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THE AURORAN
Aurora's Community Newspaper
Vol. 20 No. 45 905-727-3300 TheAuroran.com FREE Week of August 27, 2020 CMCA AUDITED

SPEAKING OUT - Susan Walmer addresses approximately two dozen Aurora residents gathered outside Town Hall on Tuesday evening speaking out against Council moving forward with the redevelopment of Library Square (inset). They urged Council members to push "pause" and re-think the project in light of financial uncertainty stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic.

Auroran photo by Brock Weir

Library Square redevelopment clears final Council hurdle on "historic" 4–3 vote

By Brock Weir

After decades of debate, Aurora's plan for the redevelopment of Library Square moved forward Tuesday night on a "historic" vote of 4 – 3.

Council awarded the tender for the construction of Library Square, including an expansive addition to the Church Street School, improvements to the Aurora Public Library, a bridge connecting the two buildings and a public gathering space below, to Chandos Construction in the amount of $41 million, bringing the total project budget to $51,939,500.

The bulk of this price tag will be funded by municipal reserves – including Aurora's Hydro Funds – along with a long-term debenture of up to $12.9 million to be repaid over a period of up to 20 years. Council also signed off on the creation of a Budget Control Task Force to oversee the construction costs.

"Today is truly a historic moment for Aurora," said Councillor Michael Thompson, who made the motion for a task force. "Since the current Library was built in 2001, the topic of Library Square has been openly and repeatedly discussed by multiple Councils. For the 10 years I have been on Council, the revitalization of the downtown core and the vision for Library Square has been a constant item for discussion and a key objective of our Strategic Plan. It has been a long road to get here, there have been many starts and stops and starts again, but I am proud

Continued on page 17

Rainbow Crosswalk hailed as "important symbol" for community

By Brock Weir

As far as walks go, it was a relatively short walk, but it was a step in the right direction for Aurora, according to dignitaries and community members who gathered at Yonge and Wellington on Thursday for the unveiling of the Town's new Rainbow Crosswalk.

Featuring the colours of the Pride flag, the Rainbow Crosswalk, which was approved by Council last month, is intended to be a landmark to show that Aurora is an "accepting

Continued on page 6

Local dignitaries helped inaugurate Aurora's Rainbow Crosswalk last Thursday morning, Pictured here are Mayor Tom Mrakas, Aurora-Oak Ridges-Richmond Hill MPP Michael Parsa, Newmarket-Aurora MP Tony Van Bynen, Dawn Gallagher Murphy (representing Newmarket-Aurora MPP Christine Elliott), Councillor Michael Thompson, Aurora-Oak Ridges-Richmond Hill MP Leona Alleslev, and Councillors Wendy Gaertner and Harold Kim.

Auroran photo by Glenn Rodger

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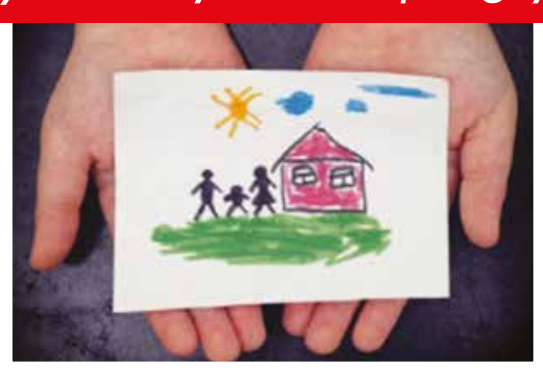
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TOWN OF AURORA

Notice Board

AURORA

Council & Committee Meetings

Date	Time	Location	Meeting
Thursday, August 27	6 p.m.	Video conference	Aurora Appeal Tribunal
Tuesday, September 1	9:30 a.m.	Newmarket	Joint Council Committee
Tuesday, September 8	5:45 p.m.	TBD	Council Closed Session (if required)
Tuesday, September 8	7 p.m.	Council Chambers	General Committee
Wednesday, September 9	6:30 p.m.	Virtual Meeting	Aurora Cultural Centre Board (Public Meeting)
Wednesday, September 9	7 p.m.	Video conference	Accessibility Advisory Committee
Thursday, September 10	7 p.m.	Video conference	Committee of Adjustment

*Meetings can be viewed online by visiting **aurora.ca/livecouncilmeeting**

What's Happening

Online Skylight Gallery Exhibition Artist: Willo Rodrigues

Inspired by nature, God, and her own exploration and discovery, Willo (Maya) Rodrigues was inspired to express "*A Detailed Approach*" by using colour, fantasy, and emotion. As an Ontario College of Arts graduate, Rodrigues uses a myriad of techniques; ranging from oils, watercolours, soft pastels, acrylics, and pencil. Her fascination for fine detail has intuitively led her to feel the beauty of the world around her, in its landscapes, flowers, animals and much more. For some, Willo is hoping the viewer will see her art as a healing experience. You can now see works by Willo Rodrigues in Aurora's Online Skylight Gallery throughout September.

View this online gallery at **aurora.ca/skylightgallery**.

PLAY IN THE PARK

Play in the Park Series throughout the month of September

The Town of Aurora has introduced a new *Play in the Park* series which offers a variety of recreation focused workshops for tots, children and youth. Each outdoor workshop is 45 minutes and provides an opportunity for participants to spend time playing outdoors and engaging in group interaction through a variety of recreation focused games and activities that encourage play, while maintaining physical distancing.

The *Play in the Park* series will be offered at Lambert Willson Park throughout September after school and on weekends. Programs offered for preschool and children up to the age of 12 require a parent or guardian to participate alongside them or remain on-site at all times.

Participants must pre-register and pay online to reserve a spot at **aurora.ca/ePlay**.

For more information on the many exciting workshops offered in the *Play in the Park* series, please visit **aurora.ca/playinthepark**.

Limited summer swim programs

The Town is now offering the following summer swim programs at the Aurora Family Leisure Complex (AFLC):

- Lane swims with no spa pool access
- Aquafit classes with no spa pool access
- Private swim lessons for individuals (Levels - Swim Kids 5 and higher)
- Aquatic sport clubs (i.e. facility permitting)

For more information on the modified summer aquatic program and for more details on procedures that should be followed, please visit **aurora.ca/aquatics**.

Recreation at home

It's easy to stay actively engaged at home with more than 100 online resources available on our *Recreation at Home* webpage. These activities are for all ages. They contain a collection of games, activities and ideas to keep you and your family actively and engaged at home.

For more details, visit: **aurora.ca/recathome**.

Club Aurora Fitness Centre reopening

Club Aurora will be reopening its doors on **Monday, August 31** with new safety protocols in place. We will have controlled access, limited capacity and schedule time blocks for patrons. Our group fitness classes will be operating on a modified schedule.

For more information on what to expect when returning to Club Aurora, visit: **aurora.ca/clubaurora**.

What's Happening

Help stop the spread of COVID-19

Medical masks and gloves should be disposed of in garbage bags only. Place all tissues and napkins in a closed bag to ensure safety of collection workers and help reduce the spread of COVID-19.

For more updates, please visit: **aurora.ca/covid19**.

ENGAGE AURORA

NEW

ONLINE ENGAGEMENT PLATFORM

engageaurora.ca

AURORA

Community Energy Plan (CEP)

Have you taken our Community Energy Plan (CEP) Survey yet?

The CEP is a comprehensive long-term plan to improve energy efficiency and reduce energy consumption and greenhouse gas emissions locally. To be effective, it's critical that this plan represents the insights and ideas of our community members. By contributing your thoughts on the vision and goals, we can set a strong direction for the future. We are also looking for your thoughts and input on how you use energy at work, home and on the road to help shape strategies within the Plan.

Complete the survey and share your thoughts at: **engageaurora.ca/cep**

FREE EVENT

EXCELLENCE AND RETENTION OF WOMEN IN SPORT VIRTUAL KEYNOTE ADDRESS and Sport Equity & Inclusion Committee

SUNDAY SEPTEMBER 13, 2020

10 A.M. TO 12 P.M.
VIRTUAL ZOOM PRESENTATION

Keynote Address on Excellence & Retention of Women in Sport
SHEILAGH CROXON
THREE-TIME OLYMPIC COACH

aurora.ca/womeninsport

AURORA

What's Happening

TD PRESENTS

FREE EVENT

AURORA'S 2020 CONCERTS IN THE PARK

Town Park - 49 Wells Street

AUGUST 5 12 19 26
SEPT 2
7 P.M. TO 8:30 P.M.

Pre-registration is required. Limited space.
Register at **e-play.com** using Program Code per concert

FEATURE CONCERT **Code #19419**

SEPT 2 **Classic Lightfoot Live**
John Stinson's tribute to Canadian legend Gordon Lightfoot is outstanding. Many of his classics include "If You Could Read My Mind".

Food donations for the Aurora Food Pantry are greatly appreciated.

For series line-up and more information, visit **aurora.ca/summerconcerts**

For your seating comfort, please bring your own lawn chairs.

We reserve the right to cancel, amend or change activities. 905-726-4762 • #AuroraConcerts

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Aurora's DRIVE-IN MOVIE

FRIDAY SEPT 4

CHECK OUT WHAT'S PLAYING
aurora.ca/moviesinthepark

Stronach Aurora Recreation Complex, Parking Lot
(1400 Wellington Street East)

Register online at aurora.ca/eplay using program code #19454

Spaces are limited. Pre-registration is required.

★ Must be an Aurora resident to register and attend
★ One registration per household

Arrival starts at 7 p.m. | Movie begins at 8 p.m.
To allow for a timely check-in, no arrivals past 7:45 p.m.

For more information and pre-registration details, visit **aurora.ca/moviesinthepark.**

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We reserve the right to cancel, amend or change activities.

FREE ADMISSION

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CULTURAL DANCE PERFORMANCES
In-person at Aurora Town Park • 49 Wells Street

SATURDAY SEPTEMBER 12 | SATURDAY SEPTEMBER 19

Shows at 9 a.m. and 11:15 a.m.
Repeat performances due to limited gathering sizes.
Attendance is on a first come, first serve basis.

VIRTUAL ACTIVITIES All week (Sept 12-19)
Enjoy cooking demonstrations (for all ages), online cultural activities & interactive games

aurora.ca/multiculturalfestival
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We reserve the right to cancel, amend or change activities.
For health and safety reasons, pets are not welcomed to experience the festivities first hand.
Service animals excepted.

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Contact tracing key for school re-opening, new institutional outbreak in Aurora: York

By Brock Weir

As parents prepare to send their kids back to school next week, if that is the choice they made, York Region's Public Health Unit is reiterating its support for plans to re-open classrooms.

On Monday, Dr. Lana Fitzgerald-Husek, York Region's Associate Medical Officer of Health, said the decision facing parents has been a "difficult one" and York Region Public Health "will continue to play an active role in helping to limit transmission in school settings and…investigate all cases of COVID-19."

"We know it has been difficult making decisions about whether or not your child will attend school in person or participate in online learning," she said. "We know the importance of school for children's overall mental, social, physical and emotional development.

"Public Health has longstanding partnership with public, Catholic and French school boards and with private and independent schools in York Region. These relationships are so important as we navigate this complex, evolving COVID-10 environment. We remain committed to working with schools and school boards and supporting children, parents and educational workers in a safe return to York Region classrooms."

Public Health, added Dr. Fitzgerald-Husek, will continue to follow "the lead and guidance" of the Province and provide input."

Tackling communicable diseases in school settings over the years, including measles and whooping cough, have been "beneficial" experiences in determining how to manage COVID-19 cases and contacts in schools, she said.

"We take case management and contact tracing very seriously. While we anticipate that some cases of COVID-19 may occur in school settings, we know we are well prepared to promptly and effectively respond. If a student, for example, tests positive for COVID-19, York Region Public Health will conduct an in-depth investigation to identify close contacts of a case. Contact tracing is an effective tool to slow and control the spread. In the school setting, close contacts are more likely to be students and teachers in the same class or cohort, siblings of the case in different grades, or other school staff with close contact to the case while the case was infectious. Close contacts outside of the school will also be followed up.

"Public Health will directly get in touch with close contacts of a confirmed case to advise on important public health measures such as testing, self isolation and symptom monitoring. There will also be communication with students, parents and the schools… Each situation may be unique and evaluated on a case by case basis and we will continue to follow established communicable disease prevention and control practices and additional guidance on COVID-19 in schools that is forthcoming from the Province."

As local schools prepare to welcome students once again, Aurora is currently battling 3 active cases of COVID-19.

As of Tuesday, August 25, the Town has seen a total of 143 confirmed cases of the virus, 15 of which have proved fatal. A total of 125 of these cases are now marked as resolved.

The Region is also reporting a new institutional outbreak in an Aurora seniors' residence – this time at Cobblestone Lodge Retirement at Yonge and Kennedy. In this case, there is one case of COVID-19 amongst its caregiver complement of six and, at press time, no cases amongst its resident population of 19.

Of the active cases in Aurora at large, 2 are attributed to local transmission or close contact, while the remaining case is related to an institutional outbreak outside of Aurora.

Region wide, there have been a total of 3,410 cases of COVID-19 since the start of the pandemic. There are presently 119 active cases of the virus, with 3,038 cases now marked as recovered. There have been 253 deaths as a result of the pandemic.

TOWN OF AURORA
PUBLIC NOTICE

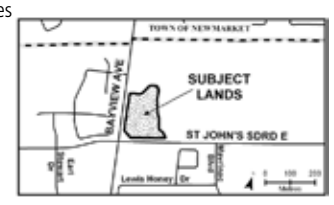
AURORA

NOTICE OF PUBLIC PLANNING MEETING

AURORA TOWN COUNCIL will hold a Statutory Public Meeting to receive input on proposed Official Plan Amendment and Zoning By-law Amendment Applications:

Tuesday, September 15, 2020 at 7:00 pm
Aurora Town Hall, Council Chambers
100 John West Way, Aurora, Ontario

APPLICATION: The applicant has submitted 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 (T&T Supermarket Plaza)

LEGAL DESCRIPTION: Whitchurch Con 2 Pt Lot 26, RP65R32530 Part 1

APPLICANT: RCG Aurora North GP Inc.

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

RELATED APPLICATION: N/A

PROCEDURAL INFORMATION: Anyone interested in attending this meeting in person will be required to fill out and submit a Screening Registration Form by 4:30 p.m. on the Tuesday of the meeting. In-person attendance is limited to the first 20 people. Masks must be worn at all times inside Town Hall. For more information, visit: **aurora.ca/meetings**. The meeting will also be live streamed at **youtube.com/user/Townofaurora2012/videos**.

Parties interested in speaking during the public portion of the meeting may attend in person or electronically. Pre-registration is required. For more information, visit: **aurora.ca/participation**.

The Planning Report **PDS20-053** will be made available the Tuesday before the Public Planning Meeting date on the Town's website, by visiting the Agendas and Minutes section, located at: **aurora.ca/agendas**.

CONTACT INFORMATION: Additional information and material regarding the proposed Official Plan and Zoning By-law Amendment Applications is available for public inspection by appointment, at the Town of Aurora office located at 100 John West Way, Aurora, ON, L4G 6J1. Please contact Matthew Peverini of the Planning and Development Services Department at 905-727-3123 extension **4350**. Comments may also be mailed to the Planning and Development Services Department at the same address above, faxed to 905-726-4736 or emailed to **planning@aurora.ca** prior to the meeting. Please quote the File Name and Numbers.

INFORMATION ABOUT PRESERVING YOUR APPEAL RIGHTS:

If a person or public body would otherwise have an ability to appeal the decision of the Council of the Town of Aurora or the Regional Municipality of York, as the case may be, to the Local Planning Appeal Tribunal (LPAT) but the person or public body does not make oral submissions at a public meeting or make written submissions to the Town of Aurora or Regional Municipality of York, as the case may be, before the proposed Official Plan Amendment is adopted and the proposed Zoning By-law Amendment is passed, the person or public body is not entitled to appeal the decision.

If a person or public body does not make oral submissions at a public meeting or make written submissions to the Town of Aurora before the proposed Official Plan amendment is adopted and the proposed by-law passed, the person or public body may not be added as a party to the hearing of an appeal before the LPAT unless in the opinion of the LPAT, there are reasonable grounds to add the person or public body as a party.

If you wish to be notified of the decision of the Council of the Town of Aurora, or the Regional Municipality of York, as the case may be, on the proposed Official Plan and Zoning By-law Amendments, you must make a written request to the Town of Aurora to the attention of the Director of Planning and Development Services.

PERSONAL INFORMATION COLLECTION NOTICE:

The Town of Aurora collects personal information in communications or presentations made to Town Council and/or its Committees under the legal authority of the Planning Act, R.S.O. 1990, Chapter c.P.13, as amended. Pursuant to Section 27 of the Municipal Freedom of Information and Protection of Privacy Act, R.S.O. 1990, c. M.56, as amended, (the "Act") public feedback to planning proposals is considered to be public record and may be disclosed to any individual upon request in accordance with the Act. If you are submitting letters, faxes, emails, presentations or other communications to the Town, you should be aware that your name and the fact that you communicated with the Town will become part of the public record and will appear on the Town's website. The Town will also make your communication and any personal information in it, such as your address and postal code or email address available to the public unless you expressly request the Town to remove it. Questions about this collection should be directed to the Town Clerk, Town of Aurora, 100 John West Way, Box 1000, Aurora, ON L4G 6J1 905-727-3123.

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DATED at the Town of Aurora, this 27th day of August, 2020.

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

TOWN OF AURORA
PUBLIC NOTICE

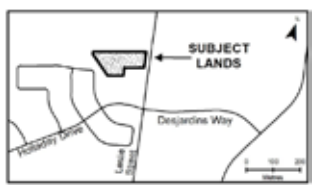
AURORA

NOTICE OF PUBLIC PLANNING MEETING

AURORA TOWN COUNCIL will hold a Statutory Public Meeting to receive input on proposed Official Plan Amendment and Zoning By-law Amendment Applications:

Tuesday, September 15, 2020 at 7:00 pm
Aurora Town Hall, Council Chambers
100 John West Way, Aurora, Ontario

APPLICATION: Official Plan and Zoning By-law Amendments to facilitate the development of a seven (7) storey residential apartment building with a total of 137 units, underground parking, private driveway and open space lands. The Official Plan Amendment proposes increases to height and density. The Zoning By-law Amendment proposes to change the existing "Rural (RU)" zone to "Second Density Apartment Residential Exception Zone (RA2-XX)" and "Environmental Protection Zone (EP)". A related Site Plan Application has also been submitted that is not the subject of the public planning meeting.



PROPERTY: 15516 Leslie Street

LEGAL DESCRIPTION: Part Lot 22, Concession 2 Whitchurch

OWNER: 15516 Leslie Street GP Inc.

FILE NUMBERS: OPA-2020-03 and ZBA-2020-03

RELATED APPLICATION: SP-2020-02

PROCEDURAL INFORMATION: Anyone interested in attending this meeting in person will be required to fill out and submit a Screening Registration Form by 4:30 p.m. on the Tuesday of the meeting. In-person attendance is limited to the first 20 people. Masks must be worn at all times inside Town Hall. For more information, visit: **aurora.ca/meetings**. The meeting will also be live streamed at **youtube.com/user/Townofaurora2012/videos**.

Parties interested in speaking during the public portion of the meeting may attend in person or electronically. Pre-registration is required. For more information, visit: **aurora.ca/participation**.

The Planning Report PDS20-051 will be made available the Tuesday before the Public Planning Meeting date on the Town's website, by visiting the Agendas and Minutes section, located at: **aurora.ca/agendas**.

CONTACT INFORMATION: Additional information and material regarding the proposed Official Plan and Zoning By-law Amendment Applications is available for public inspection, by appointment, at Town Hall. Please contact Sean Lapenna of the Planning and Development Services Department at 905-727-3123 extension **4346** or at **slapenna@aurora.ca**. Comments may also be mailed to the Planning and Development Services Department at the address below, faxed to 905-726-4736 or emailed to **planning@aurora.ca** prior to the meeting. Please quote the File Name and Numbers.

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DATED at the Town of Aurora, this 27th day of August, 2020.

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

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Former mayor states case on Library Square

Having served 28 years on Aurora Council, 16 as a councillor and 12 as mayor, I can empathize and respect both sides of the debate on whether to proceed with the Library Square development at this time.

Many residents are experiencing personal challenges with their own finances, employment, and/or their health and to compare their personal perspectives with the Town's decision on whether to proceed with this project at this time is a natural thing to do.

That said, one has to understand the financing position of the Town to even start to understand why moving forward with Library Square at this time is a prudent thing to do.

Unless things have changed since my time on Council (1978-2006), the core funding for this project is supported by Reserve funding and not current tax dollars. Reserve funding cannot be used for anything other than what it was or will be collected for.

In addition to that, there are the Hydro funds which, when we sold Aurora Hydro to PowerStream, were put in a reserve to be used specifically for a "legacy" project.

It is my understanding that between the Hydro Reserve and specific facility reserves collected from development charges, there is/will be sufficient funding for this project – and I repeat, funding that by law cannot be used for other operational purposes.

Initiatives including what to do with the old library and firehall/seniors' centre and downtown revitalization have been on Council agendas for 20-30 years. Almost every time Council got to a point of possible action to demolish the existing buildings, to take action to improve parking or supports to the downtown, for various reasons or issues of the day, Council deferred taking action for more study.

Today, I see a Council that has, to their and the previous Councils' credit, taken steps to move forward with the downtown and develop this extraordinary plan for the core, with the studies and the input assembled AND the base funding in place.

Moving forward with this project sets in motion the legacy aspect of the Hydro funds designated for this purpose – to me, it is a perfect use of these funds. The project itself could provide local employment and service provision opportunities which actually may help some people through the COVID era.

To defer at this time will only drive the cost up and quite possibly nickel and dime a quality plan that would lower the positive effects for the Downtown core.

I've seen it happen before and would urge Council to show leadership and continue to move forward on the project; don't wait and watch the costs rise and the Council term end without a decision.

In my experience, I participated in discussions and decisions which have resulted in facilities including the Aurora Family Leisure Complex, the additional ice surface at the Community Centre, the Stronach Complex, a second Fire Hall, the Town Hall and more. Most of those discussions included similar requests to defer or scale down due to the conditions of the day, but when I see how these facilities have developed and are used, I don't regret moving forward on any of them.

Leadership is not always easy, but this Council has been one that has made decisions on numerous issues and by doing so is accomplishing their mandate to provide residents with a great and inclusive quality of living that I commend them for.

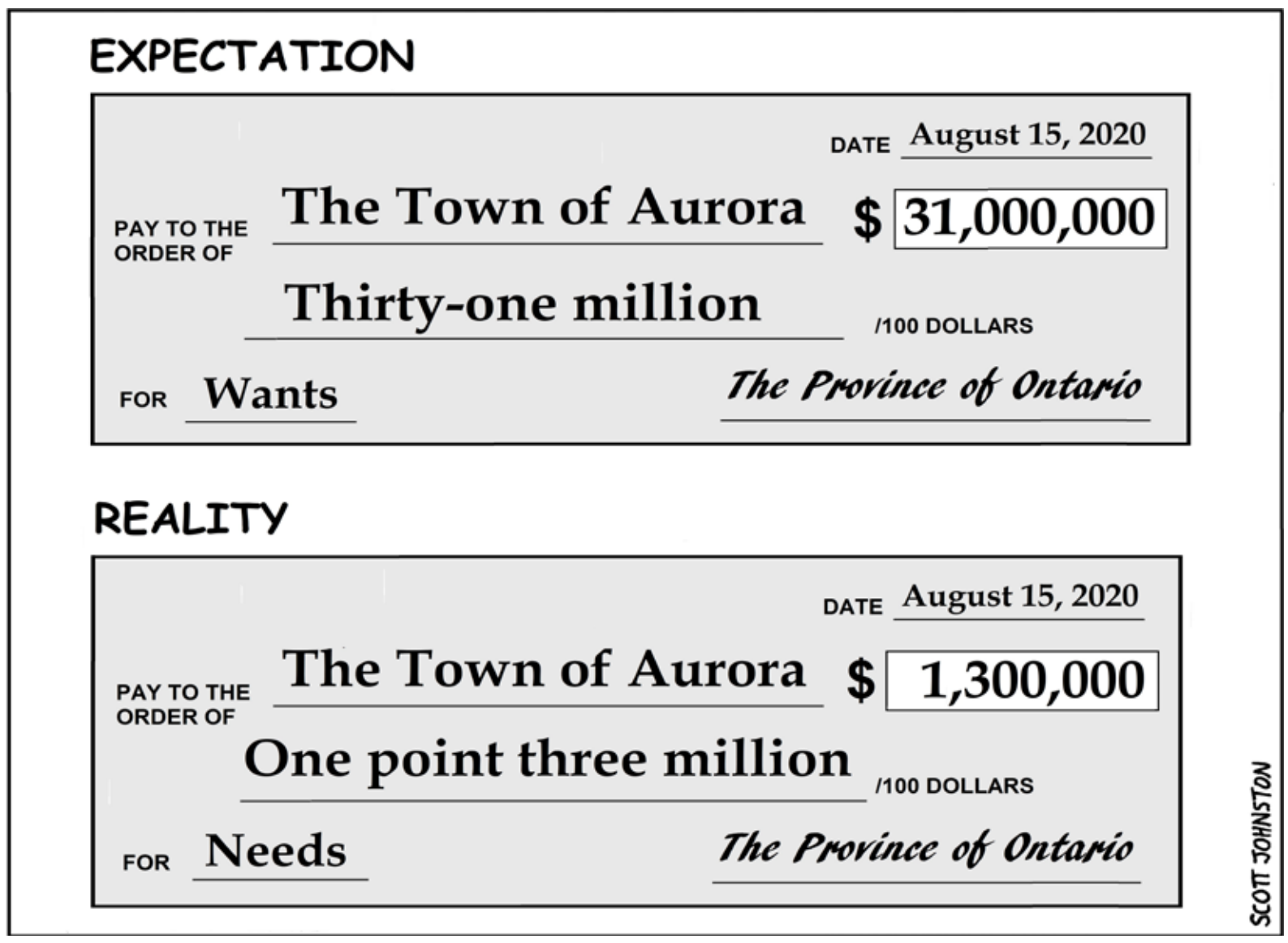
As Joe Biden said in his nomination acceptance speech last week, "History tells us that in our darkest moments we've made our greatest progress"

The time is right to move forward with this project!

Tim Jones
Aurora

Letters continue on page 19

Machell's Corners



Round and Round – and once more for good measure

BROCK'S BANTER

Brock Weir

It is a strange, yet exhilarating feeling living through a moment of history.

Of course, the present historical moment we're living through right now is both alarming and challenging, but there is no doubt that this is (hopefully) a once-in-a-lifetime occurrence and one that will help define us in the decades to come.

Truth be told, that has been my approach to covering this multifaceted pandemic.

In the early days, it almost seemed like a tragic human numbers game, alas. But, as people once again found their bearings and devised new and creative ways to get themselves and help others through the pandemic, and pivot towards newer and more creative ideas as well, the less about numbers it became – although numbers are still vitally important – and, at its core, it became and remains very much a community story.

When the next pandemic rolls around, stories of the community rising to the occasion are likely those that will be revisited in the years to come examining how the community endured and defined itself.

As we at The Auroran approach our twentieth anniversary this October, I have been delving deep into our archives to revisit some of the people and events that have contributed to how we, as a community, have come to define Aurora over the past two decades.

Flipping through the pages, it is striking that as much as things change, many things also stay the same.

Ahead of this week's Council meeting on Library Square, a conversation promoted a dive into waters shallower than 2000 – 2001, and I landed on an installment of Poor Richard, a popular column penned for many years by former Aurora mayor Dick Illingworth from the earliest days of The Auroran until just before his death in 2009.

Dated October 11, 2005 and entitled "Round and Round on Library Square," it touched upon many themes that ring very familiar nearly 15 years on:

The most recent Council meeting when the controversial Library Square was discussed was a perfect example of Council going around in a circle and getting nowhere.

The Library Square was originally defined as the area within the boundaries of Yonge, Mosley, Victoria and Church Streets, which includes the Church Street School, the former Library, the former fire hall, and Victoria Hall.

The controversy started in 1979 when Council voted 4 – 3 to postpone a special meeting of Council called to discuss the future of the town-owned properties in the square until more information was available, especially for the Church Street School.

In June 1985, Council authorized Town Staff to prepare items for reference and a cost estimate of obtaining professional services to maximize efficient uses for all of the Town-owned properties.

In September, 1992, Council established the Church Street School Ad Hoc Committee to consider uses for the building in conjunction with other town-owned properties.

During budget discussions in 2001, it was suggested a consultant be engaged to review redevelopment on the town-owned buildings in the square.

After meeting all summer and not agreeing on any recommendations, Council disbanded the committee in December, 2001.

The debate started all over again about hiring a consultant and when Council members couldn't agree, the whole issue was referred to staff.

In May, 2003, Council adopted a staff report endorsing a request from the Historical Society to become the sole tenant of the Church Street School as a Museum and Cultural Centre.

Staff was directed to investigate the option of replacing the former library and fire hall, then used as a seniors' centre with a new facility providing both a seniors' centre with a new facility providing both a seniors' centre and a new five-storey seniors' residential building through a public/private partnership.

During all this period although lack of parking was mentioned there was no serious discussion about the shortage of parking. With the approval of the new seniors' centre west of the Town Hall, attention was again directed to future uses of the old library and the soon-to-be-vacated seniors' building.

A staff report indicated it would cost $377,420 to bring the two buildings up to building code standards and council agreed that the rental rate for the groups would cover the cost of renovations.

A rental rate of $9 per square foot plus $2 per square foot for utilities was approved by Council.

Council then approved criteria for evaluating applications.

In March, 2005, Council approved an Expression of Interest and directed staff publicly to advertise the facilities and rate the applications as defined in the criteria.

This was done by staff and Leisure Services Advisory Committee and a report and recommendations were presented at the recent Council meeting which degenerated into a shouting match with interruptions, points of order and personal attacks.

The end result was rejection of the committee report and recommended space allocations on the basis there was a shortage of parking and a need for a new vision for the property.

In the intervening decade-and-a-half, many new visions were subsequently presented to Council.

Some were rather uninspired, like mowing down the former library, seniors' centre and fire hall buildings simply to alleviate area parking pressures – despite some people making valiant attempts to argue these parking pressures simply didn't exist.

Others were more intriguing, from a multi-storey studio space for artists and other creatives, to a landmark destination building built in the shape of a grand piano, to a nice modern building incorporating historic Victorian Hall into the construction, similar to Toronto's Commerce Court. (Okay, that last idea was one I put forward as a resident, which somehow didn't make one of the many reports to Council, but I am graciously and belatedly conceding defeat on that one.)

So, here we are at last: a new vision for the property signed and sealed, and now it is just a matter of time before it is delivered – for better or worse.

In the weeks, months, and years ahead, especially with a municipal election little more than two years away, it will be up to the individual Council members to justify their vote one way or another – and history will play a significant part in how that justification pans out.

Regardless of whether the project is completed by the election of October 2022, there will be little time for the community to realize dividends from this significant community investment, so this is a saga that will endure. For those involved in our community, it will remain a hot topic of conversation long after shovels hit the ground, and given the first half-decade of the Aurora Cultural Centre's existence, it will still remain a contentious issue even if – and after – its value has been proven.

Who will ultimately have the last laugh? Keep watching The Auroran. We might have a final score by our Golden Anniversary.

THE AURORAN
Aurora's Community Newspaper

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Deadline for submissions is Sunday at 1 p.m.

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The Aurora Museum & Archives is celebrating…

Bow Tie Day!
(August 28)

While the identity of this man remains unknown,

we believe that he would be entirely supportive

of celebrating Bow Tie Day!

Time Travellers Diary

By Michelle Johnson
Collections & Exhibitions Coordinator,
Aurora Museum & Archives

How to close out summer break?

As summer winds down, and August comes to a close, I often find a sense of nostalgia creeping in. Something about the arrival of a new school year and a sudden crisp breeze invites some reminiscing – at least for this time traveller.

I decided to journey back to the late summer festivities throughout Aurora's past, beginning 140 years ago in August of 1880.

It was a crisp evening on Monday, August 16 as I walked to the Hillary property on Yonge Street to attend the 12th Battalion Band's garden party that was being hosted by Dr. Hillary.

The grounds were beautifully decorated with lanterns everywhere and at least 250 were people in attendance. I lingered for a while and thought to myself how a garden party would be the perfect way to wrap up summer break back in 2020 given the social realities of COVID-19. Although, the guest list would need to be a fraction of what Dr. Hillary hosted.

After listening to a performance from Miss Hillary, I decided to skip ahead and venture to 1905.

August 25, 1905, was a beautiful sunny day and I found myself in a crowd of people on Yonge Street waiting to board the Radial Railway.

I was told that the destination was Bond Lake and the occasion was to welcome home Mr. H.W. Fleury who had returned from England.

When we arrived at Bond Lake there were over 1,000 citizens present to welcome the head of the Fleury Foundry back home. I was amazed to hear that during his trip he was received by the King and Queen at Windsor Castle.

Mr. Fleury spoke about the drive through Windsor Park and a visit to Frogmore. The tales of royal encounters were followed up with a game of tug-of-war between the men from the Foundry and men from the Town – the Foundry men were the victors. I wondered what other late summer festivities I could come upon and set my sights on 1955.

The main end of summer activity in 1955 was entirely designed for students! To mark the end of the summer holidays, forty-one Aurora businesses, in partnership with the Royal Theatre, provided 760 free tickets for students to attend a back to school theatre party. Along with a free screening, each child was given a free bag of peanuts. The back to school theatre party was so successful that a second matinee was added to make sure that all 760 students could watch the cartoons and Roy Rogers film on the big screen.

When I returned to 2020, I couldn't help but wonder what activities people would (or wouldn't) be getting up during these final days of summer break.

It was obvious that 1,000 people wouldn't be attending a picnic, 760 kids wouldn't be waiting to see a movie together and 250 people wouldn't be enjoying a garden party; but I did find some small comfort in knowing that small groups could still picnic in the park, and movie theatres, be they drive in or sit in, were open once again.

Back to School and Supporting Local Communities

CHRISTINE'S CHRONICLES

Christine Elliott, MPP
Newmarket-Aurora

With more businesses and amenities safely reopening, I hope everyone is enjoying the summer dining at your favourite restaurants, shopping at local stores and visiting the beautiful parks in our community.

It's important to continue following public health advice, including practising physical distancing, wearing a face covering if physical distancing is a challenge, washing hands frequently and thoroughly, and avoiding touching your eyes, nose and mouth.

Back to School

The upcoming school year has been on the minds of many families. It's important that kids and their parents know that school is a safe place. Ontario's plan, which has been widely recognized as the strongest in Canada, was developed in consultation with the Chief Medical Officer of Health, the COVID-19 Command Table and paediatric experts.

Our government is building on this plan by providing boards flexibility to make additional investments to help schools reopen safely in September for students and staff. School boards can access up to 2 per cent of their operating budget from their reserves, providing up to $496 million province-wide. This funding will allow them to make necessary adjustments based on local needs, which could include smaller class sizes, leasing additional space, hiring more teachers or fully deploying all non-timetabled teachers.

Ontario is providing up to $50 million to support improved ventilation, air quality and HVAC systems in schools. This is another key public health recommendation that we are implementing, on top of the existing $1.4 billion funding for maintenance and renewal.

In support of giving parents more options, our government is also ensuring a stronger and more robust remote learning experience for students which will include a complete and weekly class schedule to mirror the in-class experience.

The new Policy/Program Memorandum (PPM) will provide parents and students with what to expect when they participate in remote learning, ensure a consistent approach across the province, and guarantee students are fully engaged. The PPM will include ministry-set requirements on minimum time for synchronous learning by grade, protocols for communicating with parents and students and access to technology.

We are also investing $18 million to help school boards hire principal and administrative support to better deliver and oversee synchronous, live learning. Students will have several opportunities throughout the school year to re-enter classroom learning.

Our government will continue working closely with public health and school boards to monitor and report on the health status of school communities as part of the government's outbreak management plan.

Total of $1.39 billion in emergency funding to Ontario Municipalities.

In partnership with the federal government, Ontario is providing urgently needed emergency funding to Ontario's 444 municipalities, which includes $1,298,500 for the Town of Aurora and $23,461,600 for the Regional Municipality of York, with an additional $17,107,059 to support transit operations throughout the Region.

Through the Safe Restart Agreement, the first round of emergency funding will help keep the people of Aurora and all of York Region, healthy and safe while maintaining access to critical public health services like transit and shelters as we continue our fight against COVID-19.

There will be an additional $695 million that will be available through Phase Two for municipalities that have COVID-related financial impacts. This second phase of funding will flow this fall, and will help create longer term, innovative and sustainable housing solutions.

Our government is working in partnership with municipalities across the province to ensure they can emerge stronger than ever and help lead Ontario's economic recovery.

Please continue to reach out to my constituency office with any provincial matter. My office is here to support you. Call at 905-853-9889 or email christine.elliottco@pc.ola.org

The editor and the columnist

FRONT PORCH PERSPECTIVE

Stephen Somerville

I have been writing this column, over 452 at last count, since 2006 and I just read in last week's edition of The Auroran that this newspaper will celebrate its twentieth anniversary in October.

Time sure does fly!

Surviving twenty years is extremely impressive, in any business.

I have lots of fond memories as I think about the people involved with this newspaper from Ron Wallace, Diane Buchanan to Scott Johnston and Brock Weir.

Over the next few columns, I will share some thoughts/reminiscences of special moments that have occurred during my time writing for this paper.

One story goes back to 2006 when I had been writing this column for only a few months. The municipal election was coming up and I was planning to write a bunch of stories about the candidates and the campaign.

I proceeded to pound out my column, at a leisurely typing rate of approximately eight words per minute. I then submitted it.

The editor rejected the column.

The reason cited was unfair publicity for one of the municipal candidates.

As many of you may recall, Ron Wallace was the owner/editor of The Auroran for a long number of years, and back in 2006 he happened to be a current member of Aurora Town Council. He was not seeking re-election that fall. And, because of his dual roles, he was particular sensitive to any charges of media favoritism.

Here is what you did not see in my original column in 2006. The first part of the column starts off innocently enough.

"The candidates are coming! The candidates are coming!

"It is approaching that time again, as the children get ready to return to school, the daylight gets shorter and the nights get cooler, that the municipal candidates start to come out from their summer hibernation.

"At last count there were three official candidates for mayor – including the incumbent. And nine council candidates have confirmed that they are running; all of them political newcomers. Potential candidates have until September 29 to declare their intentions and it is expected that at least a few of the incumbent councillors will seek office again.

"As we move past the Labour Day long weekend, we should expect these folks to be out in full force, with upwards of possibly twenty candidates seeking the eight council seats.

"I have been checking my mailbox every day anxiously awaiting the first campaign pamphlet and I have also been waiting patiently for the first municipal candidate to come to my door. (Yes, I know, I should get a life. I also have had enough driveway paving company representatives visit my front door these past few weeks thank you!)

"We do have a winner.

"Meet candidate X."

The column then goes on to describe the pamphlet that I found in my mailbox and the results of a subsequent phone interview that I had with candidate X.

This is the e-mail from the editor rejecting my column:

"Hope you had a good holiday.

"Unless you plan to write a similar column about everyone who is running in the municipal election, I won't allow this one.

And, regardless, I wouldn't allow it to appear until nominations are closed, and by then there won't be enough weeks to cover them all…because I agree with you, there will probably be about twenty candidates for council alone…not to mention the mayor's race."

I responded with my own e-mail – outlining the reasons why the column should be run. Included among my reasons was that "this column would be published over two months prior to the actual election taking place, so I would think any publicity value would be lost by then."

In addition to my response I also sent the editor a revised version of the

Continued on page 18

THIS WEEK'S NEW POLL

Are you happy with Council's decision regarding Library Square?

Yes No Unsure

www.theauroran.com

PREVIOUS POLL

Has the COVID-19 pandemic changed your opinion on the future Library Square redevelopment?

RESULTS TO DATE August 25, 2020	YES	NO	UNSURE
	69%	26%	5%

Christine Elliott
MPP - Newmarket-Aurora
Ontario
905-853-9889 1-800-211-1881
Christine.Elliottco@pc.ola.org
www.christineelliottmpp.ca
Help your kids keep themselves and others safe from COVID-19 when returning to school.
In-person school attendance is optional for the 2020-21 school year.

Symbol of Rainbow Crosswalk sends important message to community: leaders

From page 1

community and welcoming of all," according to Mayor Tom Mrakas.

With a price tag of $12,600, the lion's share of which was funded through an anonymous donation made to the Town of Aurora, the Rainbow Crosswalk has not been without controversy since first proposed in a motion to Council by Mayor Mrakas, but representatives from all levels of government and stakeholder organizations accentuated the positive at last week's unveiling.

"Symbols are very important and people have the opportunity to rally around symbols," said Aurora-Oak Ridges-Richmond Hill MP Leona Alleslev, who was joined at the dedication by Newmarket-Aurora MP Tony Van Bynen, Aurora-Oak Ridges-Richmond Hill MPP Michael Parsa, Mayor Mrakas, and Councillors Wendy Gaertner, Rachel Gilliland, Sandra Humfryes, Harold Kim, and Michael Thompson.

"To have this gorgeous crosswalk in the middle of Aurora where everyone can see it every day at one of the highest traffic and pedestrian places gives us that inspiration and reminds us of just how important everyone in our community is."

This was a sentiment shared by Tristan Coolman, President of Pflag York Region, who has been an active proponent of Aurora's Rainbow Crosswalk.

"Growing up, you never thought something like this was possible," said Mr. Coolman. "It is one thing to see it in Toronto and to walk through Toronto and feel affirmed there, but to see it in your own backyard is absolutely phenomenal. I think it means the world to the community. It is obviously affirming to the LGBTQ community and also, as Councillor Kim spoke to in Council a couple of weeks ago, this has meaning for a number of different communities and a number of different life experiences. Whether you see it as something that is overtly about Pride and celebrating Pride, or whether you see it otherwise, the overall message is love and acceptance and to see yourself reflected in this community."

"I think it shows there is a commitment to affirming LGBTQ lived experiences," he added, not only of the Rainbow Crosswalk itself, but the levels of government represented at the event. "Symbolism is incredibly important because, like many lived experiences that make up the community, some people can go home and still have those life-affirming lifestyles at home and some people within the queer community can't do that because they are still hiding from their family, unsure of how they are going to react when they need to protect themselves. Any time someone walks across this, they can know they are welcomed in our community."

Pictured at the Rainbow Crosswalk are, left to right, Councillors Rachel Gilliland, Sandra Humfryes, Wendy Gaertner, Mayor Tom Mrakas, and Councillors Harold Kim and Michael Thompson.

Auroran photo by Glenn Rodger

Building a "compassionate community" is one of the top goals of CAYR Community Connections, formerly the AIDS Committee of York Region, an organization which has also hailed the Rainbow Crosswalk.

This, according to Executive Director Marie Morton, is a potent symbol and one which, despite some naysayers, has been greeted as a "fantastic" initiative.

"It is the community coming together and people can assign their own positive meaning to it," said Ms. Morton. "It is beautiful, it is embracing a community that has been really marginalized and that is a great thing and where we want to be as a society. I always think it is worth saying that even though this is one small thing and some people might say it is a token or symbolic, I think it is worth taking those small steps, making the effort and, [saying] 'Okay, here's one thing and now we're going to do something else.' We just keep building that momentum and even small, symbolic things are worth the effort."

Following the ceremony, Mayor Mrakas issued a statement reiterating why he brought the motion forward in the first place, noting the intent of the Rainbow Crosswalk is to "provide a permanent symbol" of the Town's "commitment to diversity and inclusiveness."

"The Town of Aurora is a community that embodies diversity and inclusiveness and is committed to the Inclusion Charter initiatives of creating a sense of belonging in the community and reducing hate crimes," he said. "The Town is focused on creating an environment where everyone is equal, and the approved Rainbow [Crosswalk] shows Council's support for the LGBTQ+ community. Aurora supports living in a harmonious, cohesive environment where we all have the utmost respect and honour for each other."

And this is a great example for the wider community as well, noted MP Van Bynen.

"It is great to have reminders like this to talk about how we, as human beings, should be inclusive, should be embracing, and rejoice in our differences," he said. "I think the entire community should think about how we respect that people are different, should think about how everyone contributes to our society. It is a great reminder that we live in a world of beautiful differences."

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Rainbow Crosswalk vandalized within 24 hours: Police

Photo courtesy of York Regional Police

Arrest made after spray paint incident, Police seek info on driver

By Brock Weir

It took less than 24 hours for Aurora's newly inaugurated Rainbow Crosswalk to be vandalized and now York Regional Police are seeking the public's help in identifying the culprit.

"On Friday, August 21, York Regional Police received a report from staff with the Town of Aurora regarding a suspected hate crime incident in the Town of Aurora following the unveiling of a new rainbow crosswalk located at Yonge Street and Wellington," said Constable Laura Nicolle on Friday. "Officers learned that just before midnight on Thursday, August 20, a pick-up truck drove over the crosswalk and left black tire skid marks over the rainbow area, then returned a short time later and left some more. Investigators believe that the marks were done intentionally and this is being investigated as a hate-motivated incident."

Police describe the pick-up truck as light-coloured.

"Investigators are asking any witnesses, anyone with information, or anyone with dashcam or video surveillance footage in that area to please come forward. York Regional Police does not tolerate hate crime in any form. Those who victimize individuals based on race, national or ethnic origin, colour, religion, age, gender, sexual orientation, gender identity, or mental or physical disability will be prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law."

Police released footage from nearby cameras to help identify the driver.

A second case of vandalism, this time in the early hours of Saturday morning, has resulted in an arrest.

57-year-old Aurora resident Roy Zinn is facing a charge of mischief after an officer patrolling the area of Yonge and Wellington "spotted a man using black spray paint to damage a Pride rainbow crosswalk."

"The man was placed under arrest and has been charged," said Sergeant Andy Pattenden.

The charges have not been proven.

"In the last 48 hours since its installation, the crosswalk was already hit with two acts of vandalism," said Tristan Coolman, President of Pflag York Region, in a statement. "There will always be hate in every community big and small, but these acts of hate are just an example of the hate that is woven through LGBTQ2 history and our daily lived experiences. These acts only continue to showcase to Aurora and surrounding communities that there are those who wish to obscure lived-experiences different from their own. It is a type of hate all marginalized groups like Black, Indigenous, Women, Muslim, Jewish and other communities continue to face that is both cultural in our behaviours and systemic in our institutions.

"Those who continue act on their hate fail to realize our resolve is much stronger. Marginalized groups like LGBTQ2 folks and their loved ones are more resilient than they think. We have faced a long history of hate and discrimination carried on the shoulders of current and future generations. Every day we live with that weight and every June we carry on top of it our message of Pride. Anyone who thought a little vandalism can shake our resolve clearly don't know us very well."

Anyone with information can contact the YRP's #1 District Criminal Investigations Bureau at 1-866-876-5423, x101, Crime Stoppers at 1-800-222-TIPS, or leave an anonymous tip online at 1800222tips.com.

"It is disappointing that someone felt that doing a burnout on the newly installed rainbow crosswalk was a good idea," said Mayor Tom Mrakas on Friday afternoon. "First off, I am pleased staff have removed the marks. This is the benefit of the thermal plastic material used – it can be cleaned immediately. Thank you to staff for swiftly removing the marks."

Movies in the Park returns for second drive-in just in time for the long weekend

By Brock Weir

Some younger members of the audience didn't know just what to make of Aurora's first drive-in movie experience last month but their eyes widened in delight as the giant screen came to life and the movie came through their respective car radios.

This was something that made the first go-round in July all worthwhile for Shelley Ware, Special Events Coordinator for the Town of Aurora, and will make things twice as nice for Aurora's second Drive-In Movie next Friday, September 24 at the Stronach Aurora Recreation Complex, featuring… well, you'll have to go to aurora.ca/moviesinthepark to find out which modern-day classic will grace the screen.

Registration for this movie experience will open this Friday, August 28, at 6 a.m. at aurora.ca/eplay with one registration per vehicle as per health and safety guidelines handed down by the Province.

"Given the importance of history in Aurora, this movie depicts that importance and how it piques your curiosity," teases Ms. Ware of the motion picture. "If we go beyond the linear experience of watching the movie, I think it will help us to reflect on our history and also our present. The two are always connected and one can't be without the other. The nature of this movie kind of creates a pathway to getting the younger generation excited about looking into where our country and history comes from and how we can curate the kind of future we want."

While showtime is set to begin at 8.15 p.m., movie-goers are asked to arrive between 7 and 7.45 p.m. The drive-in experience will begin immediately upon arrival with activity sheets specially created to keep kids' minds active as they wait for the screen to flicker.

At traditional Movies in the Park events, a roster of free and interactive themed activities are the order of the day. But this is anything but a traditional year; re-thinking tradition is essential.

"The custom-made activity sheets are themed to the movie and we've tied a bit of Aurora into it," says Ms. Ware. "As the kids get busy, not only will their wait times fly by, it creates another dimension to this movie experience. We have tried to stay consistent within our programming by providing meaningful activity sheets that will pique their curiosity, and the goal is that everyone will learn something new to them and stay busy. The entertainment really begins as soon as they check in with us upon arrival."

Many families didn't know exactly what to expect when Aurora held their inaugural Drive-In on July 24, featuring Cheaper by the Dozen 2, the film sequel to the Steve Martin-Bonnie Hunt comedy which was partially filmed in Aurora, but everything went very smoothly.

"We were very fortunate on July 24 to have really great weather, which we're crossing our fingers and toes that we will be fortunate once again," she says. "With Friday being the kick-off to the Labour Day weekend, we wanted to have an exciting, free activity for residents. Hopefully this will be something different."

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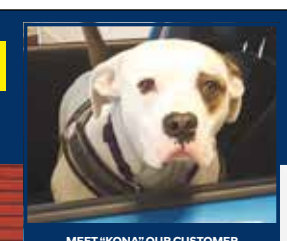

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Ultimate model shown ♦

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Ultimate model shown ♦

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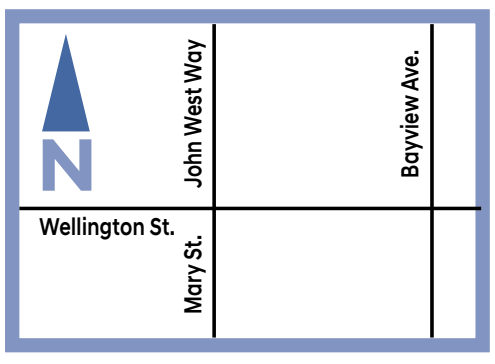

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DEEDS SPEAK – Recently retired York Regional Police Chief Eric Jolliffe was honoured by photographer Karen Merk, left, as part of her Portraits of Giving series, highlighting local individuals who have given back to the community. The Portraits of Giving series will be at the YRP's Aurora Headquarters through August to give employees a chance to see outstanding community members. At a presentation on Thursday to mark the Portraits of Giving exhibition, the photographer, accompanied by Jolliffe, presented a cheque to Lorris Herenda, Executive Director of Yellow Brick House, which will go a long way for the locally-based women's shelter. **Auroran photo by Glenn Rodger**

Company inspires community and celebrates frontline heroes – one shirt at a time

By Kinjal Dagli Shah

Ann Baiden had never imagined that her 20th year of being in business would be in the midst of a pandemic. As CEO and founder of Innovatex Solutions, a company specializing in promotional products, Baiden brainstormed ways to give back to the community even as many of her clients closed shop in the early days of the pandemic.

"We worked to design and produce shirts with both inspirational and essential messages. We committed to donating a minimum of $2,500 to the Southlake Foundation COVID-19 Fund but our goal is to sell out of our inventoried shirts and exceed the amount," said Baiden, whose team came together to plan the fundraiser. "Susie Goobie, Client Experience Creator and Sales Relationship Manager for Innovatex, spearheads our Trees of Hope butterfly keychain fundraiser in conjunction with the Healing Gardens at Southlake and she is the one who suggested the Foundation's COVID-19 Fund in support of front line workers."

The mother-of-two realized that her company specialized in something that could be put to good use to spread the message of hope and support.

"As promotional product distributors, we are aware of the recognition our products can garner with the correct messaging. We felt these shirts would be like walking billboards that could bring our community together. Inspired by the front line workers at Southlake Regional Health Centre, Innovatex began selling t-shirts and hoodies, designed with phrases like, 'Together We Got This', 'Apart But Together', 'If you can read this you are closer than 2 metres', and a tribute shirt to nurses and doctors reading: 'Commitment, Sacrifice & Courage.'"

Baiden and her husband were both born at Southlake Regional Health Centre, then known as York County Hospital. Like many other parents, Baiden began working from home while juggling homeschooling when the closures were announced in March. "With many of our factories closed, it was challenging to do business in the early days of COVID-19, but we managed to service our clients and maintain our business standards of prompt and detailed service and delivery," said the mother of two. "We are very fortunate at Innovatex to have an incredible team that works together and supports each other. We hosted regular zoom meetings and added fitness challenges to keep us motivated and engaged."

The support for her company's fundraiser kept her going, too. "The community has been incredibly supportive and we love receiving their notes and photos," said Baiden, who learned to drive the bobcat to ship some skids. "You do what you have to do to ensure it all gets done, right?"

From seeing photos of entire families wearing their t-shirts to having their story shared on Breakfast Television, Baiden's fundraiser has received incredible support. "We have sent shirts from coast to coast across Canada and received photos and notes from front line workers saying how much they love their shirts. Another favourite is a note from a parent who said their teenager wouldn't stop wearing it, it was his new favourite shirt."

Stephen Ralls, a local customer who ordered the t-shirts, was impressed with their efficiency. He wrote to them in an email, "Having worked in technologies and sales, I have never seen a faster delivery from an online order in my life. I ordered, had dinner, went into town for some supplies and the shirts were here when I got home. Thank you for getting behind Southlake with this fundraiser, I have family that work there, it means so much to me. I can't say enough about your support."

The pandemic may be far from over but as Baiden pointed out, "we used this time to better ourselves."

To support the fundraiser and order t-shirts, visit www.innovatex.ca/fundraiser

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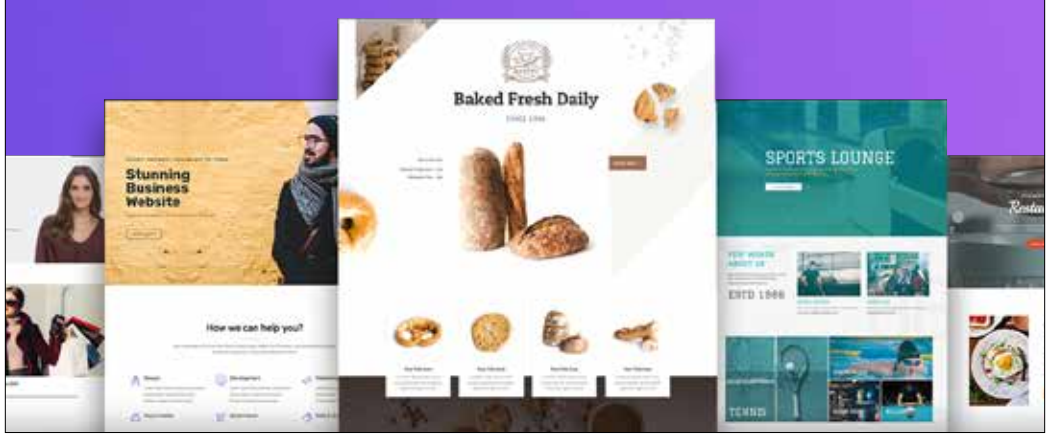

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The 2019-2020 Audited Financial Statements and year-end reports will be presented, along with a look into the future. Chamber members will have the opportunity to virtually meet the 2020–2021 Board of Directors.
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Getting Things Done

Mayor Tom Mrakas

With the culmination of years of planning and preparation, Council is taking the final step to approve the construction tender and ground-breaking on the historic Library Square project.

This is a significant investment in our community and residents have some tough, important questions about the project.

So, let's answer the questions and correct any misinformation.

How long have we been planning Library Square?

Municipal Councils have been discussing the revitalization of our downtown core for 40 years. In 1979, Council held a special meeting to discuss the future of Town-owned properties, especially Church Street School.

In 2001, the first significant step to create Library Square was taken when the Town purchased seven properties to build the Library and started the renovation of Church Street School.

Phase 2 of Library Square began in 2005 when the Town sold Aurora Hydro and the funds generated by the sale were designated for investment back into the Town.

In 2006, the new Seniors' Centre was opened, so we could repurpose the land from both the old Library and Seniors' Centre.

Since then we have had 15 years of discussion, debate, public consultation and expensive consultant's reports. 15 years with no improvement to our downtown to support struggling local businesses. 15 years of spending time and money with nothing to show for the tax dollars spent – but bills and empty storefronts.

Further delay will only lead to further decay.

As we recover from a global pandemic, is this the right time to invest $51 million on new infrastructure?

Yes, our local economy needs investment more than ever. With local businesses experiencing financial hardship, doing nothing does nothing to help our local businesses.

From Brampton to Burlington, from Markham to Newmarket, improvements in other municipalities have proven that when communities invest in their downtown core, the area sees improvement and renewal. Investing in the revitalization of our downtown, is central to the economic development of the community as a whole.

As reported in the Aurora Museum and Cultural Centre Business Plan presented at the March 21, 2019 Council meeting, "…the creation of a cultural hub in Aurora's downtown will act as a catalyst for redevelopment which will provide spin off benefits to local business along Yonge Street."

It is also why the Federal and Provincial Governments are investing $1 billion in infrastructure projects, from recreation centres to cultural centres, roads, bridges and housing — because that is how you stimulate economic recovery.

Investment inspires investment. Pausing doesn't stimulate the economy – it risks stagnating it.

What are we spending 51 million on?

The project breaks down roughly as follows:

- $27M for the Church Street School addition, a 32,000 Sq. ft. multi purpose built facility
- $8M for an Outdoor Square and Parking
- $7.5M for enhancements and expansion to the existing Library Building
- $4.5M for an enclosed pedestrian bridge linking the two facilities
- $5M Contingency fund, a standard process to have 10% set aside for unforeseen issues that come up during construction.

If we do them all separately it will be less efficient, take more time overall and be more costly.

By combining them we have created synergies and efficiencies that will save the Town time and money.

How are we paying for this project?

Funds for this $51.9 million project will come from a combination of sources. $24.3M from the Hydro Reserve Fund. $20.1M from Development Charges/Reserve Funds and the balance of $7.5M from a 20-year debenture.

What will the impact be on our taxes?

As part of our long-term financial planning, the Town works on the budgeting principle of inflation plus 1.0%. This anticipates the need for increased access to services to support new residents moving into Town as well as maintain and repair existing infrastructure. The construction of Library Square will not impact this planning principle. This long-term planning is also how we have been able to keep tax increases near 3.0% and avoid a significant increase in any single year as new services launch.

How will this help revitalize our downtown core?

Building on the investments of the Library, The Armoury and Town Park, Library Square creates a destination for people to gather based on programming by the Town and our partners. This will bring people downtown more frequently and will help generate an environment for stores and restaurants to thrive.

We need to provide spaces in our Town that will provide a reason for our residents to continue to shop locally as opposed to going to neighbouring communities for their leisure and shopping.

Additionally, experiences in other communities make a strong financial case for investing in our downtown. Successful downtown revitalizations have triggered $10 to $15 of private investment for every $1 of public investment. So, in our case, our $51 million investment could ultimately generate over $500 million of private investment in Aurora in the years to come. These investments create ongoing benefits for a thriving local economy and the ability to generate higher tax revenues.

How will the extra space be used? What type of programming can we expect in the new facility?

Library Square will have a complex of larger multi-use spaces and break-out rooms to provide businesses and community organizations a variety of options to hold their programs and annual events. Amenities include:

- Outdoor Public Square: movies, concerts, ice skating, splash pad, space for public gathering, etc.
- Café and catering kitchen
- Multi-use performance venue with versatile seating: Theatre, Conferences, Workshops, Banquets, Fairs/Markets
- Visual arts studio divisible to suit different uses
- Dance studio
- Environmentally controlled museum storage
- Multi-use programming space at Library

What about parking? is there appropriate Accessibility Parking?

The downtown core parking study identified over 400 parking spots within the same equivalent space as the Walmart plaza. This ensures visitors can enjoy the magic of Library Square while creating a walkable, pedestrian friendly, downtown core. Additionally, there will be an improvement in accessible parking that exceeds the legislated requirements.

What are Reserve Funds? Can this money be used for something else?

No, Reserve Funds are special savings accounts which should not be used other than for the specific purpose they were created for – such as Parkland, Facility Repair & Replacement, Library, etc. They should not be used to reduce operating costs and the resultant tax rate.

As part of the Town's long-term planning, each year a percentage of our tax revenue is transferred to Reserve Funds to pay for future infrastructure needs. This is comparable to putting money into a home repair account each year so you have enough to replace your roof or purchase a new fridge when it needs replacement. It's prudent financial management. However, unlike your home repair account, Reserve Funds should only be used for the purpose they were created.

Similarly, Development Charges can only be used for infrastructure projects like roads, parkland acquisition, and development of community amenities like pools, arenas and libraries.

Simply put, none of these designated funds would ever be used towards our yearly operating budget. Contributions to our Reserve Funds have been part of our long-term planning for many years, so building Library Square today versus in the future using these funds has no impact on any future tax rates. So, suggestions that pausing Library Square would reduce taxes is either uninformed or purposely misleading.

Why are we borrowing money when recovery from this pandemic is uncertain?

The Town has enough money in our reserves (i.e. savings account) to pay for the project in full. However, we currently earn 3.0 – 3.5% interest on our Reserve Funds. So, it's common sense to take a low interest line of credit at 0.65% or a debenture at 1.85% from the Province to keep our reserves locked in earning a higher rate of interest. Utilizing this fiscal strategy, the Town could realize over $1 million in additional investment income. With the completion of the planned Library Square development, the Town will still have approximately $50 million in reserves. A positive financial position that is the envy of many Municipalities.

Wouldn't it be more prudent to delay?

Year after year, people have said; "let's go slow, let's get more information, the time is not right to spend tax dollars." However, since then, construction costs have risen each year and we have not enjoyed the benefit of the facility for use or the positive impact on our downtown core to support business.

The studies are done, and we have a responsible funding plan that does not impact future tax rates.

Equally important, we had a very competitive tendering process because many companies are seeking projects to keep their people employed, so we received very cost-effective pricing and we are generating jobs.

What are the downsides of delaying?

There are 4 key downsides of delaying this project.

1. Downtown needs our support now. The longer we delay, the longer before this critical element of our downtown revitalization plan can have a positive impact on our local economy
2. Our community partners need programming space now
3. Construction costs invariably rise each year. Delays today mean the project will cost more later
4. Interest rates are currently low. As the economy improves, interest rates will increase
5. There has never been a better time to invest in our community!

I am proud of the work the previous Council started and this Council will finish by taking the final historic next step to make the long-term vision for our downtown core a reality; a practical, productive step forward to build a stronger community with a vibrant downtown core and a thriving local economy.

As the former Mayor Dick Illingworth said in 2005, "Round and Round on Library Square." After 15 years, it's time we get off the merry go round and get things done — and done right.

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"We're guardians, not warriors" – Deputy Chief Crawford prepares to hang up his badge

By Brock Weir

Police are sometimes painted with the broad brush of having a "warrior mentality," but that doesn't reflect the experience of York Region Deputy Chief Andre Crawford.

Crawford, a long-time Aurora resident, is set to hang up his badge on September 29, 34 years to the day after first entering policing after a career in banking.

Over that time, he has seen myriad changes at the York Regional Police, but one thing has remained steadfast: his philosophy that police are here to be "guardians of the people."

"We're often viewed as warriors and policing has a long tradition of the warrior mentality," says Crawford. "We're guardians, we're not warriors. We're specifically looking after our community, especially here in York Region. It is not about the bad guy, it is about 99 per cent of the people who are working hard and doing their best. They are the ones we are here to serve, protect and look after.

"There is the misconception that we run around in our pretty cars, lights flashing, arresting people, when it is really about making sure people are safe and doing what we can to engage with people." Community engagement has been an important part of his long career in the force, especially fostering connections with young people. For him, engagement means building relationships and that is just what he set out to do when he looked at a career change more than three decades ago.

Crawford wasn't one of those young boys who grew up with dreams of being a police officer. After graduating from university, he worked at the Royal Bank for six years before he began looking for something different.

A cousin working with the Toronto Police Service suggested a move to the uniform and Crawford decided to apply – just in time for Toronto to impose a hiring freeze in the middle of his application process.

Within months, however, opportunities cropped up in York Region, a place at the time was viewed as "all country" for the then 28-year-old Willowdale native.

"I liked the way my cousin sold policing to me: you were helping the community, you got to patrol around and it sounded like another team," he says. "I was fortunate to join with York. I look back now and think, what if I got onto Toronto with 5,000 members? Where would I have ended up?

"Life is a strange thing. It points you in different directions and you take the opportunities that come to you. I ended up in York never imagining I would go up the ranks to Deputy Chief, but things happen and that is what it is all about."

Before he rose up the ranks, Crawford was on the frontlines, assigned to the YRP's sexual assault unit.

It is here where he experienced what he describes as his most rewarding experience on the force.

Assigned to a sexual assault case where the victim was a young woman, Crawford and his partner received a tip and, with that, they were able to break the case.

It is not the fact the perpetrator was arrested and served jail time that he looks back on, but the impact cracking the case had on the young woman.

"I am a big believer in victim advocacy because we're doing it for the victims and, in the big criminal justice system of ours, a lot of times the victim gets forgotten and it is the bad guy [who] is in focus," he says. "I always try to remember that the victim is the most important person in anything that happens. I will always remember when we got him… and I was able to tell her personally to her face that we got the guy. It gives me shivers just talking about it [remembering] the relief on her face and the tears welling up in her eyes. It is just the sense that something had been done and I will never forget that until the day I die. She was just so relieved.

York Regional Police Deputy Chief Andre Crawford retires next month after more than 30 years on the Force.

Contributed photo

"For me, that is what it is all about. That is the case I will remember forever not because we got the bad guy, but because we looked after the victim."

Outside of policing, Andre Crawford is an active member of the community. Although he describes himself as "not overly religious," church life has been a "big part" of his life as an Aurora resident.

An active member of Our Lady of Grace Catholic Church, he serves as both a eucharistic minister as well as a member of the Parish Council. He is also a long-time volunteer with the Aurora Film Circuit, reflecting his passion for film.

"I don't live and breathe policing," he says. "I like to do other things as well, so the Film Circuit is a nice outlet and a nice way to get involved."

With little over a month left in his policing career, Crawford says he is looking forward to what the next chapter will bring. He is spending the next few weeks tying up loose ends and working with incoming deputies to make sure everyone is up to speed for a seamless transition.

When asked what advice he plans on giving to his successor, he says the most important thing is to "have an open mind and listen to what people say."

"People have a voice and we especially in law enforcement and the police world, we can't close our minds and think that we know it all and we know exactly how best to do things," he says. "We need to listen to people. People have a voice, people have opinions. Their opinions can make us better. We should always strive to be better."

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Vol. 20 No. 45 905-727-3300 TheAuroran.com FREE Week of August 27, 2020 CMCA AUDITED

Nine Stripes come back to earn first point in the Island Games

By Robert Belardi

The Canadian Premier League never thought their second season as a professional entity would be held in a hub city.

Held at the University of Prince Edward Island's (UPEI) artificial turf field in Charlottetown, its 35-match tournament began on August 13 between Forge FC and Cavalry FC.

Already dubbed a unique tournament by York9 FC head coach Jimmy Brennan, the League's presser prior to the first official kick-off informed fans, players and media of a creative beginning to the games.

"The Mi'Kmaq Community blessed land for the commencement of the Canadian Premier League Island Games in Charlottetown, Prince Edward Island. Blessing and Ceremony were performed by the first Mi'Kmaq Poet Laureate of PEI, Julie Pellissier Lush and The Mi'Kmaq Heritage Actors, a group established in 2011 and made up of Indigenous youth," said the League.

They also mentioned that every team will honour Black Lives Matter before every match, making a statement at the centre of the pitch, where Black Lives Matter is written.

Forge and Cavalry tied their match 2-2 on the Friday and it was time for the Nine Stripes head coach Jimmy Brennan to address the media before his club's heavy-weight tilt last Saturday against newcomers to the league; Atletico Ottawa.

Brennan said everyone is in the same boat. Fitness levels are as good as they can be, but it will all be about making the right adjustments at the right time and bringing in the right guys off of the bench.

He also said the bond with the group is becoming stronger. Seeing each other every day and having access to ping pong tables and television in the hotel has given all the players enjoyment in a very restrictive bubble.

The Nine Stripes began without Christopher Manella, captain Manuel Aparicio and Michael Petrasso due to injuries. One of the favourites of the tournament, already down three men,

Central defender Luca Gasparotto wore the captain's armband.

With Nigel Reed and former Canadian International Craig Forrest on the commentary for CBC in this game, this tilt was off to a slow and scrappy start.

New signing from Spain, Alvaro Rivero, rifled a strike directly at goalkeeper Nacho Zabal. Joseph Di Chiara threatened the opposition in the 23rd minute with a low shot that trickled past the post and passed a trailing Gabriel Vasconcelos who couldn't tuck it in.

Towards the end of the first half, it was Atletico Ottawa that began to control the tempo of the game.

Fullback Vashon Neufville sprinted past Ryan Telfer on the left-hand side of the box and his low-cross into the 18-yeard area found Mohamed Kourouma who tucked the ball into the back of the net for the first goal for Ottawa's new franchise.

The club's second goal didn't take long. One minute in the second half, Miguel Mista's men got on the board again. Francisco Acuna was sent in behind the defence from an over-the-top pass and fed the ball across to Malcolm Shaw for the second goal.

The celebrations didn't last long, however, as Neufville was given a second yellow card after a collision with Di Chiara and Ottawa went down to 10-men.

When Brennan said there will come a time to adjust and to decide as a gaffer, this was the moment.

His triple substitution following the red card saw 16-year-old forward Lowell Wright, 19-year-old Max Ferrari and Japanese international Wataru Murofushi come on and make an instant impact.

Just over seven minutes of being on the pitch, Ferrari made a surging run down the right flank and set up Wright for the easy tap in to bring the game back into arm's reach.

The Brampton native became the youngest CPL goal scorer at 16 years, 11 months and 26 days and said it meant a lot to be the first one to score for the club this year.

"It means a lot. First, I got to give thanks to God for blessing me to be able to do that and I got to give thanks to the gaf Jim and Stalteri for trusting me," Wright said after the game.

Over two minutes, Y9 was awarded a penalty and Joseph Di Chiara tied the game up from 12 yards out.

The match ended 2-2 with York9 coming close to completing a comeback, having taken 11 shots in the second half and holding 60.1 per cent possession.

"I was disappointed going into half time conceding in the 47th minute," said Brennan in the post-game press conference.

"It was a terrible goal for us to concede. We had a good conversation at half time. Said what we needed to work on and we came out in the second half flat footed. Made those changes right away brought on the young boys to give us some life and changed our formation as well."

Y9 began the match in a 4-4-2 diamond formation and transitioned into a 4-3-3.

Brennan acknowledged this is the first competitive match, and, at times, there were some moments where the club did the right things. It was a scrappy first half and it took time for the guys to get into rhythm, and Brennan felt that the team did create chances at some points in that game.

The gaffer began a lot of his experienced players on the squad, before bringing in some of the young players. He says his young players proved a point.

"We told them, go out there, go express yourself, go play your football and enjoy it. They did today and then they proved a point and more or less, showed us they can play. They can compete in this league."

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Aurorapalooza strikes just the right note for Canadian Mental Health Association

By Brock Weir

Planning a music festival in the midst of a global pandemic is a tall order for even the most seasoned event producers, but 23-year-old Aurora resident Joel Gouveia pulled off a sold-out show in less than three weeks, one which went a long way to giving back to the local community.

Mr. Gouveia, a budding music industry professional, recently welcomed 100 music lovers to Town Park – and tens of thousands of streaming music fans from all over the world – for Aurorapalooza, the first of what is hoped to be an annual event showcasing local musicians, benefiting the Canadian Mental Health Association.

A self-described "concert junkie" who attends up to 20 live music events each year, Mr. Gouveia says he was "devastated" when countless concerts were scuttled due to COVID-19. But, as soon as York Region entered Stage 3 of the Province's plan to re-open Ontario, he saw an opportunity and approached the Town to examine the possibilities.

"We were allowed 100 people in one spot and live concerts were technically legal, so I thought I could just do it myself; I knew a bunch of local bands and I knew the space at Town Park was perfect because they already had a stage, so I put my entrepreneurial cap on and just did it myself instead of waiting for it to happen," he says, noting an added bonus was the Town had recently moved forward with its plan for a socially-distant Concerts in the Park series, so social "bubbles" were already marked on the lawn in front of the Town Park bandshell.

"That made my life a lot easier," he says with a laugh.

The next step was booking the music and, drawing on his contacts, he assembled Yellow Magnolia (Evin Jennings, Jake Allen, Keith Jarvis, and Owen Jennings), The Beresfords (Brendan Beresford, Shannon Beresford, Graham Unsted, and Carlos Aguilera), and Ed Jackson & His Band (Jackson, Manny De Grandis and Robin Joly).

"I knew they were all super-talented, so I figured it would be the perfect combination to bring everyone from Aurora in," says Gouveia. "They were the perfect combo. I have known all three acts personally for a long time, so it made my life really easy. I wasn't dealing with any strangers or booking agents, so it was all personal."

And the line-up was potent. The 100 tickets, the maximum allowed under present emergency restrictions, sold out in just a couple of hours, and each ticketholder not only had a chance to enjoy live music, but support a worthy organization at the same time.

AURORAPALOOZA – Volunteers Anton Lewis, Micheal Campea, Gill Redpath, Aaron Knights, Anya De La Haye, Mac Thomas, and Austin Kiddey kept the party going – and posed with a banner created by artist Lxyxt. INSET: Event director Joel Gouveia is congratulated by Mayor Tom Mrakas.

Auroran photos by Glenn Rodger

"We wanted to raise as much money as possible for the Canadian Mental Health Association," he explained, adding that each ticket purchaser had the option to donate to the cause at the point of purchase or make further donations to a Go Fund Me campaign.

"We're trying to break the stigma. Now, more than ever, it is really important and it is something that effects every one of us. Whether you have a mental illness or not, I am sure everyone knows someone who does. It is something I really care about.

"With quarantine and everything that happened in March, it is a really hard on the mental health of people if we're not allowed to see our friends and our families as much and go do fun things. It is something I really care about and I thought this was the perfect time to tackle it and give back as much as I can because it has been a really crappy time over the last few months. Even if you don't actually have a mental illness, I think it has been tough on mental health overall."

With the first sell-out Aurorapalooza in the books, Mr. Gouveia is looking forward to building on this year's success for year two – and next time with a bit more time to plan.

"I want to plan it months ahead of time," he says. "The person I was working with at the Town said, 'Just so you know, things don't usually happen this fast. Let us know five or six months ahead of time,' so I was doing this on top of my day job, scrambling around for three weeks, working 16-hour days, just to put this together. Being able to put this together in three weeks was amazing."

Concerts in the Park welcomes homegrown talent

Aurora's popular Concerts in the Park summer series continued last Wednesday, April 19, with the homegrown country-rock band Johnson's Creek. (Top) Members Glenn Code, Michael Lanteigne and Mike Crombez entertain the socially distant crowd. (Middle Left) Marcella and baby Charlotte were residents able to secure two of the the 100 spaces at Town Park. (Middle Right) Alessia Bozzo, Aurora's 2020 Teen Idol, begins the musical program. (Bottom) The band, including drummer Jake Adams, are pictured with Mayor Tom Mrakas at the bandshell. The Concerts in the Park series concludes next Wednesday, September 2, with Classic Lightfoot Live (See Page 18). For more on the series, including how to reserve your spot, visit aurora.ca/summerconcerts.

Auroran photos by Glenn Rodger

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The Auroran at 20: Trinity Anglican Church is important part of Aurora's cultural core

By Brock Weir

Library Square has received a significant amount of focus in recent weeks as the Town looks to take another step on the path towards downtown revitalization.

Recent Councils have zeroed in on the importance of what has become known as Aurora's "Cultural Precinct" to the overall vision of the historic downtown and, in our first year of publication, an integral part of that precinct was ready to open its doors.

The May 29, 2001 edition of The Auroran was a first for the paper, featuring a special pull-out section to commemorate the opening of the newly-expanded Trinity Anglican Church.

It was a momentous occasion for the Trinity community and, in time, it would prove to be an important milestone for the wider community as well.

Over the last 20 years, Trinity has become an important community hub for numerous programs and services, including Welcoming Arms, The ABLE Network, the Clothes Closet and, following a devastating fire in April 2014, welcomed the Aurora United Church under their Victoria and Church roof.

THE TOP STORY

The impending visit of then-premier Mike Harris to the upcoming Aurora Street Sale, as the Aurora Chamber Street Festival was then known, might have taken the top banner, but Trinity's re-opening is what ultimately drew the eye, along with the headline "The waiting is over."

The 400 seats will be filled Sunday morning as Aurora's brand-new Trinity Anglican Church addition opens to its parishioners for the first time.

For the past 13 months, the 700 families of the church have been holding worship services at St. Andrew's College.

Now, the $3.8 million project is about to become a reality, as the 117-year-old building puts on a new face and multiplies the available usage area.

A total of 17,000 square feet of space has been added to the original 2,700 square foot building.

And, as far as the congregation is concerned, it's time to let the celebrations begin.

As noted on the front page, the dedication was set to take place Wednesday, June 6, 2001 with a special musical program. An ecumenical service was followed the following evening, involving music from Our Lady of Grace Catholic Church and Aurora United Church, alongside Trinity talents.

Festivities continued June 9, with guided tours of the new building, a "Stewardship Fair" featuring displays from church groups, and a full day-long music program:

The new building includes a Christian education centre, modern nursery facilities, church hall and office space.

The old church building is linked to the new facility and will be used as a chapel and meeting area.

"This has been a project of tremendous scope and it required the commitment and vision of all parishioners to see it through," said Rev. Canon Philip Poole, rector of the church. Our parish is privileged to have been a part of the creation of a new church; we have a lot to be thankful for."

The renovation and restoration of Trinity has been in the planning stages for more than 10 years. Its scope and scale reflects both the social and spiritual growth of the town as a whole. Since the early 1990s, Trinity's congregation has grown to the point where it is now considered among the top 10 growing Protestant parishes in North America.

The old church, built in the late 1800s, has become a chapel for smaller worship gatherings and meetings.

Trinity Anglican has been a part of the Aurora community for more than 150 years. This is the third building on the site and is, without a doubt, the most expensive.

The first church was built for about $1,600 and the second for about $7,200.

St. Andrew's College wasn't the only site made available to the Trinity family during the construction.

Church group meetings throughout the week were given space courtesy of Aurora's Howard Johnson Hotel, while Our Lady of Grace, St. Andrew's Presbyterian and St. Paul's in Newmarket, opened their doors to provide worship space for funerals, weddings and choir practices.

"We are deeply grateful to those who have welcomed us and give us the opportunity to continue our mission as a community of faith this past year," said Rev. Poole. "This is an exciting time for our parish. We welcome everyone to be a part of our vision for the future."

TRINITY SPONSORS

Inside, the special pull-out section included an interview with the Reverend Canon Philip Poole, photographs of Trinity in transition, and a full page of local businesses welcoming Trinity home. Participating businesses included Shopper's Drug Mart, Tayson Meats, Omar's Shoes, Hartwell Thayer Financial Services Group, realtor Sean Herbinson, The Hurst Bakery, Thompson Funeral Home, Irene Robinson Interiors Co., Barth's Dry Cleaners, Biggs' Gallery and Framing Shop, Decorating Works! Interiors, and Marilyn Redvers – the late realtor who also chaired Trinity's Capital Campaign.

Aurora's then-mayor Tim Jones also offered a message on Trinity's milestone:

TIM'S PERSPECTIVE

While walking through the downtown core last week, it was hard not to look up the street and notice the wonderful addition to the Trinity Anglican Church which is almost completed.

The official re-opening ceremony is scheduled for June 6. What a tremendous addition to our Town. I admire the thought that has gone into blending the old and the new on this site as well as the consideration to the aesthetics that surround this revitalized place of worship. And not just a place of worship, but also a gathering place for numerous functions and potential opportunities.

It did not seem that long ago when Stephen Mills and Father Philip Poole appeared before Council with their vision. Given the location of the church, right in the downtown core of our Town, we all did our best to ensure that sensitivity was given to the surrounding functions of the area. Personally speaking, I am very proud of this rejuvenated facility. This is such a successful example of maintaining the historic value we try so hard to preserve while also considering the more modern applications of today's society.

It is a tribute to all the parishioners of Trinity who have believed in and supported this vision from its inception. On behalf of the members of Council, I offer congratulations to all who played a part in this wonderful reconstruction right in the heart of our Town.

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"I am definitely the black sheep in the bunch," says Gallo on Council decisions

By Brock Weir

Councillor John Gallo says he sometimes feels like "the black sheep in the bunch" when it comes to Council's decisions. It is not something he necessarily wants to hang his hat on – indeed, he says he is "disappointed" that this is the reality he sees, but, "I just don't know how else to do it."

Speaking to The Auroran ahead of Council's decision this week on tendering out the redevelopment of Library Square, he said "Some of the things are just so shocking that it is beyond me."

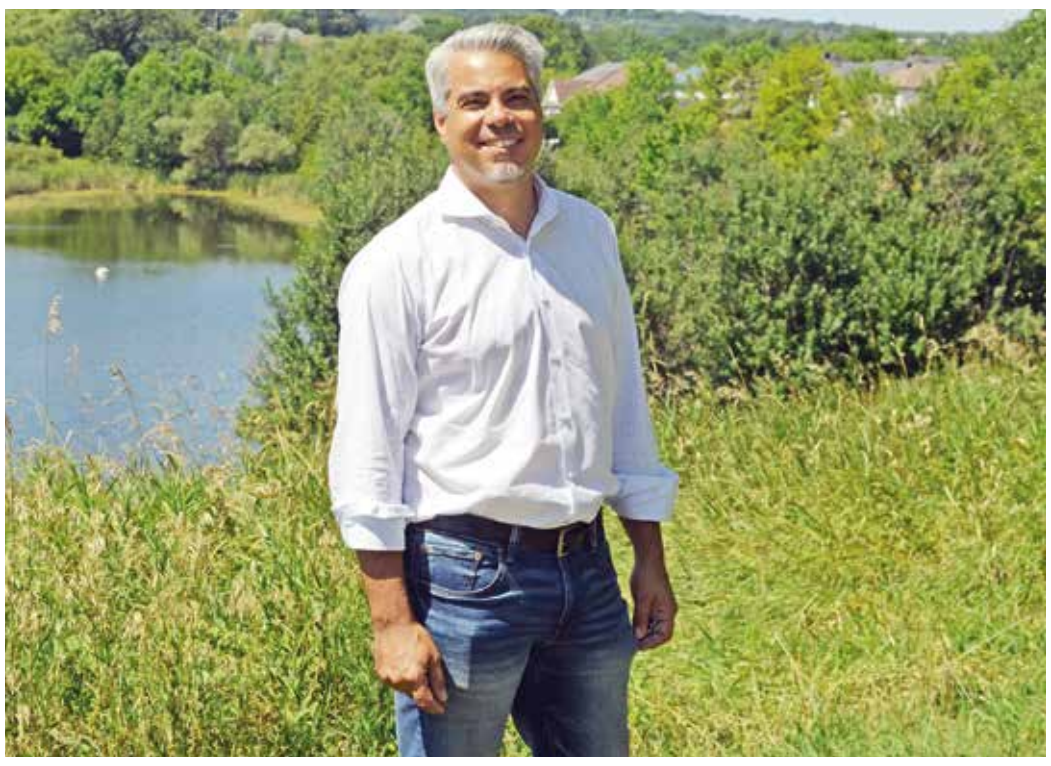
"Some things just don't sit well with me and I can't get over that," he says. "There is more happening that I am not in the loop, or at least that must be happening that I am not in the loop for some of the Council members to make the decisions they make, and I just can't explain it any other way. They just don't make sense to me."

Among the decisions that fall into this category, he says, are both Library Square and Council's $7.5 million purchase of buildings just north of the Aurora Public Library as part of that greater Library Square vision.

"I am not sure to what extent the general public is [aware] of what we're actually doing and that has always been my issue," says Councillor Gallo. "Our connection to the residents has been extremely poor and it is clear I have a different perspective on how Council should conduct business than some others."

In recent weeks, Councillor Gallo has made his position on Library Square clear. From his perspective, it is time to hit "pause" on the project due to financial uncertainty stemming from the COVID-19 pandemic.

"We're in an unprecedented time and I think some of my colleagues, unfortunately, have their heads in the sand," he says of the Town's finances, an issue he cites as one area he will be particularly focused on once Council resumes regular meetings next month. "I don't think they realize the impact this global pandemic is going to have on our finances. To me, that is a huge concern and I am trying my best to convince them, particularly the two major issues – to really reflect on it and better understand whether it is the right time or not.



Councillor John Gallo is pictured at the Aurora Community Arboretum.

Auroran photo by Brock Weir

"To me, there are significant issues that really haven't been planned out to the degree they should. At least as a sitting councillor, I am unsure [of] the impact of spending all that money [will have] on our reserves. Our financial position relies on the income from that, which goes towards some operating through reserves. We have to make that all up. There are a lot of question marks there."

The COVID-19 pandemic has thrown up "a lot of question marks" across the board, not the least of which is Council's ability to convene and engage residents, he contends.

Meeting remotely on Zoom since April, Councillor Gallo says he has "felt a bit of a disconnect with the public" in not having that in-person engagement and has looked for ways to remedy that situation. Looking at a few different options, he has increasingly focused on engagement through a series of YouTube videos re-capping that week's Council or General Committee meeting and the decisions that had been made, as well as through social media channels.

"I figured I could make a connection with residents in that way, but I am still trying to figure out how to get a two-way conversation going," he says, but he notes there are certain things about the Zoom meetings he has come to like. "[Outside of Council chambers in this setting] you can actually see people's faces and reactions to different things. I find value to get a sense of where that Council member is or where a staff member is, seeing them face to face. I didn't expect to have that."

Despite Council not being able to host meetings in chambers for most of the first half of 2020, Councillor Gallo says he is proud of some of the achievements that have been made.

An active member of the Town's Arts and Culture Roundtable, a group brought together to discuss the impacts COVID-19 might have on that particular sector, he says there was a "great exchange of information and a great depth of knowledge" that was shared around the table, and the initiatives stemming from the group "demonstrated how wonderful a community we have" and how knowledge and talent can be tapped.

As Council shifted focus to COVID-19, Councillor Gallo says some initiatives he was looking to bring forward had to be pushed to the backburner, but come this fall, these will be in focus.

Among them is a motion to allow schools to use municipally-owned parks during the school year, something that is not presently allowed.

"It just doesn't make sense to me," he says. "They are all taxpayers. Short of maybe some liability issues and teachers crossing over to public property and having kids there, I am sure we can overcome those and there is no reason why kids couldn't use Town parks during school hours."

He also plans on continuing to work with Town staff and Metrolinx on pedestrian railway crossings, building on a motion he successfully presented to Council earlier this year.

"One of the things I asked for was a status report on where we are," he says. "I think September or October is where they will be putting a report to Council."

But, in the months ahead, putting a sharp focus on the Town's finances and continuing to build connections with the public, will be a primary effort.

"Personally, I feel I am connecting more with the residents and they're hopefully listening to what I have to say," he says. "I hope that even though I realize I brought some negative energy to the Council table, I really didn't know how else to do it for them to perk up and listen. I am not suggesting I know it all, but I have some experience and I hopefully have a pretty good sense of making good decisions. I have connected with residents [and] hopefully turned a negative into a positive.

"I am just going to continue what I am doing. I really hope I am effective. I want to get back to work and do some good things for the Town, but there are some struggles before we get there."

Advertorial

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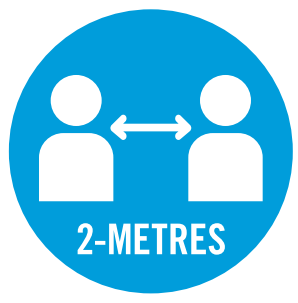

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"Decades of delay" has led to downtown decay: Mayor

From page 1

of this Council and the term before us… Council may not have always agreed on the when and the how, but we did [on] why Library Square is important."

Few individuals at Town Hall on Tuesday night questioned the importance of Library Square as a whole, but there were many stops and starts throughout the evening on whether the plan ultimately approved by Council was the right one – and at the right time.

Before the start of the meeting, nearly two dozen community members, including some past members of Council, gathered to protest the plan as presented, questioning the long-term financial impacts the project might have on the community, particularly spending reserve funds in a time of economic uncertainty stemming from COVID-19.

These concerns were echoed inside Council Chambers by Councillors Wendy Gaertner, John Gallo and Rachel Gilliland, each of whom encouraged Council to press "pause" and wait until the fall for a pending budget update.

"There is a lot of uncertainty with an investment this large," said Councillor Gilliland, contending there is additional uncertainty on how spaces like what is planned for Library Square will be used in a post-COVID world. "It is prudent to consider what any financial situation might look like as a result of COVID-19 and [in] these uncertain times I am concerned not only personally but professionally and, most importantly, as an elected official. How we socialize might look different for a rather long time.

"I am not saying shelve this. I am saying, why not buy some time? We have 120 days (until the tender bid expires). We have a report coming back to Council in October. The director has said it is no problem, we can have something to give us that visual. Why not take advantage of that time while we have it on our side?"

For Councillor Gaertner, the Library Square decision was "the most critical decision Council has ever made" and there is too much uncertainty to move forward at this time.

"The residents trust us to run the Town efficiently and to build a secure future for them," she said. "I don't think spending a thousand dollars per resident on one project represents that. In this time of COVID, this time of financial uncertainty when so many residents, businesses, are struggling, we can't take any chances. We need to be on the right side of history. Organizations, corporations, municipalities are following the path of caution. Let's do the same. Our future financial health may depend on it.

"This is not the right time, this is not the right project, [and] Council needs to say no."

Councillor Gallo agreed more time was needed to address financial and operational uncertainty. In stating his case, Councillor Gallo raised a number of procedural concerns with how things have progressed, including the use of Hydro Funds.

A resolution before Council last year, he said, stated that the final operating plan needed to come before Council before final construction on Library Square could be approved.

"The resolution says that the draft operating plan be approved and finalized prior to the approval of the construction tender," he said. "Am I living in a dream world? I clearly know what 'prior' means and we don't have that. It is very clear; it is black and white. Listen, do as you will [but] you have been put on notice that moving forward on this you are making a serious error."

Staff contended that nothing will change operationally from what is before Council with the exception of who is delivering the service, but Councillor Gallo questioned whether enough notice had been given to the public on Council's intention to use the Hydro Funds for Library Square.

He said he believed previous resolutions before Council were contingent on the success of Aurora's ultimately unsuccessful $31 million grant application to the Provincial and Federal Governments to put towards Library Square.

"It is very clear: we approved the strategies subject to the success of the grant application. It is my view that we do not have a Council resolution that is authorizing us to spend the Hydro funds. It is clear the funding strategies for Library Square, which authorize the use of the Hydro Funds, was subject to the grant application's success. We were unsuccessful and therefore a new meeting with proper notice needs to happen before we continue.

"You should be aware that there are many people out there that – I don't want to say this as some kind of a threat or something, but there is a lot of passion out there for this issue and they are well aware of what is happening. Now that they hear this, I wouldn't be surprised if some legal action is taken."

But staff and Council members alike insisted that Tuesday's resolution followed previous motions and stated their case for forging forward.

"I have heard from many residents and businesses who are just as passionate as we are about this historic project, not just in its immediate economic impact in helping the local economy recover from the pandemic, but how this investment will act as a catalyst for future economic, social and cultural growth in Aurora," said Councillor Sandra Humfryes. "This project represents sound public investment in our economy that will foster a renaissance for the downtown core.

"I have campaigned and been elected on the platform of taking meaningful action towards the revitalization of Library Square. Our downtown core has been in desperate need of significant capital investment for quite some time, but there has never been the right project or the political will to make it happen. For too long, little has been done to renew our downtown core. Despite the desperate need, the untold taxpayer dollars spent on report after report, from expensive consultant after expensive consultant, year after year, Council after Council and always the same result: 'Let's wait, let's rethink, pause, don't move ahead.' No, I think the residents have been through enough, businesses have had enough, 20 years of inaction is long enough."

For Councillor Thompson, Tuesday's decision was a vote in favour of Aurora's future.

"Library Square is very much about the future of our community," he said. "We are not only building for today but also planning for tomorrow. Do we really need this? Absolutely. Today, Aurora's population is 60,000 and we have been told by the Province through their growth plans to prepare and see our population rise to 76,000 by 2031 and 86,000 by 2041. The construction of the addition to Church Street School and the enhancements to the Library will help us meet the demands placed on our facilities, services and programs by the increase in population. Furthermore, the transformation of our parking area into a vibrant open square featuring an amphitheatre, skating, seating and other amenities will help strengthen this community and draw Aurorans from all four corners into our downtown.

"This is a long-anticipated project needed to revitalize our downtown. Downtowns are the heart of any town or city and having a healthy heart is essential to having a strong and thriving community. They serve as the engine for local economies and represent the image and character of a Town. Downtowns are unique in that they are typically the only neighbourhood that belongs to and is shared by everyone. While this may be true for many Canadian towns and cities, Aurora's downtown has struggled. We have all seen the empty storefronts and the businesses come and go. Residents and entrepreneurs and others are investing their hard-earned dollars into their businesses and our community. They are trying to make a better life for themselves and in many cases add to the community by giving back. Now it is our turn to support them by making this investment in our downtown."

Councillor Harold Kim's position in favour of Library Square was also bolstered by looking into the future.

"People said, 'Do we need a new meeting place where people can gather?' or an arts centre," he said. "We can debate that all night, but I think given the reports that we have seen over the last couple off years, we have [heard from the Library and Cultural Centre] that there is a need. Certainly we, as proxies for residents, and as Board of Directors of the Town Corporation, we have to think of the future, think of the vision for what Aurora can and would look like in the future…

"When this project is built, I hope there is some capacity so there is room to grow in this structure. That is what we, as leaders, have to consider. We're building for tomorrow. I would submit that there has been a lot of consultation through this over the last several years and I am quite confident in the financial position of the Town of Aurora and I am confident that we have the means to pay for the project."

As was Mayor Tom Mrakas, who said Council's approval is "the exciting last step in a decades-long journey to translate ideas into action and realize a shared vision" for Aurora's historic downtown core.

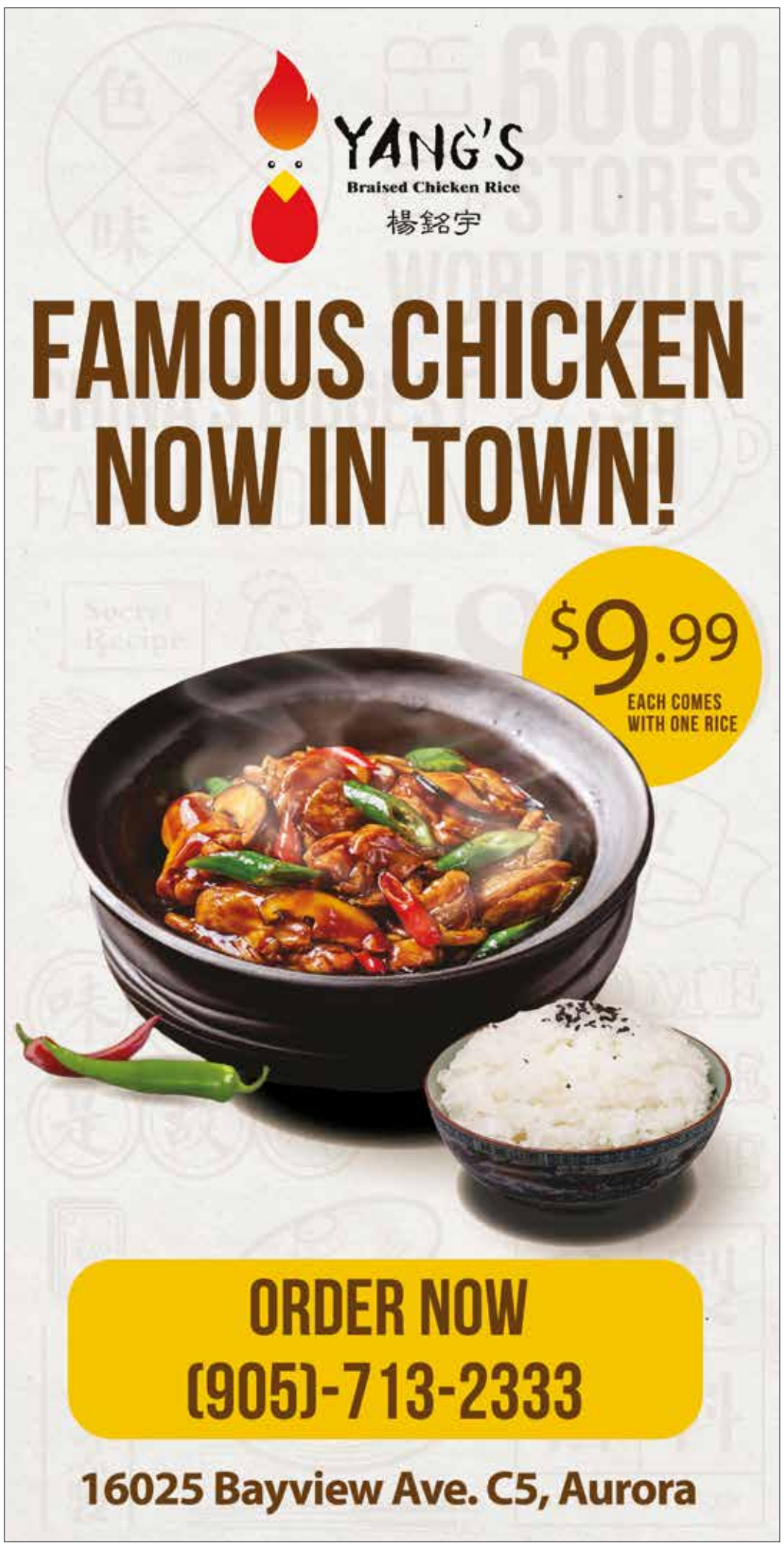
"Over the course of many years, thousands of residents, businesses and Council members have directly contributed to this shared vision and it is stronger for it," he said. "Library Square has been a hot topic for decades and most certainly at every election cycle. Every member sitting around this table has discussed in length the revitalization of our downtown core, as have the members of many Councils before us. Why? Because we all recognize its importance."

The Downtown Core, he added, is economic, social and cultural hub in the community but a lack of investment in it has resulted in a decline.

"The project is not just revitalizing our downtown core; it is a re-connection," he said. "Re-establishing that connection is the key to rebuilding a vibrant local economy. It represents a significant investment in the revitalization of our downtown core, but importantly in Aurora as a whole, so we can realize Aurora's potential to be a strong, vibrant locally-supported" economy and community. Building on the investments of the Library, the Armoury and Town Park, Library Square creates a destination for people to gather and businesses to locate and grow.

"Decades of delay has led to further decay. Our businesses and residents have made it clear they want and deserve more. We had a very competitive tendering process and received very cost-effective pricing due to many companies seeking projects to keep their people employed. Construction costs invariably rise each year. Delays today mean the project will cost more later. We cannot continue to ride the merry-go-round of indecision. The studies are done and we have a reasonable funding plan in place that recognizes our residents' tax concerns and does not impact future tax rates. As we seek to recover from the ongoing impacts of the pandemic, it is clear our local economy needs investment now more than ever. Now is not the time for inaction. There has never been a better time to make this investment in our community."

NEXT WEEK: The Library, Cultural Centre, Chamber of Commerce and members of the public state their cases.



FRONT PORCH PERSPECTIVE

From page 5

column that contained the following two paragraphs;

"Before any of the other councillor/mayoralty candidates write to the editor or e-mail me that The Auroran should not be providing free publicity for any one particular candidate by virtue of this article – please understand that this column is not an endorsement of candidate X.

"As Aurora does not have a ward system, municipal candidates are therefore free and encouraged to seek support throughout all of Aurora, and as no one knew that I was writing this column, all prospective candidates had a fair chance at being the first one to come to my door or leave something in the mailbox."

No dice. The editor was not buying either my arguments or my revisions.

The e-mail from the editor to moi:

"The reason you're writing the column in the first place is the reason for my decision.

"For the mayor to continue his column would give him unfair advantage over any challengers. That's why we stopped it and replaced it. He understood that. He'd be the first one in my office if I allowed your comments to appear.

"Publicity, as you know, good, bad or indifferent, is still publicity, and any public mention of a candidate, via column particularly, is a plus for whoever is mentioned. Candidate X gets a mention because he/she was, apparently, the first candidate to knock on your door.

"What about candidates – myself included – who hate door knocking, and depend on other methods to get elected?

"Because we (they) elect not to knock on doors, does that make us (them) any less competent?

"You can bet if I ran your comments on candidate X, every candidate would be in my office demanding similar coverage.

"You're right, we will do something closer to the election by providing space to each candidate in the paper; and The Auroran will also sponsor the Chamber of Commerce Election Fest slated for Howard Johnson's a couple of weeks before the election.

"If candidates elect not to respond, that's their problem. But The Auroran will not select a slate nor recommend who should be the mayor of the community."

I was very disappointed and puzzled at the time as to why he would not publish my contribution. In hindsight however, the editor was right in not allowing the column for the clear reasons he enunciated above.

The final paragraph of that non-column is still valid for upcoming elections:

"Please take the time to read through the literature, compare the candidates, attend the upcoming town forums and when the candidates show up at your door, treat them with respect and courtesy. But by all means ask them the tough questions – after all, it is your Town's future that is at stake."

Stephen can be contacted at stephengsomerville@yahoo.com

Homegrown Gordon Lightfoot tribute set to close Concerts season

By Brock Weir

It has been a Concerts in the Park season unlike any other, but the popular Wednesday night summer series is set to close next week with further homegrown talent.

On Wednesday, September 2, the curtain will come down on Aurora's 2020 summer concert series with Classic Lightfoot Live, Aurora resident John Stinson's tribute to the Canadian icon.

Pre-registration for the 100 free tickets available for the season finale concert will begin Friday, August 28, at aurora.ca/eplay.

Classic Lightfoot Live is set to bring to life such standards from the Canadian music songbook as If You Could Read My Mind, Canadian Railroad Trilogy, Wreck of the Edmund Fitzgerald, Early Morning Rain, and more.

Speaking to The Auroran before he performed at a 2018 fundraiser for CHATS (Community & Home Assistance to Seniors), Mr. Stinson said he first fell in love with Gordon Lightfoot's music as a teen while learning to play the guitar.

He tried to copy what he thought were Lightfoot's simple sounds, but, after discovering they were more complex than he imagined, the seeds of a passion were firmly planted.

"I loved his lyrics and unique melodies," he said. "You'd buy his latest album, listen, and read through the lyrics as the new songs came across your 2-bit record player. During college parties I would play more than drink, and was always asked to play Canadian Railroad Trilogy. As job and family took up more time and music became a cloudy memory I happened to form a duo and perform in clubs and bars as often as I could and performing pop-folk-rock. Often, I›d be asked to perform a Lightfoot tune, as they thought I sounded a bit like him.

"Moving to Aurora in 1988 and finding Red Shea living here, then taking lessons from him got me more and more excited about Gord's music. Around 2000, the duo was less important, I started to re-awaken my forgotten musical taste for Lightfoot. Hearing all the great tunes again on new CDs and iPods. I created a solo act of all Lightfoot tunes and performed them live in local clubs and bars."

The love affair will only continue at the Town Park bandshell next week.

After some initial uncertainty stemming from emergency restrictions put in place due to COVID-19, the Town forged ahead with a five-concert lineup, a series which was limited to just 100 individuals on-site with the community as a whole invited to watch a live stream of the performances through YouTube and the Town's social media channels.

For more information on the final concert, and how to stream the music online, and re-live highlights of past Concerts in the Park events, visit aurora.ca/summerconcerts.

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LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Letter compared apples and oranges on ward system: reader

When a person compares two items that are so different as to make the comparison invalid, we often describe this as comparing "apples and oranges."

That is exactly what was done in a letter entitled "No one should be surprised by Ward decision: reader", which compared the 2014 Ward Referendum Results to the 2018 Council and Mayoral Election.

This same logic had also previously been applied by the Mayor and some Councillors to justify their recent decisions to implement a ward system in the Town of Aurora.

The skewed reasoning in the letter was that, since they had personally supported the introduction of a ward system as part of their 2018 campaign platform, this somehow trumped the clear, precise 'NO' vote of the majority of residents who voted in the 2014 Ward Referendum!

The apparent attempt to compare the two events, and draw a conclusion that they have a common relationship is a perfect example of a false analogy.

The 2014 Ward Referendum was a vote by the electorate on a single political question: yes or no to wards, whereas the 2018 Elections were based on candidates campaigning on numerous issues.

There is no way of knowing if voters agreed on absolutely every issue. Residents generally evaluate the candidates' campaign platform and award votes based on the collective "message" delivered by each candidate. Therefore, to accrue votes received by each councillor and mayor during the 2018 Election and then use this to ascertain residents' opinion on introducing a ward system is farfetched and inaccurate because there's no way to know the voters' intentions for voting for a particular councillor.

In short, the letter provides no validity whatsoever to the writer's theory that the question of whether we should have wards was answered simply by way of electing those who were ultimately elected to represent us.

In my opinion, introducing a ward system will have a significant impact on the community and therefore a credible, fair and decisive outcome will only be accomplished by a further referendum, in which an entire electorate is invited to answer a single question: Yes or No to Wards.

Peter Smith
Aurora

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for delivering The Auroran through these challenging times.

MISSING BUDGIE

Escaped from Watts Meadow on August 1 and headed east to the Seaton and Henderson area. He is all yellow, no markings, and answers to "little birdie" or "Lemon". If seen or rescued, please call 416-454-7768.

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- Plan, Prepare and Execute Advertising and Marketing Material for the annual rental campaign.
- Complete all necessary paperwork involved in lease signing and payment collection for newly rented units.
- Work with all current tenants in completing necessary paperwork for renewal units

EXPECTATIONS:
- Have a positive attitude
- Willing to work hard and enjoy rewards in a team environment
- Willing to take chances and learn from your peers

DESIRED SKILLS & EXPERIENCE:
- Sales Driven
- Work well in results based environment
- Goal Oriented
- Great Personal Skills
- Some Sales Skills Preferred but would be willing to train the right candidate
- Marketing and/or Communication education would be a great fit

COMPENSATION:
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- Freelance reporting work for weekly community newspapers and special projects
- Will produce stories and bylines for the events they cover
- Will be paid on a freelance/contract basis per project/story
- Generate story ideas and follow up on news tips
- Take photographs
- Work some evenings and weekends, as required

QUALIFICATIONS:
- Diploma in journalism preferred
- Candidates should have experience working on the editorial side of the newspaper industry
- Excellent writing, editing and photography skills
- Valid driver's license and a reliable vehicle
- Reporting experience an asset
- An interest in local issues is a necessity, as the majority of the writing for this role will be local

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Let's Talk.

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