-Oak Ridges-Richmond Hill MP Leona Alleslev, (Second Row) Newmarket-Aurora MP Tony Van Bynen, Mayor Tom Mrakas, and Town Crier John Webster. (Third Row) Music was provided by Louisa & The Planets. (Fourth Row) A dance lesson from Learn A Dance. Bex in Motion. (Fifth Row) An aerialist from Trellis Entertainment. The Fire Guy. (Sixth Row) The True North Trivia Team. Music from Glenn Marais and The Mojo Band. (Bottom Row) Light-twirling with a patriotic twist.

Photos courtesy of the Town of Aurora





Mayor Tom Mrakas hoisted the Canada's Birthday Town flag at Town Hall prior to the festivities. **Auroran photo by Brock Weir**

From page 1

I hope you will all have the chance to feel the community's appreciation for all that you do," he said.

Words of welcome were delivered to communities across the country by Prime Minister Justin Trudeau who said Canada is made up of people from "all walks of life who strive to live up to our shared values of peace, equality and compassion; people who believe in the strength of our diversity."

"We're at our best when we're looking out for one another because that is who we are," he continued. "As we celebrate, let's remember what truly unites us all: our determination to leave a better world for our children, our belief in a more just society for all, and the idea that our better days are yet to come."

Ontario Premier Doug Ford also joined in the words of welcome.

"We live in the greatest country in the world and today is about celebrating everything that makes us proud to be Canadian," he said. "I am proud to call this province and this country home. Thank you for everything that you do to make Ontario and Canada a great place, especially during these extraordinary times."

Provincial and local leaders came together to deliver Canada Day greetings to the Aurora community and leading the way was Lieutenant-Governor Elizabeth Dowdeswell, the Queen's representative in Ontario.

"How much I wish I were there with you in person today, but we're in the midst of a pandemic and we are keeping each other safe," she said. "From my past visit to Aurora, I know you will be coming together as a community to celebrate this wonderful country – inclusive and caring."

In the lead-up to Canada Day, Aurora-Oak Ridges-Richmond Hill MP Leona Alleslev handed out Canada Day-themed lawn signs to constituents who came to her Oak Ridges office.

Reflecting on Canada Day, Ms. Alleslev said it is a day to come together to celebrate who we are as Canadians.

"Not only do we gather with friends and neighbours to celebrate the strength of our communities, but we also take the time to take a moment to remember what defines us and how our past has shaped us," she said. "Although our July 1 events will be different this year due to social distance, they are no less important. The challenges we face today will not defeat us; they will only make us stronger as we find innovative ways to overcome them."

Newmarket-Aurora MP Tony Van Bynen added Wednesday was a time to "celebrate the contributions Canadians have made throughout our history."

"We're a country that knows a Canadian is a Canadian," he said. "We look after each other and generosity is an essential part of our identity. Today, let's celebrate what it means to be Canadian and hold those values close and recommit to ensure that all Canadians are treated equally. This day, Canada Day, I am especially proud of the strength of Canadians to come together to support one another in a time of crisis."

"From my family to yours, I wish everyone in Aurora a wonderful day of celebration with their family and friends, with a special gratitude to our frontline health workers and emergency first responders, and the

members of the Canadian Armed Forces."

Recording their messages from Queen's Park and delivered outside the Town's official Canada Day program through various digital and social media platforms, Members of Provincial Parliament also sent patriotic messages to the community.

"Today, we celebrate the 153rd anniversary of the birth of our great country," said Newmarket-Aurora MPP Christine Elliott. "As Canadians, we have much to be proud and thankful for. I am incredibly fortunate to call Canada home – today and every day. Although celebrations look different this year, I wish you a happy and healthy day of celebration."

Added Aurora-Oak Ridges-Richmond Hill MPP Michael Parsa: "Today, we celebrate the country we all call home and the amazing people that make up this great country. From the beautiful natural landscapes to the strength of our diverse... communities, Canada is truly the best country in the world."



Councillors Harold Kim, Sandra Humfries, Wendy Gaertner, John Gallo and Rachel Gilliland participated, along with Mayor Mrakas, in a round of O Canada.

"This year, Canada Day is unlike any other, but we still have much to be thankful for. Whether you're watching the fireworks virtually or spending time with family and loved ones, Canada Day is a reminder of the strength and unity of our nation. During these unprecedented

times, we have seen individual businesses and frontline workers, from coast to coast, step up and help exemplify the Canadian spirit.

"This Canada Day might be a little different, but our Canadian spirit is still the same."

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Leadership candidate talks jobs, economic recovery

From page 1

abroad since the former Cabinet Minister launched his bid this past January to replace Andrew Scheer as the permanent leader of the Conservative Party of Canada, but experience in crisis recovery has helped the Nova Scotia native stay on track in new ways.

During a socially-distanced local campaign stop this week, Mr. MacKay said his time at the Cabinet table, particularly through the recession of 2008 and 2009, has made him the right person to steer the national ship through uncharted waters.

“I was in government for close to 10 years across major portfolios of Foreign Affairs, Justice and Defence, and I had an economic portfolio with responsibilities regionally for Atlantic Canada, and that experience, particularly through the recession, albeit a different kind of crisis not nearly on the magnitude of what we’re facing due to COVID-19, [has given me a background] in economic management and crisis recovery,” said Mr. MacKay.

“We entered that period with a balanced budget in 2008 and emerged much stronger than other G8 countries at that time and... that experience in that era, in those portfolios, does set me apart from other candidates – and the positions I have taken, I believe, portray a broader, more inclusive vision for our party and our country.”

Canadians, he said, are looking for “sound judgement, fiscal prudence” and a plan for “how we manage our way through what is going to be a very difficult time in the economy. Those difficulties are already evident with figures related to job losses and, to that extent, Mr. MacKay has been building an eight-point jobs plan for Canada.

These points include support for small business, getting natural resources to market, making Canada “a technology powerhouse for the north”, restoring consumer and business confidence, making the country’s tax system “a driver of jobs and growth”, bringing advanced manufacturing jobs to Canada, deploying “pro-employment trade policies”, and getting government finances under control.

“Our campaign will get Canadians back to work, make necessary adjustments in our economy, particularly around our energy sector and our natural resource sector, manufacturing, technology and small business; it is looking at the way government manages itself as well as the economy, and restoring consumer confidence for both the businesses and individuals [while] restoring a sense that our tax system is fair, is inviting for new entrepreneurs, and those who might want to come back to Canada, as opposed to creating barriers,” said Mr. MacKay. “We don’t want to give the impression to the world that we’re not open for business and we can’t build things. We have to change that impression rapidly.”

To do so will take a coordinated effort between all three levels of government, he added.

Here in the GTA, issues that need to be tackled collectively include housing, transportation infrastructure, and getting people back into the workforce.

On housing and transportation infrastructure, it is about building.

“That could include things like high-speed rail,” he said. “For housing, it is a complex issue, but there are adjustments that could be made by the Federal government to work with contractors to help streamline the process for construction of new



Conservative leadership candidate Peter MacKay explains his eight point jobs plan.

Photo by Jason Ransom

housing. It’s also looking at things like money laundering and organized crime because this is also an issue in terms of external forces that are impacting housing in big cities like Toronto and Vancouver.

“But we also have to recognize that, as a party, we have to overcome some of the stigma, perhaps, of not having sufficiently addressed questions around the environment. That’s another issue I know is particularly prevalent amongst millennials, amongst young people, but also in big cities. They want to know that we have a very real plan to address climate change.”

As the campaign continues, Mr. MacKay says he is looking forward to connecting with Conservative Party members, and Canadians more broadly, through social media channels such as Facebook Live as well as Zoom calls.

For a seasoned campaigner, it is a

new way to reach supporters, but it is also a new way to connect with new people, some of whom, thanks to the global pandemic, also have new and different expectations of what they want from a leader.

“I think when COVID fully descended upon our country, there was a major priority shift, obviously dealing with human health and a lot of talk about the lack of preparedness,” he said. “In the aftermath of SARS and H1N1, people were correctly asking of the government, why weren’t we prepared? Why were we missing critical pieces of protective equipment, ventilators, respirators, the necessities? That question has yet to be answered, particularly when we know the Federal government sent 16 tons of medical equipment to China.

“I think there will be a reckoning for that and I truly believe there will be an opportunity to look at those circumstances.”

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School board shines light on anti-Black racism’s impacts on mental health

By Brock Weir

The images of protests against anti-Black racism around the world following the murder of George Floyd this past spring are seared into our minds – and have served as a springboard for long-overdue discussions on race relations across the country.

But, how do you facilitate these invaluable discussions as parents and teachers in a way that is safe and caring to youngsters? That is a question that is being examined by the York Region District School Board (YRDSB) through a series of sessions with parents and kids alike.

Last Monday and Wednesday, the YRDSB welcomed registered psychotherapist Bonnie J. Skinner for two remote sessions entitled “Sailing Stormy Seas – Helping Black Youth Navigate Life’s Challenges.”

Based in Sault-Ste Marie, Ms. Skinner facilitated the discussion for community members on ways to help Black youth address these challenges, including anti-Black racism.

The objective, according to the Board, was to address “obstacles to success, consequences for Black youth, the navigational model for building resilience and how to support and uplift parents and mentors.”

The talks were the latest ways the Board has been responding to anti-Black racism, an issue which has, in recent years, been one the Board has been forced to address internally as well.

“In speaking about the responses to recent events and tragedy related to anti-Black racism, one of the notions that came about was how can we support parents in understanding recent events and responding to their children about recent events?” said Patricia Marra-Stapleton prior to the first round of Sailing Stormy Seas. “How do we support Black parents in having those conversations and how to start conversations with their children at home in safe and caring ways?”

“The best folks to address the issues from a mental health perspective are Black self-identified clinicians. One of the things we wanted to address very specifically

with Bonnie’s help was the mental health impact. One of the things we tried to communicate to our students and families is that we may be apart but we’re not alone. We have endeavoured to put together many initiatives from a mental health perspective to support students in a variety of ways. When the recent events happened both in the States and in Canada around anti-Black racism, quite public in terms of protests, tragedies, the loss of young lives at the hands of anti-Black racism, we were aware that the impacts for our Black students in a mental health and wellbeing nature may be significant.

“When tragedies occur, crisis occurs, racism is wrapped up all into that as well [and] it erodes the mental health of our Black students. We wanted to be able to respond in a supportive and informed way. The parent session is one way of doing that. Over the last week, we have also had sessions for students, equally co-led by Black self-identified school social workers, in conjunction with community social workers who are also Black self-identified – navigating those very personal concerns

that students have in a safe space.”

Following the earlier sessions for students, Ms. Marra-Stapleton says they received significant positive feedback from students, including on the importance of having a “safe space” led by Black clinicians. Having clinicians on hand with “lived experience” had an “immensely positive impact for young learners.”

“These sessions can’t be a ‘one and done,’” she says. “We need to continue this work and we need to continue to find ways to sustain this work going forward – the support of mental health of Black self-identified students. For myself and our Chief of Social Work Heather Carter, we’re committed to finding ways to do just that, and it is not something that just falls on our shoulders. I think what our students are telling us is we need to link with them and co-create this with them

and imagine it together.

“Right now, things are virtual, we all get that and we all know why that is, but, in the short term, what we have found is we’re able to offer four different counselling groups over the summer that will be co-facilitated with our Black self-identified YRDSB social workers and these groups will be made available to all Black self-identified students. We’re pleased to offer that for different groups of students and they will be age-specific. We want elementary students with elementary students and secondary students with secondary students. We’re excited about that but that is just the short term. I think what these students were trying to get us to understand is it can’t be just right now because it is in the media, it has got to be ongoing and I couldn’t agree with them more.”

CROSSWORD

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CLUES ACROSS

1. Cyprinids
6. Icelandic literary works
10. Break in half
14. Japanese mushroom
15. Have offspring
17. Not feeling well
19. A very large body of water
20. Witch
21. Behemoth
22. Speak negatively of
23. Absence of difficulty
24. Pampering places
26. Drives
29. Truck that delivers beer
31. Makes
32. A team’s best pitcher
34. __ Carvey, comedian
35. Seas
37. S. American plants
38. Time zone
39. Deviate
40. No longer are
41. Moving in slowly
43. Patrick and Glover are two
45. Living quarters
46. Taxi
47. Pancake made of buckwheat flour
49. Swiss river
50. Not happy
53. Have surgery
57. Formal withdrawal
58. Give way to anxiety
59. Greek war god
60. 2K lbs.
61. Word of farewell

CLUES DOWN

1. __ ex Machina
2. WWII diarist Frank
3. Concluding passage
4. Supplement with difficulty
5. Title of respect
6. Cubic measures
7. Remnant
8. __ Jones
9. Salts of acetic acid
10. Long, upholstered seat
11. Capital of Okinawa Prefecture
12. A one-time aspect of Egyptian sun god Ra
13. Prefix denoting “in a”
16. Propels upward
18. What we are talking about
22. Prosecutor
23. Employee stock ownership plan
24. He brings kids presents
25. Burmese monetary unit
27. Hurries
28. Injury remnant
29. Tooth caregiver
30. Elvis backup singer Betty Jane
31. “The Partridge Family” actress Susan
33. Midway between east and southeast
35. Most excellent
36. Heat units
37. Possess legally
39. Food items
42. Skeletal structures
43. Challenge to do something bold
44. Blood type
46. Sammy __, songwriter
47. Farmer (Dutch)
48. Clare Booth __, American writer
49. Piers Anthony’s protagonist
50. Malaysian coastal city
51. Hairstyle
52. NY-based department store
53. Geosciences organization (abbr.)
54. Brazilian city
55. Niger-Congo languages
56. Gesture

PUZZLE SOLUTION

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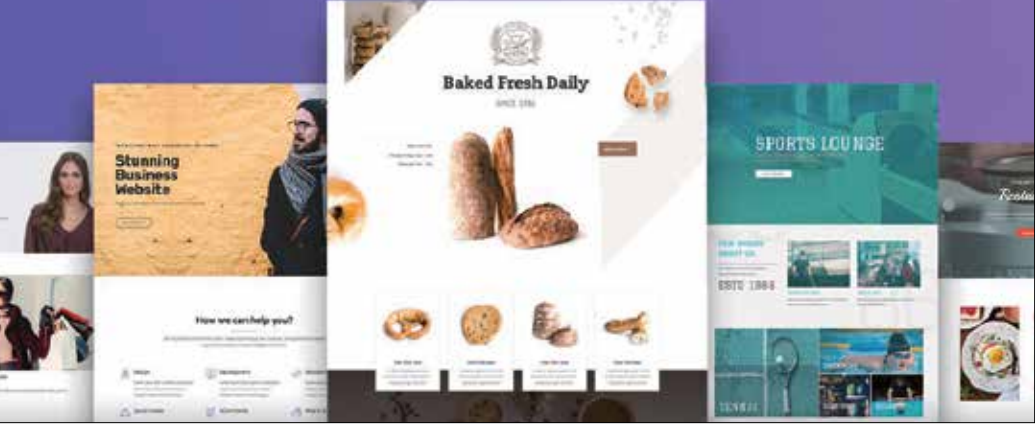
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Siblings “Raise their Hands” in support of Community Living

By Kinjal Dagli Shah

In the weeks following COVID-19 closures, Meghan and Kate Beswick missed school and their friends.

As they sat around their kitchen table, the siblings felt lonely, and by extension, empathetic towards those who were in facilities like Community Living Central York (CLCY) that had to be closed for safety.

That feeling of empathy soon transformed into a campaign called Raising Our Hands 2020, which ended in the delivery of special boxes of medical supplies, arts and crafts to 130 Community Living residents.

“Community Living is an organization close to our hearts

that provides support to individuals with intellectual disabilities in our community and helps them reach their greatest potential. With facilities closed to residents like our aunt Joan and cousin Brad, Community Living was in urgent need of PPE supplies, disinfectant, crafts and more. We wanted to join their initiative and ‘Raise Our Hands’ to give our friends in isolation a fun way to pass their time and celebrate the amazing work of the organization,” said 19-year-old Kate, the eldest of the siblings.

Having seen first-hand the depth of services CLCY provides for those with developmental disabilities, the Beswicks said they wanted to help spread some smiles and cheer amongst the residents.

“They had to close their facilities, and our friends are isolated. Just the way we have been missing school and our friends, we have a little bit of a feeling of how lonely it can be,” explained Jack, 16.

With the help of Capital Infrastructure Group and members of the community, the family hand-packed each of the 130 boxes, including a Raising Our Hands t-shirt and supplies for all residents to decorate as their own, a decorate-your-own cookie kit and toys.

“Each resident had one week to decorate their t-shirt and celebrate their friends and the staff at Community Living Central York,” said 18-year-old Meghan.

On June 13, the family gathered

at the Aurora Community Centre Parking Lot, and invited all CLCY residents to their drive-by parade to celebrate the staff and residents, with everyone dressed in their decorated shirts.


The campaign itself raised around \$10,000 but it brought much more in happiness and friendship to the residents.

“Much as it was about raising funds, it was really about raising our hands and helping our vulnerable friends that have been isolated for so long. This was about giving them the gift of a project and fun of a parade.”

To support the campaign and to donate, visit raisingourhands2020.com.



(Left) The Beswick siblings. (Middle) The Raise Our Hands 2020 kit. (Right) Members of Community Living Central York participated in a drive-past parade to get their gear. Contributed photo



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Council renews vision to turn Hallmark lands into baseball hub

From page 11

said Mayor Tom Mrakas at the GC meeting.

Voting against the motion at the following week’s Council meeting, however, were Councillors John Gallo and Wendy Gaertner.

Councillor Gallo, who was never a proponent of lands formally designated for employment use being reclassified for recreational purposes, reiterated his position that the potential \$3 million price tag to build the two diamonds was not a sound investment for the municipality.

“Land value, we paid \$7 million. We’re paying at least \$3 million [for construction]. We’re at \$10 million for two baseball diamonds, no taxes in perpetuity on employment lands, highly valued employment lands, and I wholeheartedly, once again, believe this is a mistake,” he said. “We should not be building recreational facilities on employment lands and to spend \$5 million per baseball diamond just blows my mind how we are moving forward with this. I can’t stress how much I am against this.”

Referring to his support for a multiuse facility if the land was, in the end, going to be developed for recreational purposes, he added: “We had a report from staff that had some other recommendations. I tried my best to influence, to try and do what I think would have been a better solution and have the best use of that land, if we were going to have it as recreational facilities. Clearly the will of Council isn’t there and the majority of you support spending \$5 million per baseball diamond on employment lands, losing taxes in perpetuity.”

Speaking against the matter, Councillor Gaertner said she was “torn.”

“I am torn because we don’t have enough recreation land and we missed an opportunity in the 2C lands to buy a nice, flat piece of land from the developers,” she said. “We need to provide the diamonds but, on the other hand, we’re maybe in a very difficult financial situation because of COVID-19 and, because of that, I have to change the way I voted and agree with Councillor Gallo. I will be voting against this.”

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

From page 4

shouldn’t matter. It was built to commemorate our Town’s Centennial. It is equally important to note that the library could have served a practical purpose.

To those that argue it would have served no purpose and that it no longer held relevance, please consider that Council was given, at their request, a study by AECON that deemed the building to be structurally sound and demonstrably viable in terms of repair and retrofit to serve the needs of an expanding Cultural Centre.

A Council majority voted to demolish nonetheless, and, just as swiftly, the old Aurora Public Library was gone just over a year later.

After reading letters in this paper the last few weeks about the high cost of the Library Square project, which includes a new building where the 20th century building once stood, consider that the aforementioned

study estimated that with less than \$500,000 worth of repairs and upgrades, the old building could have been transformed into a practical, useable space for the community once again.

In doing so, we would still have this important part of our shared history. Not to mention, we could have had a little more money left in our reserves for a possible uncertainty that lies ahead. Instead, we have tax levies and programming cuts already in place to cover the cost of a \$56,000,000 project (\$51+5 million contingency).

And so, while local heroes continue to write their own stories, let’s not forget how the destruction of a gift has become part of our shared history.

Happy Canada Day!

Neil Asselin
Aurora

(Editor’s Note: Mr. Asselin is a member of Aurora’s Heritage Advisory Committee)

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