

PUBLIC FORUM

about the
Aylmer Library



Despite Aylmer Council's decision on Monday,

WE STILL WANT TO HEAR WHAT YOU HAVE TO SAY

Build new or renovate?

Rent or own?

Lower taxes? Increase services? Neither? Both?

What is the purpose of a modern library?

"I use it all the time."

"But I don't use it ever."

Downtown or the arena?

Motions passed, motions ignored

11 years, 3 councils

An OPEN INVITATION to voice your thoughts on the future of the Aylmer branch of the Elgin County Library.

Thursday, March 30 • 7 p.m. at the Old Town Hall Theatre

To allow as many perspectives as possible, speakers will be limited to five minutes. Community groups are to appoint one speaker. This event will be moderated to encourage active discussion.

• All Aylmer councillors have been invited •

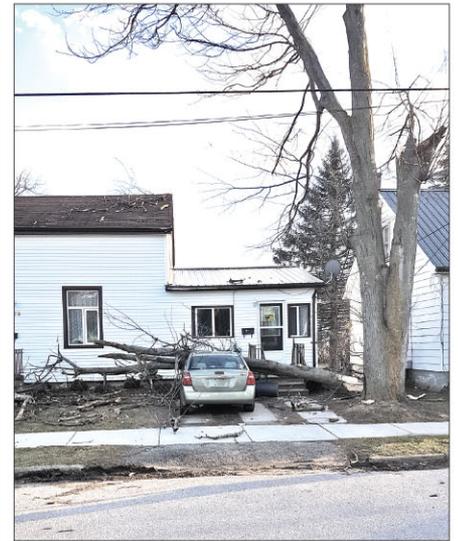
HOSTED BY

AYLMER EXPRESS

Refreshments provided



Viki LaCombe, who lives on Heritage Line just east of Richmond, took this photo of the wind damage to her home's roof on Wednesday, March 8. She returned home from work to discover the damage and picked up several shingles from around her property. The damage was repaired the next day by a neighbour. Ms. LaCombe was a little upset about the wind damage as her house was built 10 years ago and the roof came with a 30-year shingle warranty. The high winds on March 8 in the Aylmer and East Elgin area had gusts between 60 and 90 kilometres an hour. "We had quite a few calls affecting over 5,000 customers (experiencing a power outage) in the beginning," Paul Falk of the Aylmer district Hydro One office said on Thursday morning, March 9. "Last night 90 percent of the customers were restored and the remainder hopefully will be on by late today. We have had extreme damage and wires down due to the high winds and trees coming down along with a few broken (hydro) poles." (AE/contributed)



A large tree limb crashed on a car parked in a Sydenham Street East driveway Wednesday afternoon, March 8. The car was not occupied at the time. A violent wind storm that day caused damage and power outages in the area. (AE/Brett Hueston)

Health unit finishes audit in record time

Elgin St. Thomas Public Health board members on Wednesday, March 8, received the results of its 2016 annual financial audit in what amounted to record time.

Rob Foster, on behalf of auditors Graham, Scott, Enns, gave a clean bill of health to how the health unit kept its financial records last year.

Health unit managers were "very co-operative" in the audit process, he said, and he gave them "An A-plus in that regard."

Board members voted to re-appoint the accounting firm

as the health unit's auditors for this year.

"They've been a really good firm to work with," quick to answer any questions, health unit Executive Director Cynthia St. John said.

She added that next year, board members would receive audit results at the more usual time of April.

Getting the audit documents along with other year-end paperwork done in the first eight weeks of this year, along with the 2017 budget, had proven to be overly taxing, she said.

County councillors paid \$275,237 in '16

Elgin councillors received a total of \$275,237 in remuneration in 2016, including \$231,258 for county duties, \$23,690 in convention expenses and \$20,289 for membership on and expenses related to outside boards.

West Elgin Mayor Bernie Wiehle received the most last year, serving as county warden from January through November.

He received \$55,690 in pay, plus \$4,375 for expenses at three conventions.

Southwold Mayor Grant Jones, who took over as warden in December, got \$24,281 in pay and attended no conventions.

Bayham Mayor Paul Ens received \$21,508 in pay and

\$2,225 for one convention. Malahide Mayor David Mennill got \$21,675 in pay and \$2,183 for one convention.

The late Mike Wolfe, deputy mayor of Malahide, received \$21,648 in pay and \$4,389 for two conventions.

Aylmer Mayor Greg Currie got \$21,358 in pay and \$3,807 for two conventions. Central Elgin Mayor David Marr received \$21,245 in pay and \$2,997 for two conventions.

Central Elgin Deputy Mayor Sally Martyn got \$21,625 in pay and \$1,893 for one convention.

Dutton-Dunwich Mayor Cameron McWilliam received \$22,230 in pay and \$1,822 for one convention.

Quiz

TEST YOUR CANADIAN KNOWLEDGE

- QUESTION 1: What famous sculpture was depicted on the back of Canada's \$20 bill from September 2004 until November 2012?
- QUESTION 2: Andrew Bonar Law (commonly called Bonar Law) was the only Canadian ever to have held what position?
- QUESTION 3: Which province is home to North America's only tidal power plant?
- QUESTION 4: What is the name of the trophy awarded annually to Canada's top athlete?
- QUESTION 5: Which Quebec film director is behind such successful titles as *Le Déclin de l'empire américain* and *Les Invasions barbares*?
- QUESTION 6: What is Canada's oldest city?
- QUESTION 7: What is the Shuttle Remote Manipulator System better known as?
- QUESTION 8: Which Canadian athlete has won the most Lou Marsh Trophies, with four to his name?

- ART, LITERATURE AND ENTERTAINMENT
- HISTORY AND GEOGRAPHY
- SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY
- SPORTS AND LEISURE

- ANSWERS**
- 1: Spirit of Haida Gwaii, by Bill Reid
 - 2: British Prime Minister Newfoundland and Labrador (established in 1883)
 - 3: Nova Scotia (Annapolis Tidal Station, near Annapolis Royal)
 - 4: Lou Marsh Trophy
 - 5: Denis Arcand
 - 6: St. John's
 - 7: Bill Reid
 - 8: St. John's

Canadian treasures

NATURAL SOURCE OF PRIDE SINCE 1867

SNOLAB - Unravelling the deep, dark secrets of the universe



Far beneath the streets of Sudbury, Ontario, scientists from a dozen North American universities are hard at work inside the deepest clean room facility in the world. Their mission: to figure out why we exist, no less. And SNOLAB—named after the Sudbury Neutrino Observatory (SNO), the experiment for which the two-kilometre-deep facility was originally built—provides an ideal setting to crack the case.

SNOLAB employees must take an ear-popping elevator ride down a mineshaft at a speed of ten metres per second, followed by a long stroll through the dark tunnels of Vale Creighton mine. Then, it's shower time: entering the lab requires stripping down, washing up, and finally zipping into clean room attire.

Why so deep? Simply put, the experiments performed at SNOLAB use equipment so sensitive that the normal amount of radiation and particles found on Earth would render it useless. Imagine trying to weigh a single snowflake during a blizzard—and then imagine that the snow is also invisible. This is also why extreme cleanliness is required of anyone who steps foot inside the lab.

Particle physics and its related fields are astoundingly complex, but their main goal boils down to explaining how our world works at the most fundamental level. The key to understanding what's actually going on in the universe—why atoms are able to form planets and stars, and what holds everything together—is hidden, scientists think, in dark matter. But before physicists can start studying dark matter, they need to find it. That's where DEAP-3600, a giant, spherical, alien-like contraption nestled inside SNOLAB, comes into play.

The DEAP-3600 experiment is one of eleven currently underway at SNOLAB. The device, whose goal is to detect dark matter in hopes of unravelling its mysteries, is the most sensitive of its kind in the world. Researchers hope to start collecting and analyzing data from the experiment in 2016, but no one really knows what results, if any, will this ambitious endeavour yield. One thing is certain, however: Canada is a leading contributor to the complex field of particle astrophysics, and DEAP-3600 has a strong potential for groundbreaking discovery.

The Sudbury Neutrino Observatory, precursor of the DEAP project and SNOLAB as a whole, provided crucial insight into the behaviour of neutrinos—a milestone advancement in the field. Queen's University physicist Arthur McDonald co-won the 2015 Nobel Prize in physics for his work on the SNO. His efforts helped pave the way for what is now, some believe, humanity's best chance yet of finding the missing piece in an incredibly complex puzzle.

Photography: The DEAP-3600 detector under construction. © Mark Ward, used under CC-BY 3.0

Countdown to 150

16 WEEKS TO GO



info Canada THE STORIES BEHIND OUR SYMBOLS

NEW BRUNSWICK TREE: BALSAM FIR

The balsam fir (*Abies balsamea*) became New Brunswick's arboreal emblem in 1987. This tree is an important part of the province's history of pulp and paper production. The wood is also used for lumber. These conifers make beautiful Christmas trees and 97% of holiday pines grown in New Brunswick are in fact balsam firs.

Where are we from? A SPOTLIGHT ON THE LARGEST GROUPS IN CANADA'S MULTICULTURAL MOSAIC



Canada's Slovak community

Slovak people have been in Canada since the mid-1800s. A first wave of immigrants from the Central European region now called Slovakia settled in Alberta and Saskatchewan, where farmland was so abundant that newcomers were promised 60 acres of free land. Following a lull during the First World War, immigration resumed, but the 35,000 Slovaks that arrived in Canada during this period largely settled in mining areas rather than farmland, forming large communities in Northern Ontario and Quebec.

A later wave of immigration saw some 13,000 highly educated Slovaks flee their homeland following the Warsaw Pact and subsequent invasion of Czechoslovakia in 1968. Many of them became celebrated academics in Canada.

The Canadian Slovak League is the most important Slovak organization in Canada. Founded in 1932, the league hosts social and cultural events that aim to keep Slovak heritage and traditions alive in Canada. Painters Ladislav Guderna and Tibor Koválik, musician Antonia Mazán and filmmaker Ingrid Veninger are a few Slovak Canadians who made an impact on the country's cultural scene. In the sports world, notable Slovak Canadians include NHL players Stan Mikita and the Stasny brothers, as well as former Edmonton Eskimo Mike Volcan.

If you find yourself near the city of Oshawa, Ontario, pay a visit to the Slovak Canadian Heritage Museum to learn more about this vibrant community. *Na zdravie!*

THIS WEEK'S COUNTDOWN SPONSORED BY:

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Agriculture is the backbone of our local economy. Our area farmers have persevered, and now produce some of the finest agricultural products in Canada. We are proud of our rural heritage, and the valuable lessons it has taught us.

Express-O-Gram

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

people who elected them. Apparently we're too stupid to weigh in when it's decision time.

ABH

COME ARMED ONLY WITH QUESTIONS

It was just this weekend that our informal editorial board decided it was time to host a public meeting about the Aylmer library.

Council had recently ordered an investigation into costs to move it to East Elgin Community Complex, and we'd noticed a recent bump in the number of library-themed letters to the editor.

Now that we've read the results of council's decision Monday night – to move the Aylmer library to the Complex, right now – we're certain all seven of them will accept the invitation to the March 30 meeting at Aylmer Old Town Hall Theatre.

See the ad inside this newspaper for more details. We still think there's plenty to talk about – maybe now more than ever.

THEY COULD TIGHTEN THEIR BUDGET ANYWHERE

It might do well for Elgin parents and ratepayers who have been set upon each other in the defence of area schools to keep in mind one number – \$430,000.

That is the expenditure set aside last year by Thames Valley District School Board to make spare keys for all classrooms, gyms and libraries in its 180-building system. That was part of a deal with the teachers' union to see that any occasional or replacement teacher be given a room key in case of emergency lockdown where attack on or threat of violence at any school is perceived.

That was just a half-million-dollar incidental in their nearly \$750-million (that's three-quarters of a billion) budget.

Hope an asteroid doesn't hit a school or it will cost us millions to arm all the teachers and inmates with stainless-steel umbrellas.

These are numbers of a size most Canadians are unfamiliar with, although it would help to be an employee of some school board where average wage for tens of thousands of employees is closing in on sunshine list \$100,000-level. And of course, there is that indexed pension for life well north of \$50,000.

Just the increase in Thames Valley wages and benefits last year was over \$23-million.

So it's helpful to understand the real expenses at the board when area schools are threatened over what, to the board, is the equivalent of pocket change.

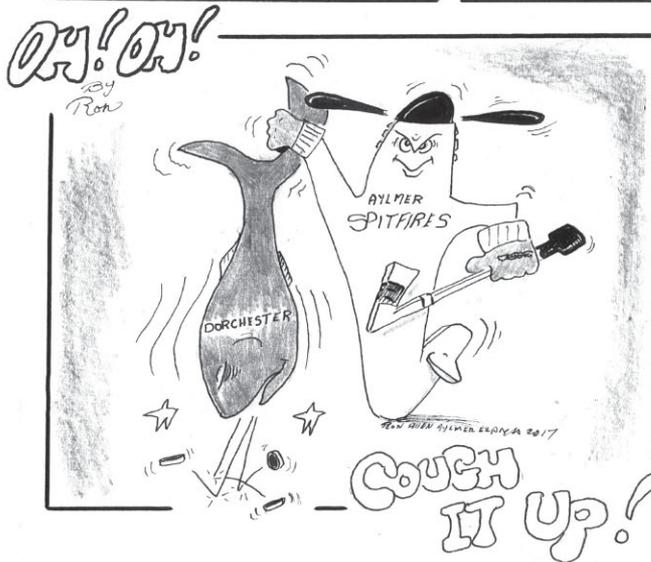
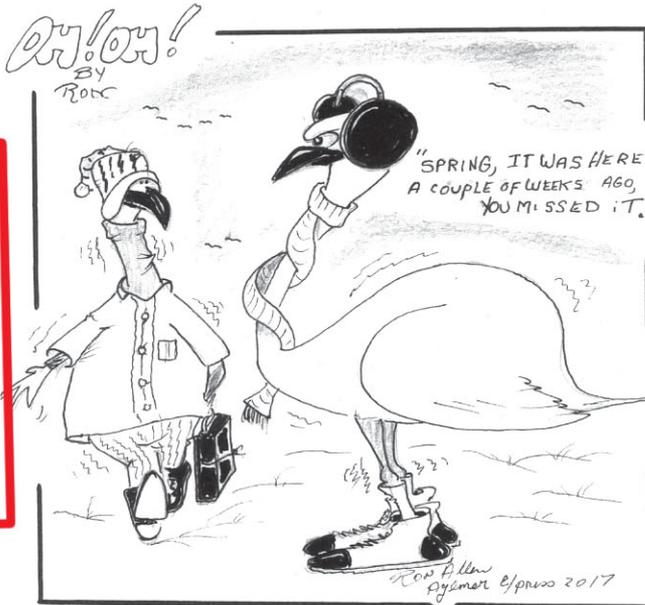
Weren't we told that they expected to save almost half a million dollars with the closing of Springfield, New Sarum and South Dorchester. "Oh, sorry about your community."

We wish those fighting the Thames Valley District School juggernaut much courage, energy and endurance. They need it. The board is one of those highly paid professional bureaucracies designed to soak up such protests like a sponge on a countertop spill.

NOTABLE QUOTABLES

"If we had no winter, the spring would not be so pleasant; if we did not sometimes taste of adversity, prosperity would not be so welcome."

— Anne Bradstreet, *The Works of Anne Bradstreet*
[Meditations Divine and Moral]



Members of the Kingsmill-Mapleton Busy Bees completing a "Stand on Guard" project in the fall of 1940, were, from left: Beatrice Jenkins, Hazel Learn, Helen Howse, Evelyn Legg, Shirley Kilmer, Shirley Ashford, an unidentified girl (possibly Marjorie Orris), Julia Brown, leader,

and Edith Stover, assistant leader. This photograph is part of the Kingsmill-Mapleton Tweedsmuir History Volume One, courtesy of the Elgin County Archives. Anyone with information on this photograph or to purchase a reprint, please call 519-631-1460 ext. 154. (AE/contributed)

Letters to the Editor

Political correctness run amuck

At the rate the world is headed by the world be divided or destroyed by liberalism, political correctness or racism? Any one or likely all three? In this fast-moving society racism seems to be the subject of today.

We cannot legislate anti-racism through curtailing free speech, muffling feelings, or actions through demonstrations; it must be done through education and understanding the root causes. You can't change a person's mind by force.

Liberalism seems to be spreading throughout the world and may be the biggest threat – trying to look past obvious problems and taking everyone under its wing regardless of the cost.

As the saying goes, a "hand-out not a hand-out" seems to be a worn out philosophy. Political correctness is re-writing history. When we were young we were taught to call Black people Negroes. Dark skinned people regarded Black as racist. In the mid-1960s Black became a term of pride and within a few months Black was in, Negro was out. Names like Washington Redskins or Chicago Blackhawks must be changed to be more politically acceptable. Then there are the French or Frenchies who are called or nicknamed "Frogs" because they ate frog legs. Will Pincroft have to change the name of the Green Frog restaurant?

Children's stories have been taken out of schools like "Lit-

tle Black Sambo", a story read in Primary class for over 100 years even though it originated in India with the tigers. Uncle Remus, himself a slave who wrote dozens of songs and stories relating to the old south, is gone from schools mainly because of the tar baby story that taught a lesson that kids could understand.

Mark Twain once said "Uncle Remus is good literature and good reading" and at one time Walt Disney agreed. How long before Tom Sawyer and Huckleberry Finn will be banned because of Mark Twain's language of the day? Will history be lost through political correctness?

Ken White
Aylmer

We deserve to know severance

Regarding last week's story of Town of Aylmer staff paid over \$100,000 a year:

I think police officers and firefighters should be paid well because their jobs are dangerous.

You choose to write what their wages are because they are public employees. But when it comes to the ex-manager of East Elgin Community

Complex you don't disclose her severance package even though she was a public employee. Any other employer does not give a severance package if an employee quits. People of Aylmer and Malahide should know where our tax money goes.

Don Huse
Aylmer

Editor's note: Through a Freedom of Information request, the Aylmer Express has been pursuing the value and terms of the town's severance for the former Complex manager since June 2016.

Letters to the Editor

Give Aylmer taxpayers a break

(Regretfully this letter appeared last week with several Aylmer Express typographical errors.)

While council moves closer to a debt-free town there are some who would like taxpayers to take on another multi-million-dollar project. They want to see a 13,000-square-foot library (over four times the size of the present one) built in Bear Park. At more than \$300 per sq. ft. this adds up to approximately \$4-million.

A new, stand-alone building is prohibitively expensive. In-

sniff, for example, completed a 6,000 sq. ft. library at a cost of \$4.4-million. The recent Ferguson expansion was a whopping \$6-million.

Aylmer taxpayers are fatigued after working to eliminate the \$10-million debt for East Elgin Community Complex and they deserve property tax reductions as opposed to another expensive project that will increase taxes. The only practical option remaining for us is to locate the library in existing space at the Complex.

There is no need for another

survey. The Aylmer News survey of April 22, 2014 indicated that 49 percent of respondents wished to move the library to Complex. 21 percent of respondents wished to keep the library as it is while 19 percent would add to the present structure. Only 11 percent would support a new stand-alone building.

It is time to put this issue to bed in a manner that will have the least impact on taxes while satisfying the need for expanded library space.

Don Shepherd
Aylmer

The Aylmer library has been hijacked

Last week Aylmer Mayor Greg Currie announced publicly in an interview with the St. Thomas Times-Journal that Aylmer council is moving by June to "pick and stick" Aylmer's library in a new facility. This is in reference to questions by the Times-Journal reporter about the library at the East Elgin Community Complex. Mayor Currie said they would "get it done so it doesn't go any further".

With this shocking statement we sought more information through council. We learned that there are those on council trusting that to this point council is investigating and that a public meeting would be requested before any final decision was made about our public space, the library.

On Monday night four councillors slipped in a lengthy

detailed resolution to move Aylmer's library to the Complex and to rent the space from Malahide. The resolution was not on the agenda and not all councillors were privy to what was about to happen. It was voted on, 4-3, so the Library will be stuck out at the Complex.

Four may feel they have been successful but to Aylmer,

to the minority of council, including the Aylmer town staff, this cannot be success. It feels like the library has been hijacked and along with it the potential for developing a more vibrant and greater downtown core. Public involvement has not been included for our most public community space.

Tom and Linda Charlton
Aylmer

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Express-O-Gram Springing into home show

JUST LIKE RODNEY DANGERFIELD

After a rather nasty letter decrying local merchant prices and service we were disappointed – shocked really – at so few letters springing to their defence. The one we got, singing their praises, we played on the front page – a message that needed to be told. Then another recently, weeks on, but telling the same positive story.

We've lived in Aylmer our whole life and have benefited from roundly excellent small-town service. It began in our infancy with the parental level assistance and guidance we got from Ross Munn of Munn's Groceteria, then again food during our swimming pool years at the Chuckwagon on Pat Bird, then after high school at Juke's Restaurant beside Munn's and on into our adult years with cars and clothes, food and houses. Not perfect though, there was that one bank we were thrown out of.

That first critical letter writer might well have had some dismal experiences. He had us immediately questioning how our recent treatment has been at the hands of local merchants.

We were in desperate need of a windshield wiper which had flipped off into the chill night gloom. A creative staffer at Arrow Tire "borrowed" one off of the boss's car.

A special requirement for glasses put the staff at Dr. Rahman's office through the wringer. Their exceptional accommodation resulting in our pool shooting average on the rise and a tournament win, just a couple of weeks ago.

A new television from Roszells was purchased and delivered at or below supposedly unbeatable London prices.

Our better half overheard a customer at Durkee's thanking them for letting the customer take a number of outfits, no money down, to be tried on by a resident at Terrace Lodge.

We could go on. Unfortunately it just takes one or two indifferent or even rude exceptions to reflect on a whole community. We had suggested Aylmer Chamber of Commerce book a service expert to speak to the merchants annually in an effort to make Aylmer a provincial standout in customer satisfaction. Maybe they thought it unnecessary because it didn't happen.

However our real disappointment came from those who depend on these stores and services for taxes and goods.

There was no letter of support or defence from the town or the Chamber of Commerce or Main-Street Aylmer. It would be awkward for an individual storekeeper to speak out, but surely these agencies and the town might defend the sector they thrive on.

Were there just two satisfied customers willing to stand up and speak out?

And the worst offenders of all – those canvassers and charities, service clubs and children's groups who visit those stores weekly, if not daily, for favours, donations and "sponsorships". Not a

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

by Rob Perry
of The Aylmer Express

Spring officially arrived on Monday, March 20, and the Aylmer Fair Board will hold a party this weekend to celebrate with its seventh annual Aylmer and East Elgin Home, Garden and Rec Show at East Elgin Community Complex.

The show opens Friday at 3 p.m., and features 100 businesses, says Fair Board President Scott Lewis.

Admission is \$5, with children under 12 allowed in free.

Hours are Friday from 3 to 8 p.m., Saturday from 11 a.m. to 8 p.m. and Sunday from 12 noon to 4 p.m.

Mr. Lewis said the fair board resurrected the home and garden show, which had been run for many years by the Aylmer Kinsmen Club, because "The town needed another event to show the community what's in its own backyard" in terms of businesses and services.

"No need to go outside your own community. There's a lot here people don't know about, and we want to present that to everybody."

This year, the size of the show had been trimmed back a bit, so that it just fit one of the rinks at East Elgin Community Complex.

But the vendors were offering "Everything from tractors to gardening to pools to indoor renovations, outdoor renovations and buildings."

"There should be everything there a person would need if they were thinking about building, upgrading,

renovating, landscaping or decorating."

Mr. Lewis noted all fair board directors would be dressed in matching shirts at this year's show, so they could be easily identified by mem-

bers of the public needing directions or other help.

One vendor would be serving food, and Aylmer Home Hardware would hold a demonstration on paint and decorating trends Saturday at 1 p.m.,

he said. "Walk up and talk," he urged show-goers. "You're not signing a contractor unless you're willing to."

In addition to learning what local businesses had to offer,

he said, the spring show gave everyone a chance to emerge from the winter blues and socialize.

"In a small town, it's not always about the mighty dollar," he said.

Organizers were hoping for the show's usual weather—overcast and drizzly, encouraging attendance at indoor events instead of spending time outside, he added.



Aylmer Fair President Scott Lewis, middle, joined Krista Hueston, left, Vera Ulrich and Michelle Barrett of The Aylmer Express celebrating the first day of spring planting flowers in front of the business on Monday, March 20. Turns out they were fake, though. The seventh annual Aylmer and East Elgin Home, Garden

and Rec Show opens at East Elgin Community Complex this Friday at 3 p.m. and continues through the weekend, and this year the 100 exhibitors will include the Express. Admission is \$5 a person, with children under 12 free.

(AE/Rob Perry)

Aylmer library busiest in Elgin

By Rob Perry
of The Aylmer Express

Aylmer's library continues to be by far the busiest in the Elgin County system, with about 80,000 items checked out last year, more than twice as many as Dutton, the second-busiest branch.

Aylmer's circulation was up by over 7,000 from 2015, Library Coordinator Laura Molnar said in an annual report to county councillors Tuesday, March 14.

While the overall number of Elgin residents with active library cards was trending slowly downward, she said, with just over 13,000 in total last year, the system was also seeing a steady growth in first-time registrations at branches that had reached out to local schools to make children aware of what libraries had to offer.

Last year, almost 1,700 new users registered with the library system.

While physical resources such as books continued to dominate overall library circulation, electronic offerings such as "e-books" were becoming increasingly popular, Ms. Molnar said.

In 2012, electronic circulation was 9,000 items a year. By last year, that increased to 22,000.

Last year saw 244,000 physical items circulated across the county system, with nearly a third of those in Aylmer.

Ms. Molnar said library branches had also in recent years increased the amount of special programs they offered, both on site as well as at local schools.

The number of participants each year was now over 22,000, she said.

Bayham Mayor Paul Ens asked who were the 1,700 new card holders who registered last year.

Ms. Molnar said most were youths, though all ages were represented.

Aylmer had seen a big jump in its youth registrations since a "maker space" including a three-dimensional printer had been installed there, she said.

Couckuyt calls vote "illegal"

No regrets in library decision

by Craig Bradford
of The Aylmer Express

The same 4-3 split among Aylmer councillors was repeated this week during the Monday, March 20 meeting when it came to all votes regarding the Aylmer library and moving it to East Elgin Community Complex.

Express: let's hear from library users

The Aylmer Express will host a public meeting at Old Town Hall on Thursday, March 30, starting at 7 p.m., seeking to measure the public's pulse when it comes to a new library.

"We want to hear from library users, because as far as we can tell, in this decade-long library saga, they haven't been given a forum where they can tell everyone involved what they want," said Brett Hueston of The Aylmer Express.

He expected the meeting

would have to at least in part address Aylmer council's recent abrupt decision to move the library to the community hall at East Elgin Community Complex, on the west edge of town.

"Our meeting was in the planning stages, and that decision effectively hijacked the original intent of it," Mr. Hueston said. "Like just about everyone except a small coterie of councillors, we didn't see this coming, though this isn't

CONTINUED ON PAGE 5

A series of resolutions relating to putting a library at the Complex on Monday evening's council meeting agenda all were carried in 4-3 non-recorded votes.

The same councillors voted for and against the five resolutions: councillors Pete Barbour, Arthur Oslach, Ted McDonald and Sheri Andrews in favour and Mayor Greg Currie, Deputy Mayor Mary French and Cr. Ann Laur against.

The first motion was to receive and file a letter from former Mayor Jack Couckuyt that was critical of the process observed in introducing Cr. Barbour's March 13 surprise resolution committing a new library to the Complex.

Cr. McDonald moved the resolution which was seconded by Cr. Andrews.

"The manner in which the resolution was added to the council agenda was undemocratic and at odds with municipal procedures," Mr. Couckuyt wrote. "Under scrutiny, this would be an illegal

resolution."

He maintained in order to make informed decisions, councillors needed the opportunity to "scrutinize the proposals beforehand."

With no notice, Aylmer councillors in a 4-3 vote at their March 13 meeting, abruptly committed a new library to the Complex.

A two-page motion was added to the agenda near the start of that meeting by Cr. Barbour who passed out paper copies of it to all councillors and staff. He moved that his resolution be added to the meeting agenda which was seconded by Cr. Ted McDonald and carried by a vote of council.

Mr. Couckuyt wrote that additions to the agenda "must not be made on the spur of the moment or kept from council until the day of a council meeting."

He said "urgent decisions" when required are an exception made under the new business part of an agenda with all other

CONTINUED ON PAGE 5



The Rajeh family, originally from Syria, enjoyed some refreshments during a meet and greet event at Belmont United Church on Saturday afternoon, March 18. One brother, Fateh Rajeh, second from right, and his family had just arrived in Canada with official refugee status after waiting in Lebanon for 15 months after escaping the civil war violence in Syria. Pictured were, from left: Mr. Rajeh's daughter Bayan, wife Waffa Derke, daughter Douha, son Hasan, sister-in-law Suzanne Rajah,

family member Duaa Yahya, Mr. Rajeh and his younger brother Ahmad Rajeh. Belmont United Church members, along with members of other United Churches located south of London, worked together to sponsor the Rajeh family and bring them to Canada. The family arrived in this country on Thursday, March 9 and are now living in an apartment in London. The three Rajeh brothers, all engineers, are now living in London. See story on page 3.

(AE/Craig Bradford)

Aylmer Express Graphics Group continues expansion, reinvestment

Aylmer Express President John Hueston announced the recent purchase of top-quality lithographer Contact Creative Printing, and digital graphics shop Double Q Printing.

Both London companies and their staff have been absorbed into existing graphic reproduction centres under the Aylmer Express Graphics Group umbrella. That includes the Aylmer Express head office in Aylmer, Accell Graphics and Absolute Mail Solutions in London, Barney Printing in Woodstock and mail, data management and distribution centre Westminster

International in Toronto. The Aylmer production facility has hired two additional staff to help keep up with the work.

"No one else in the territory has our combination of capacity, versatility and expertise. We are now the largest general commercial printers in Southwestern Ontario and more importantly, unsurpassed for quality reproduction," said Mr. Hueston.

"We are extremely busy and will continue to grow organically and through acquisition. Our full-time staff, almost 100,

far exceeds what my father and I set out to do when we accepted Prime Minister Pierre Trudeau's challenge to create jobs 35 years ago. We have been very fortunate to have such fine colleagues who share our vision and their craftsmanship."

The acquisitions follow a 12-month capital investment in new technology including a Heidelberg CD74 press installed in Aylmer, Heidelberg bindery equipment and a Polar automated cutting system in Woodstock, and large-format printing equipment in produc-

tion in London.

"We bought a 35,000-square-foot building in Woodstock just about seven years ago and knew it would be too big," Mr. Hueston said. "Now it's just about full – it looks like the busy beehive that is our Aylmer office."

"There's still room for one more press though," he added.

The 137-year-old Express, owned since 1947 by the Hueston family, was also a Family Enterprise of the Year Award finalist at the Family Enterprise Exchange awards banquet on March 2.

GOT AN OPINION ON THE LIBRARY?



YOUR CHANCE TO SPEAK UP

PUBLIC FORUM about **AYLMER LIBRARY**
Thursday, March 30 • 7 p.m.
at the Old Town Hall Theatre - BE THERE!

Active discussion encouraged - Speakers limited to five minutes.



HOSTED & MODERATED BY:

AYLMER EXPRESS
Building Community

Complex library "terrible"

CONTINUED FROM PAGE A1

and moved downstairs into the main branch.
 New clientele also meant cramming more resources into the Old Town Hall branch, including literacy collections and audio-visual materials.

"That was the start of space getting smaller and smaller," and when she first began exploring the possibility of an expansion, either on site or in a standalone building nearby.

Small study groups also needed somewhere to meet, as did tutors offering one-on-one lessons.

She often gave up her own office for a quiet space for patrons to work in.

The library evolved into also being a community centre.

"We never had much of a quiet library," she chuckled, but it offered the community space for all sorts of activities.

Ms. Mayhew said she didn't get much response from town officials when she started talking about expansion.

She couldn't imagine a more beautiful and inspiring building than Old Town Hall to have a library in, which proved to be a double-edged sword.

Expanding the existing library would mean adding onto the Old Town Hall and obscuring some of its architectural beauty, she said. But no other downtown building offered the same architectural magnificence.

Aylmer, she noted, has since she started, if not before, always had the largest circulation by far of any Elgin branch.

Circulation when she began was about 30,000 individual books and other materials a

year. When she retired, that had risen to 90,000.

The Aylmer branch drew its patrons not just from the town, but from the south end of Malahide as well, she said. It's essentially been a library provided by one community but serving two.

And in addition to its traditional role, she said, it served as a sanctuary, often for patrons who were marginalized.

"We need to look after our vulnerable people, because they don't have a voice," Ms. Mayhew said.

She recalled one woman who, when she first started visiting the library, would just sit in a chair, not even taking her coat off. Library employees at first tried to help her, but then realized she was just seeking a refuge from the rest of the world and, while remaining friendly, left her alone.

When Ms. Mayhew retired in 2014, the town had been pursuing a library expansion on or off for a dozen years already.

She believed the realization of that dream came closest in the late 1990s.

"The time was certainly ripe then," she said. "That's when it should have happened."

But as seemed to occur again and again, just when plans seemed to be firming up, "The rug was pulled out from under us."

She never understood what caused the expansion to be aborted so many times.

What she did know, though, was that a society couldn't have a democracy without literacy.

"Not a functional democracy. Democracy works best if you're informed."

While she, like many others, enjoyed the instant information sources online, the written word still offered the most comprehensive source of information, Ms. Mayhew said.

She'd sat on five or six town committees studying library expansion over the years, she said.

The first real attempt came when an old house just south of the library was purchased, with an eye to using it for additional space, connected by a glass structure to Old Town Hall.

"But that went south," she said, and later the house was torn down and promptly replaced with municipal parking and a small green space that came to be known as "Bear Park," because of a topiary shrub there.

A subsequent council, under Mayor Jack Couckuyt, explored a new standalone building in Bear Park for the library.

Ms. Mayhew said she and someone from the library's head office had prepared a plan to furnish the new space.

"It was that close," she said, but again, somehow the proposal evaporated.

Losing the expansion was heart-breaking, she said, "but it was even more heart-breaking to think the community didn't recognize the importance of an institution that in my view is probably the most important service."

"It's not just a building. It's a symbol of how you care about your town and how you care about the people in town, and how you recognize the importance of democracy and literacy."

A library was, she said, "The only place you can go where no-

body is selling you anything."

Moving the library to the Complex "would be a terrible mistake," she said. Libraries were a vital part of a community, and should be downtown where they were accessible to walkers.

A library "should be recognized on its own merit. It should be something that the town is proud of."

Instead, she said, "It seems to me that the library is being offered as a sacrificial goat to shore up the finances of the Complex."

"To move to the Complex is a big-time step backwards."

"Libraries are not peripheral in any way, shape or form."

She'd been to the Complex twice, to look at the community hall proposed to house it.

The space was, admittedly, larger than the current downtown branch, she said. But it had few windows at a time when modern libraries were filled with lights, and had an "institutional atmosphere."

"It's a cold place, and it's not a welcoming place."

Given her druthers, she said, she believed the best idea would be to build a standalone library in Bear Park.

But that left the question of the fate of Old Town Hall, which would lose its main revenue source when the library left.

Sadly, she said, the situation was so complicated, no solution would please everyone. "It's a very polarizing thing in this town."

"I'd keep it right where it is until tempers cool and we can go back to it at a later date and try to do the right thing."

Malahide awards tender for gravel

Malahide councillors on Thursday, March 16, awarded a tender to provide and place gravel on township roads to C.R. Chittick Construction Ltd, which had the lower of two bids at \$276,877.

About 28,800 tonnes of gravel are to be placed on: Sawmill Road from John Wise Line to Calton Line; Walker Road from Glencoln Line to Pressey Line; Century Line from Putnam Road to Newell Road; Dorchester Road from Yorke

Line to Avon Line; Whittaker Road from Wilson Line to Yorke Line; And Sparta Line just east of the boundary with Central Elgin.

Physical Services Director Rob Johnson said that the amount of gravel used by the township had been reduced considerably in recent years. An effort had been made in that time to improve roads so they wouldn't need large amounts of fresh gravel on a regular basis, or they had been converted to a hard surface.

Canadian treasures

TAKING A SEAT TO TAKE A STAND



VIOLA DESMOND, NÉE DAVIS (1914-1965)
 BUSINESSWOMAN AND CIVIL RIGHTS ADVOCATE

In December 2016, Viola Desmond was selected for the future Canadian ten-dollar bank note. The public suddenly became aware of this extraordinary woman, whose bold stance against racial discrimination furthered the cause of equality in Canada during the first half of the twentieth century. Desmond's story is an inspiring one.

Viola Desmond was born in Halifax in 1914. She and her nine siblings had a white mother and a black father, unusual for the time. Growing up, Viola noticed that all of the professional beauty and skin-care products on the market were for white women. This perceived injustice prompted Desmond to take things into her own hands. Because black women could not attend beauty school in Halifax, she moved to Montreal for training before returning home to open a salon.

Not one to idly enjoy success, she founded the Desmond School of Beauty Culture so others like her could study close to home. It created opportunities for countless black women in Nova Scotia by enabling them to open their own salons and create jobs. Desmond also created, marketed and sold a line of cosmetics for black women.

It was in the rainy evening hours of November 8, 1946, that Viola Desmond became a full-blown civil rights activist. Her car broke down en route to a meeting, so she decided to catch a movie at Roseland Theatre to pass the time. Her ticket was for a balcony seat; the cashier had refused to sell her one for the main floor, where only whites were welcome. Undeterred, Desmond took a seat downstairs, but was quickly told by a manager to either sit where people of her colour should, or leave. She did neither. Police were called. Desmond was arrested, and spent the night in jail. During court proceedings, matters of race were never discussed. Still, the trial's true motivations were painfully clear, and its verdict—which came with a hefty fine—was as predictable as it was unjust.

For years, Viola Desmond fought her charges, mobilizing the province's black community in the process. It wasn't about the ruling, nor was it about the fine. It was about sending a crystal-clear message: non-whites would no longer tolerate being treated as second-class citizens. Slowly but surely, Desmond and her supporters' steadfast determination ushered in a new era of tolerance. Segregation in Nova Scotia was finally abolished in 1954. Eleven years after this watershed moment, Viola Desmond passed away, and her baseless conviction followed her to the grave.

As the twentieth century reached its end, Viola Desmond's courageous actions had all but disappeared from public consciousness. The story resurfaced in the early 2000s thanks to her sister, Wanda Robson, who released a book about Desmond called *Sister to Courage* in 2010. That same year, Nova Scotia premier Darrell Dexter granted Desmond a total pardon.

Countdown to 150

14 WEEKS TO GO



info Canada THE STORIES BEHIND OUR SYMBOLS



ONTARIO
 FLOWER: WHITE TRILLIUM

In 1937, white trillium (*Trillium grandiflorum*) was designated Ontario's provincial flower. It blooms in mid-spring and favours deciduous forests in which to propagate. Its seeds are dispersed mainly by ants and sometimes deer. Once the seeds sprout, it can take another seven to ten years to flower.

Where are we from? A SPOTLIGHT ON THE LARGEST GROUPS IN CANADA'S MULTICULTURAL MOSAIC



Canada's Croatian community

According to the 2011 National Household Survey, nearly 115,000 Canadians have some degree of Croatian heritage. Communities of Croatian Canadians are present in most major Canadian cities, with large concentrations in Ontario. A small town in Saskatchewan, Kenaston, is home to the largest percentage of people of Croatian origin, with 17.5 per cent of its 285 inhabitants identifying as ethnic Croats.

Historians believe that the first Croats to arrive in Canada were two sailors that served as crew on the third voyage of Jacques Cartier. A few years later, the French government sent Austrian military units, in which several Croats served, to help defend New France. These French-mandated Croats were also involved in the Cariboo Gold Rush of the 1860s and the Cariboo Gold Rush of the 1890s, as well as British Columbia's early salmon fisheries. The main period of Croatian migration, however, spans the 20th century. During this time, around 80,000 Croats settled in Canada, motivated mainly by the promise of a better life. During the 1920s and the post-WWII years, a large number of these immigrants came to Canada to protest the political conditions in their homeland.

Today, Croatian Canadians play a large role on Canada's cultural landscape. Actors Stana Katic and Alicia Jospovic, documentary filmmaker Frank Civanovich, pro athletes Nikola Andrijevic (soccer) and Joe Sakic (hockey), as well as numerous scientists, politicians, businesspeople and activists, all share Croatian heritage while calling Canada home.

Quiz TEST YOUR CANADIAN KNOWLEDGE

- QUESTION 1: In 1951, Charlotte Whitton became the first Canadian woman to do what?
- QUESTION 2: Prior to WWII, the world's largest explosion of human origin occurred when two cargo ships collided near which Canadian city's port?
- QUESTION 3: What weather phenomenon caused heavy damage to southwestern Quebec in January 1998?
- QUESTION 4: It took Thomas Wilby 52 days to become the first person to accomplish this adventurous endeavour in 1909.
- QUESTION 5: Which Toronto-born movie star was the first Canadian to win an Academy Award?
- QUESTION 6: What is the name of the 1931 British law that granted Canada—and other former colonies—full legal freedom as a Dominion?
- QUESTION 7: A large crater on Mars was named after which Atlantic Canadian town in 1991, in honour of the community's contributions to the field of aviation?
- QUESTION 8: Which former Montreal Canadiens player was the first professional goaltender to sport a goalie mask as part of his regular uniform?

- ART, LITERATURE AND ENTERTAINMENT
- HISTORY AND GEOGRAPHY
- SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY
- SPORTS AND LEISURE

- ANSWERS
- 1: Become mayor of a major Canadian city (Ottawa, Ontario)
 - 2: Halifax, Nova Scotia
 - 3: Ice storm
 - 4: Drive across Canada and Labrador
 - 5: Mary Pickford, who won Best Actress in 1929
 - 6: State of Westminster Coquette
 - 7: Gander, Newfoundland
 - 8: Jacques Plante

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Letters to the Editor

Moving library is exclusionary

Do we want to build a caring and inclusive community? The answer from council is a resounding no.

Do we really want children who don't have the luxury of parents who can drive them to the library to walk along a dangerous four-lane highway with a dead-end sidewalk that doesn't even reach the Com-

plex? Do we care that some children will be unable to take part in the children's programming or have a place to use the Internet and complete homework?

Do we care that some children will no longer have access to the wealth of opportunities for learning that a library provides?

What about the seniors who no longer drive? Remember them: they're the ones who have contributed to our community for decades.

What about those who don't drive, but have mobility issues? Are they too to be left along the

wayside?

The exclusionary decision to locate the library at the Complex is unconscionable. There may be savings, but the cost to our community is incalculable.

Cheryl Van Raes
Aylmer

Majority will be pleased

Heartily congratulations to our town councillors who had the courage to finally make a decision on the location for the library. Obviously there will be discontent about this decision but I suspect the great majority of ratepayers of Aylmer and Malahide will be pleased with the decision.

While there are many benefits to a move to East Elgin Community Complex, there are also some problems. Some serious thought should be given to the creation of a traffic light (or at least a lighted crosswalk) at the entrance to

the Complex. They might also consider assigning perhaps six or eight parking spots for the exclusive use of library patrons which would be appreciated on those times when the lot is full of vehicles of persons attending other events at the Complex.

Perhaps one of our community groups could set up a volunteer program to drive senior citizens who otherwise don't have transportation.

Way to go, council.

Harold Tuthill
Aylmer

Send in the clowns

Fascinating how three discrete events can merge into an unpredictable yet logical whole.

A week ago, a friend thinking of moving asked me about Aylmer. Having grown up there and having maintained connections there I provided a positive impression, with one small caution: my observation that council seemed somewhat enigmatic and at times "clownish".

Last Thursday morning, I stopped whatever I was doing to listen to the gorgeous Count

Basie/Sarah Vaughn arrangement of Sondheim's "Send in the Clowns". All was right with the world.

Later that day, the Aylmer Express arrived with news of the hijacking of the library issue by town council. Connections made!

Clowns? "Clownish"? Not funny!

Send in the Ombudsman.

Dave Grimes
Ingersoll

No regrets in library decision

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1
matters requiring notice of motion or brought to the clerk the Thursday before a Monday night council meeting.

In addition, no opportunity was given for public comment on moving the library to the Complex, Mr. Couckuyt continued.

"To point to past discussions on the topic is misleading and outdated," he continued. "Remember that even council has changed their minds several times on the location of a library. A resolution only last year discarded the EECC as a site."

Mr. Couckuyt said another past resolution, which was carried 5-2, had a new library being built on the southwest corner of John Street South and Sydenham Street (his preferred option).

In addition, the decision to put a library at the Complex was made without knowing the costing or Elgin County requirements or the effect on providing library services, he wrote.

And Finance Director Lisa Pelton was asked to devise a plan to pay for the renovations required to place a library in Complex hall space without knowing a cost estimate from either an architect or engineer something Mr. Couckuyt called, "an incredible magical feat."

"This is an illegal motion, hastily added, poorly discussed (due to haste), and one which does a disservice to library patrons, town councillors, downtown merchants, Aylmer residents and the reputation of the Town of Aylmer," Mr. Couckuyt wrote, adding Aylmer deserves and needs a "proper library, not one which supposedly helps fund the Complex (and even that is debatable)."

Deputy Mayor French said Mr. Couckuyt's letter made a number of comments that had "merit."

"We promise to be accountable," she said. "I don't believe we were transparent. I am very disappointed with what transpired last Monday evening."

Cr. Laur asserted some councillors had seen Cr. Barbour's March 13 resolution, or at least knew its intent, before that meeting took place.

She asked the four councillors who voted in favour of Cr. Barbour's library to Complex resolution to answer a question: did they read the document before the meeting?

Cr. Barbour didn't deny that. "I'm not sure that is an appropriate question from a councillor," he replied.

Mayor Currie asked if any other councillor wanted to indicate if they knew of Cr. Barbour's motion in advance of it being introduced on March 13.

None of the three other councillors who voted in favour of his motion answered Cr. Laur's question.

Cr. Laur had acquired video footage of the March 13 meeting.

At one point during that meeting, Mayor Currie requested a short recess so that councillors could read Cr. Barbour's motion.

"It was very apparent the only two councillors reading it were Deputy Mayor French and myself," Cr. Laur said.

What she saw in the video indicated the other councillors had read the resolution before the meeting which she called "unacceptable."

In response, Cr. Barbour read section 13 (c) of the town's procedural bylaw which states councillors can have an item added to a meeting during the confirmation of agenda section, near the start of a meeting.

"That happened in accordance with the procedural bylaw," Cr. Barbour said.

Mayor Currie stopped the discussion at that point by calling for the vote.

MainStreet letter

A letter from Nicole Pressey of MainStreet Aylmer on behalf of Business Improvement Association Chairman Kevin Cross was next on the March 20 agenda.

The March 16 letter included

a resolution from their committee that was not in favour of the library going out to the Complex and that they prefer it being in the downtown core or at least closer to the core.

The seven BIA representatives voted in favour with the two town-designated representatives (councillors) voting against. The two council representatives are councillors McDonald and Oslach.

Cr. Barbour moved to receive and file the MainStreet letter which was seconded by Cr. McDonald.

The next three resolutions in relation to putting a library at the Complex were to rescind prior motions that had been passed: locating a new library within the BIA in existing vacant commercial space; examining the feasibility of relocating the library to the Complex; and examining the feasibility of placing a new library at the former public works property on Myrtle Street.

Cr. Laur said rescinding the first resolution did "a huge disservice to the community and should be reconsidered."

"I am really baffled that you would move something somewhere without knowing the cost," Cr. Laur said. "It's like buying real estate without knowing the cost or not knowing how much the rent would be."

"This is not rocket science to repurpose space in the Complex," Cr. Barbour replied. "There aren't any waterfalls, I hope, envisioned for this facility."

While the project to renovate hall space at the Complex into a library still had to be "engineered," Cr. Barbour said it only amounted to putting in some partitions, some new electrical infrastructure, flooring and other minor work.

He said if councillors didn't like the estimate costing that comes back from London's Sprit Associates Engineers and Architects, they could request another one.

On rescinding the motion to look at the feasibility of placing

a library on the former public works property, Mayor Currie said not pursuing the option did a "disservice to the public."

Cr. Laur agreed and thanked Mayor Currie for supporting the option.

She had received several calls from members of the public about the idea.

Near the end of the public portion of the meeting before councillors entered a secret session, Mayor Currie read prepared statement during his opportunity to provide a report.

While he wasn't concerned about the "product" of Cr. Barbour's March 13 resolution to put a library at the Complex, he did question how it was introduced.

Mayor Currie found the process to include Cr. Barbour's motion on that meeting's agenda "disconcerting."

"I was disappointed to note that it was attached to another item, one concerning the budget of the Complex, which is only very loosely connected to content of the resolution concerning the library," he read.

"Transparency in the proceedings of council is of utmost importance in view of all members of council and the public," he continued. "In my opinion, there was insufficient time given to consider the contents of the resolution as it related to issues concerning the library. I was presented with the document with only a few minutes to peruse its contents before the discussion and a vote. The rushed admission of the resolution and progression to the vote I considered as lacking respect for those of us who did not have a chance to think about the issues at hand more broadly."

He later said the way in which Cr. Barbour's March 13 resolution was introduced was "if not insulting to councillors, [then] to me representing the office of head of council, and to the public who would expect [councillors] to be well versed in information of a resolution prior to a vote."

Some were ready for "surprise" motion

by Craig Bradford
of The Aylmer Express

Aylmer Councillor Pete Barbour talked to or met with at least three other council colleagues before he seemingly sprung a surprise motion that ended up confirming a new, larger library was to go inside first-floor hall space at East Elgin Community Complex.

With no official or public notice, Aylmer councillors in a 4-3 vote during their Monday, March 13 meeting abruptly committed a new library to East Elgin Community Complex.

A two-page motion was added to the agenda near the start of the meeting by Cr. Barbour who passed out paper copies of it to all councillors and staff. He moved that his resolution be added to the meeting agenda which was seconded by Cr. Ted McDonald and carried by council vote.

While some councillors wanted to defer the motion until the next council meeting on Monday, March 20, others wanted to discuss moving the library to the Complex during budget deliberations, that evening.

After the discussion, Deputy Mayor Mary French requested a recorded vote, which carried four to three.

Councillors Sheri Andrews, Barbour, McDonald and Arthur Oslach voted in favour of the motion while Mayor Greg Currie, Deputy Mayor French and Cr. Ann Laur voted against it.

Deputy Mayor French and Cr. Laur said during the meeting that they hadn't known about Cr. Barbour's resolution. Mayor Currie halted the meeting for a few minutes for a recess so councillors could read the lengthy motion before discussion on it began.

(The Express has reviewed television coverage of the meeting and the three councillors who voted against the motion were reading quietly with their heads down. The four councillors who supported moving the library are looking around the room, not focused on the surprise motion in front of them.)

"Yes," was Cr. Barbour's one word answer when asked by the Express if he communicated his intentions to other councillors about the motion before the March 13 meeting.

"We are not permitted to meet as councillors with more than three people [councillors] and that was certainly complied with," he continued. "Meeting with four is an official meeting. Councillors are allowed to talk to each other."

"Yes," was Cr. Barbour's answer when directly asked if he met with two other councillors about his library motion.

He would not name which councillors he met with.

He also confirmed he talked with but did not meet with at least one other councillor he would not name.

When asked if he believed it was reasonable to expect other

councillors to make a decision based on his resolution the same evening it was introduced without being aware of it before, Cr. Barbour again answered "yes."

"The library issue isn't a new topic of discussion in town," he said. "There has been a lot of dialogue in the community by various individuals, groups and organizations. The prior council had discussions on the issue for the entire four year term. It's not new to the people."

Mayor Currie said he had no prior knowledge of Cr. Barbour's motion.

"No, absolutely not," he said.

When asked if Cr. Barbour's resolution should have been a notice of motion or at least brought up under new business, Mayor Currie, who is the chairman of all council meetings and responsible for ensuring the town's procedural bylaw is followed, replied in the affirmative.

"Technically I would say you are correct," Mayor Currie said. "I would have preferred it as a notice of motion. I left it up to council if they wanted it added."

Section 13 (c) of Aylmer's procedural bylaw under "Confirmation of Agenda" states: "The head of council shall request that any additions to or deferrals of agenda items be put forward at this time, be considered by council and be adopted by the passing of a resolution confirming the agen-

da as presented or as amended."

Section 13 (n) under "notice of motion - next meeting" states: "Notices shall be given, in writing, to all members of council regarding the following:

"Notice of a proposed amendment, alteration or appeal of all or part of this procedure bylaw;

"Notice of a proposal to introduce any new measure or change in the council's established policy. Such notices shall be received without debate and may be submitted under the signature of a single member of council; or

"Notice of a member's request to consider any new item of business at a future meeting of council."

Launching a last-minute resolution at the beginning of a council meeting is a tactic Cr. Barbour has used before on the same issue with the same result.

On April 7, 2014 Cr. Barbour, seconded by Cr. Oslach, put forward a motion to move the Aylmer library to the Complex. It passed 4-3. It was a surprise motion that wasn't on the agenda. That resolution was never acted on.

Included in Cr. Barbour's March 13 resolution were clauses that a new library would be operational at the Complex by Jan. 1, 2018 and that staff find a way for the renovations to be somehow financed under the 2017 town budget.

Express: let's hear from library users

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1
the first time council has made surprise rulings about the library and its future.

"A lot of questions remain unanswered before the library can or should be moved to the Complex. How much are renovations going to cost?"

"Is Aylmer going to have to foot all the bills for renovations, even though library rent from Elgin County will be split with

Malahide, the co-owner of the Complex?"

"And what's going to happen to Old Town Hall? With the loss of rental payments, the building will become much more of a financial burden on the town."

"And what happens to the programs that depend on the community hall, such as shuffleboard and pickleball, as well as other special events held there?"

Mr. Hueston said, "We hope the result of this forum will be to identify what's actually needed and wanted by library users, which should have been determined years ago."

Councillors from both Aylmer and Malahide have been invited to attend.

"We fully expect the four Aylmer councillors who voted to move the library to the Complex to be there, if not to defend

their decision then at least to hear what the public has to say."

While the exact format of the public meeting was still being determined, he said, he hoped that as many speakers as possible would have an opportunity to voice their opinions and pose questions that need to be answered.

Refreshments will be served, courtesy of The Aylmer Express.

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Express-O-Gram Community stands up for library downtown

THE MUSEUM THAT ROCKS

We've had a great week for many reasons, starting with family, friends and business, so we are privileged indeed. And it was capped with a stunning performance by mostly local musicians who showed what a deep and wide pocket of talent we have here in East Elgin.

Lovin' the Music was a fundraising evening organized by Aylmer-Malahide Museum and Archives that saw the reunion of budding musicians from the sixties and seventies and some relative youngsters in the same position 50 years on.

We're not sure who was responsible for what, but museum Curator Amanda VandenWyngaert and museum volunteers Rhonda McNaughton and Shelley Doan had much to do with the preparation. Too there was the unmistakable influence of Brian "Scrawn" Abbey through the excellent evening.

It was a great night with lots of faces to be discerned, old stories to be traded and really stellar music to be enjoyed.

Two generations of Brunelles demonstrated their singing, song-writing and guitar artistry throughout the evening in various family combinations.

Various styles from jazz to pop to country, folk and rock and roll, all had their moments.

Professional musicians, current and former, John P. Allen, Lou Moore, Paul Hurdle, Blair Heddle, Traci Kennedy and Scrawn Abbey, an outstanding bassist in his own right, kicked the performances into overdrive and showed a bit of what the pros are about, which in no way takes any shine off the rest of the performers.

Jim White flew in from Nova Scotia to hammer out the back beat, though we weren't treated to a duet with his sister, Debbie, who stayed in the audience. Don't know what deal she made down at the crossroads, but she gets younger every time we see her.

We've got to recognize George Barbier for his uncanny ability to step onto the stage and get the whole joint rocking in about two bars. That innate talent and the sharps to come in with Chuck Berry's *Little Queenie* and go out with major influence and family friend, Ronnie Hawkins' *Forty Days*.

One would presume success with a full house at \$50 a head so we'll conclude this fundraiser will be annual. Tighten the show a bit, a bit more social opportunity and you've got an annual winner.

And a dance floor for when the place is rockin'.

AN APOLOGY, IF YOU CAN FIND IT

It could be suggested we were out of line, but we are not apologizing for last week's public meeting organized by The Aylmer Express, to give public forum to views on the accessibility and location of a proposed new town library site. The daughter came up with the idea some weeks ago and we approved. At that time it was unknown that council would act so precipitously to shove the new library out to the East Elgin Community Complex at the western-most edge of town, with no consideration

CONTINUED ON PAGE A4



Former Mayor Jack Couckuyt, left, and resident and business owner Jamie Chapman contested the views expressed by Councillor Ted McDonald during a public forum on the future of the

by Craig Bradford of The Aylmer Express

All but two or three speakers from a crowd of almost 200 pleaded, reasoned or demanded the Aylmer library stay in the downtown area.

Thursday's public forum was organized by The Aylmer Express and held at Old Town Hall Theatre, on the second floor of the same building that houses Aylmer's current library.

And while the moderators of the forum regularly pushed for anyone who supported a recent decision by town council to move the branch to East Elgin

Community Complex, there were few takers. One, a town councillor, spoke in favour, and two others weren't specifically opposed to it.

Instead, speaker after speaker from the crowd made their cases to keep the library in the downtown core or provided examples of why putting the library at the Complex was a bad idea.

Others were critical of the lack of financial reasoning behind moving the library to the Complex.

Before opening the microphones up to the floor, Aylmer



Express editor Brett Hueston, who co-moderated the meeting with his father and Express publisher John Hueston, asked three specific audience members to speak first.

"Bad idea"

McGregor Public School pupil Maddi Lapadat, 8, said it was a "bad idea to move the library" from the downtown to the Complex.

She and her sister could walk to the existing library as they live in town not far from it.

Ms. Lapadat provided three reasons why the library shouldn't be moved to the Complex on the western outskirts of Aylmer:

She would no longer be able to walk or ride her bike to a library that far away and even if she could, she would have to cross Highway 3.

The Complex is three kilometres away from her house which would take her 45 minutes to walk there; the current Old Town Hall Library in the downtown core is one kilometre from her house and only takes 15 minutes to walk to.

And if the library moved to the Complex, her mother Amanda would have to drive her there, burning gasoline, which was "bad for the environment" and "would kill polar bears."

"I hope you understand that moving the library would be bad for all of the kids my age," Ms. Lapadat concluded.

Her comments generated a round of applause from the gallery.



Maddi Lapadat made the first statement of a public meeting about Aylmer library on Thursday, March 30. She skipped out on a dance held that night at McGregor Public School to plea for a downtown library. (AE/Rob Perry)



Aylmer library at Old Town Hall Thursday night, March 30. Almost 200 attended the meeting, organized by The Aylmer Express. More pictures are inside. (AE/Rob Perry)

MCS

Mennonite Community Services (MCS) Executive Director Abe Harms spoke next.

"I've tried really hard not to politicize our office over the years," he began. "I think the time has come to advocate for our community."

Mr. Harms called the downtown library a "meeting place" for MCS's Low-German Mennonite clients where they check out books after running other errands like visiting his office, doing banking or buying groceries.

"Anyone in Aylmer can walk to [the existing library] in 20 minutes," he said.

Clients that drop by the MCS office are often referred to the Old Town Hall Library to use the computers there to access the Internet to fill out required government forms, a luxury they didn't have at home, Mr. Harms said.

"The downtown is alive and we want to keep it that way," he said.

And many mothers that visit the MCS office take their children to the existing facility to get their first library cards to start reading, Mr. Harms said.

"I think we've had a hand in making the Aylmer library the busiest in the [Elgin County] system," he said.

"Let's be progressive, not regressive."

The disabled

Lisa Dyck struggled to make her way to the nearest podium with her wheeled walker.

She said as a disabled per-

son, she couldn't drive or use a taxi to get to a library at the Complex.

Suffering from strokes, Ms. Dyck said she "needs the library where it is."

The Complex was "too far to go" and "too dangerous in the dark" and during the winter for her. Making her way to the Complex to use a library would be too cold in the winter and too hot in the summer.

She also had safety concerns regarding that busy stretch of Talbot Street West near the Tim Hortons and all of the traffic in the Complex parking lot.

"I would ask that you keep this library downtown," she concluded.

Next door

Malahide resident Tom McKenney said he is a regular library user who often ties in visits to up to three other locations in town, like getting groceries, when he goes there which is "good for the community."

"If I'm going to the Community Complex [to visit the library], I won't be making those side trips," Mr. McKenney said, adding he would be "spending those dollars elsewhere."

He asked about "punching a side entrance into the building next door through Cooper's Alley," a reference to the two-storey building immediately to the north of Old Town Hall historically known as the Steam Laundry building.

"We don't need another grand building to move into," Mr. McKenney concluded.

Shuttle bus?

Both of Colleen Sawyer's two daughters had spent a lot of time at the Aylmer library: one who had spent an entire university term there and the other who now works as a volunteer at the branch.

Ms. Sawyer said local residents "deserve a decent library that is accessible."

"Why can't we have a nice stand-alone library that is designed to be a library?" she asked. "Someplace where everyone can feel welcome."

"The current library is bursting at the seams," she continued. "If we go to the Complex, would the town be willing to arrange and pay for a shuttle bus? The bus depot could be in Bear Park!"

Imagine

Jamie Chapman asked everyone to close their eyes while she described a scenario involving a single mother with two small children and no vehicle having to walk from Forest Street in the northern part of town to Old Town Hall Library which is located on John Street South between Talbot Street and Sydenham Street.

The woman would pull her two girls in a wagon in the warmer months and switch to a sleigh in the winter when there was snow on the ground so they could go to the library to learn to read.

Later as the children grew older, one of them developed attention deficit disorder and

CONTINUED ON PAGE A8



Pictured left, Hailey Adams struck a pose as she and fellow 4- through 6-year-old ballet students danced to "Tomorrow," during Tammy's Dance Studio's annual recital at Immanuel Christian School on Saturday, April 1. At right, the "Yo Daddy Crew" of fathers of students, including Mike Brunelle Jr., left,

Andy Koolen and Doug Gibbons, performed to "Dance Like Yo Daddy" by Meghan Trainor in a surprise at the start of a series of recitals. They rehearsed in secret before taking to the stage. More picture are inside this week's Express.

(AE/Rob Perry)

2016 "Sunshine List"

by Craig Bradford of The Aylmer Express

The number of St. Thomas Elgin General Hospital staff who made the "Sunshine List" of Ontario public sector employees making more than \$100,000 in salary in 2016 dropped to 29 from 36 the year before. Meanwhile at Thames Valley District School Board, an additional 106 made the list, bringing the total to 438.

In 2014, there were 19 STEGH employees on the list.

The annual public reporting of provincial and municipal employee salaries over \$100,000 was established in 1996 and applies to organizations that receive transfer payments from the Ontario government of at least \$1-million or 10 percent of their gross revenues, provided the transfer amount is \$120,000 or more.

The 2016 list was released and posted on a provincial government website on Friday March 31, the last day allowed by legislation.

There were 123,410 civil

servants in Ontario that made \$100,000 or more in 2016 compared with 115,431 in 2015; 111,438 in 2014 and 97,796 in 2013.

The 2016 list represented nearly \$16-billion in salaries and benefits to public sector workers.

The highest paid public sector employee in all of Elgin-St. Thomas in 2016 was St. Thomas Elgin General Hospital (STEGH) pathologist Fasahat Wasty who received \$333,376.47, down from the \$348,275.96 he received in 2015 and the \$381,062.71 he was paid in 2014.

The next highest paid civil servant in the area was Medical Officer of Health Dr. Joyce Lock with Elgin-St. Thomas Public Health who received \$298,739.72, a big increase from the \$120,954.92 she was paid in 2015.

Elgin-St. Thomas Public Health Executive Director Cynthia St. John explained the difference wasn't related to Dr. Lock going from part-time to

full-time.

"It is related to the Ministry of Health and Long-Term Care's compensation initiative program that is offered to health units to assist with paying medical officers of health salaries at Ontario Medical Association rates," Ms. St. John said. "We received dollars from the program in 2016 for the 2015 and 2016 years so that's why it looks odd."

Elgin-Middlesex-London MPP Jeff Yurek was paid \$116,550 last year, the same as he has received since 2012.

STEGH

Retiring St. Thomas Elgin General Hospital President and CEO Paul Collins made \$174,733.65 last year, down from the \$213,475.50 he made in 2015. Other STEGH employees on the list: registered nurse Halina Chabras, \$100,455.75 (new); vice-president Karen Davies \$175,000.80 (\$181,731.60); value stream leader Jodi Edwards, \$100,716.27 (\$102,047.96);

registered nurse Hanuka Ferizovic, \$122,468.21 (\$119,044.18); pharmacist Kathryn Ann Fletcher, \$110,975 (\$107,165.74); registered nurse Ilma Lucinda Gillard, \$105,719.72 (\$102,169.55); registered nurse Roxanna Green, \$100,248.86 (\$105,127.86); registered nurse Nancy Anne Harms, \$101,938.28 (\$103,961.61); manager Terry Hiddink, \$100,665.92 (\$102,024.71); manager Katherine Jameson, \$100,690.31 (\$102,022.39); registered nurse Judy Margaret Johnston, \$102,928.92 (\$115,312.97); registered nurse Catherine Barbara Kersten, \$103,318.37 (new); pharmacist Susan Mary Kolator-Cotham, \$103,962.51 (\$107,010.14); value stream leader Leanne McCullough, \$111,766.22 (\$113,244.51); manager Nicole Michaud-Hamilton, \$101,842.40 (new); registered nurse Elaine Mills, \$102,073.12 (\$107,562.54); manager Robin Mitchell, \$105,539.71 (new);

CONTINUED ON PAGE A2

Express-O-Gram

CONTINUED FROM PAGE A1

for convenience, cost or impact on our business centre. In fact, they gave no reasons for this sudden decision, which was communicated to us, while south on vacation. We told Renée and her brothers Brett and Eric, to continue plans despite the new circumstance. We note they all work at the Express and live here.

We only had to step in to help, or hinder – your interpretation – with moderation that night.

So that fault is all theirs – and we commend them for it.

One speaker took a shot at us for doing business in Toronto and taking a vacation. Those Toronto trips have resulted in millions of dollars of business in Aylmer that would not be here otherwise nor the resulting jobs.

A vacation – pardon me. The Mexican food, scenery, heat and ocean were great. The U.S. is closer but they won't have me. Port Bruce, you'll note, is still a bit chilly at this time of year.

That criticism from someone who has enjoyed an annual three-month vacation most of his life and now a pension that many would envy as a salary, well, that's a bit precious.

Councillor Ted McDonald has suggested that The Express colluded with some members of previous councils to distort or hide the "donation" of space at Trillium Apartments in an effort to "hijack" democracy. That was shouted from the balcony.

This newspaper has covered that phony issue several times and continuing to propagate the myth that the offer was much more than a musing is like Donald Trump challenging the birthright of former U.S. President Barack Obama.

Our diligent research has shown that a legal offer never came, never happened. If we find solid evidence to the contrary, it will be reprinted right here in red ink. Let's put this myth to rest, now.

As for hijacking democracy, Cr. McDonald admitted he took part in behind-the-scenes discussion in order to orchestrate the library decision. It was a product of just several minutes in public session – no discussion, no explanation.

When council is manoeuvred from the dark shadows and back alleys, well who is doing the hijacking?

Some close relatives have told us to tone the adjectives and nouns down. The path to enlightenment must include recognition of the moron and knucklehead factor, spring-loaded to jump out of our character at the worst possible time. The yahoo behind this pen is already responsible for too many clangers and much to be ashamed of, but we try. And we'll fail anyway. But we'll try to tone down.

So it is up to the reader to judge and perhaps label the sort of citizen who comes out to our meeting, says nothing after repeated requests – it was a meeting to hear all opinions – and then retreats to the insulation and lack of scrutiny of the Internet to criticize our meeting. What's that all about?

To our family and work colleagues who made it happen and the audience who came well prepared, researched, passionate and eloquent, from children to seniors, especially those who made it despite physical limitations, thank you so much for your community spirit.

We appreciate Cr. McDonald and Deputy Mayor Mary French, the only town council members courageous enough to face the public. But of course, that is exactly what they are paid for – to do public business.

For the councillors who used as an excuse that coming to a public meeting would be some sort of breach of trust, well maybe they and town staff should read the Municipal Act – carefully.

As the Ontario Ombudsman André Martin said concluding that a meeting of London councillors, literally IN A BACK ROOM out of the public eye, was a "clear violation" of the law:

"What does threaten the heart of democracy is when a quorum of council or a standing committee improperly gathers outside of council chambers, to the exclusion of the public ear and eye."

As one councillor recently told this scribe, in a phone conversation, "You wouldn't believe the number of secret meetings we have" or words to that effect. We were dumbfounded.

Oh yeah. A few weeks ago we referred carelessly to George Jukes' restaurant by a colloquialism and spelled his last name incorrectly, when we should have used the formal West End Snack Bar. My mistake, my fault, no excuse – well we were distracted by the sound of crashing surf just metres away. Nope, definitely not sorry about that vacation.

NOTABLE QUOTABLES

"There is not a crime, there is not a dodge, there is not a trick, there is not a swindle, there is not a vice which does not live by secrecy."

— Joseph Pulitzer

Letters to the Editor

Little evidence of courage

Thank you to the Hueston family and the Aylmer Express for hosting Thursday night's forum on the Aylmer library. Thank you to the many who presented reasoned and passionate views.

Thank you to Hueston Deputy Mayor Mary French, Councillor Ted McDonald, Malahide Mayor Dave Mennill and

Councillor Chester Glinks for presenting their personal views.

Unfortunately the reasons for moving the library out to the hockey arena were never made clear. Aylmer Cr. Pete Barbour, nominal chief sponsor of the move, said nothing. Councillors Arthur Oslach and Sheri Andrews were no-shows. Little evidence of courage or

conviction. Not a proud moment for the Town of Aylmer.

Malahide Township appears to be made of sterner stuff – the library will not be moving out to the arena until they give their approval and that will depend on results from a complete look at the financial implications.

Ian Johnson
Port Bruce

Complex complex & council

Wonderful attendance Thursday evening at library meeting. Thank you very much to Aylmer Express for organizing the event.

Brett and Eric Hueston made excellent points on what we lose both at the library and East Elgin Community Complex.

At the library if we move it anywhere we lose \$45,000 a year from heritage conservancy. This money keeps our beautiful building from falling apart because what happens to it if the Library moves out, who maintains it then?

That would probably be the next building on the chopping block.

If it goes to the arena, they lose over \$67,000. That is the revenue generated there so far, and that figure will increase as there are more sports available.

Don't forget the evacuation facility just happens to be at the Complex. That was pointed out

by Malahide Councillor Chester Glinks, at the meeting.

This Complex is called East Elgin Community Complex. To move the library there takes the "community" out of the equation. People are really upset about the way some members conduct themselves, blindsiding the rest of them.

When I was speaking at council meetings, I had to (as everyone does) have their letter ready before 12 noon on Thursday, to be on the agenda for Monday meeting. Councillor Ted McDonald said they add things all the time. That must be true, but that doesn't mean it's proper protocol or conduct, let alone fair. Deputy Mayor Mary French pointed out, at the meeting you got a two-page letter with four minutes to read it – let's vote! There are no figures for the move, renovation of the move or to my knowledge, expansion to 10,000-square-feet.

Unqualified decision

I left the library public meeting angry Thursday night, just as I was when I first read that a decision had been made to move the library to a new location without allowing the community a chance to voice their concerns.

Last Thursday I got the chance to hear the love and need the community has towards this beautiful traditional

pillar in town. My anger is directed towards the few who feel they can make these decisions without respecting the concerns of the people who use the library.

What happens if this move turns out to be more costly than forecast? We know that tends to happen. What happens if down the road that, yes, this was a bad choice? Who will bear

those costs?

My feeling is in some cases our politicians may not be the most qualified to make these decisions for the community when they don't take the time to hear all sides. When you won't hear me you don't get my vote. Shameful.

Tiziana Consalvo
Aylmer

Accessible library

The meeting organized by the Aylmer Express regarding the future of the Aylmer library was a reassuring event. It brought people together, as a library can do.

Many spoke and it became clear that there are many library users in Aylmer and surrounding areas for whom the accessibility of the downtown library is not merely a matter

of convenience but is a critical issue. These include mothers with young children, the Menonites, the Amish, residents of the Port Bruce Manor, and anyone else whose circumstances or schedules would make a library located on the edge of a town that has no public transit difficult to get to.

Why did the town council vote to move the library to East

Elgin Community Complex? This remains a mystery. The question was urgently posed by moderator John Hueston and others. This was an opportunity for those who favour moving the library to the Complex to explain their point of view. They remained silent.

Nick Johnson
Port Bruce

Lots to think about

Congratulations to the Hueston family for having the will and the commitment to democratic process to host an

open forum about the Aylmer library and encourage all points of view from the participants. There was much to think

about after that evening.

Christina Mayhew
Port Bruce

Library: correct the mistake

You would put a gas station or a big-box restaurant on the outskirts of town. Why mix a sports venue with a study hall?

It makes no sense, especially down a busy road with heavy trucks. How do you expect a young child to travel all that way alone with these vehicles

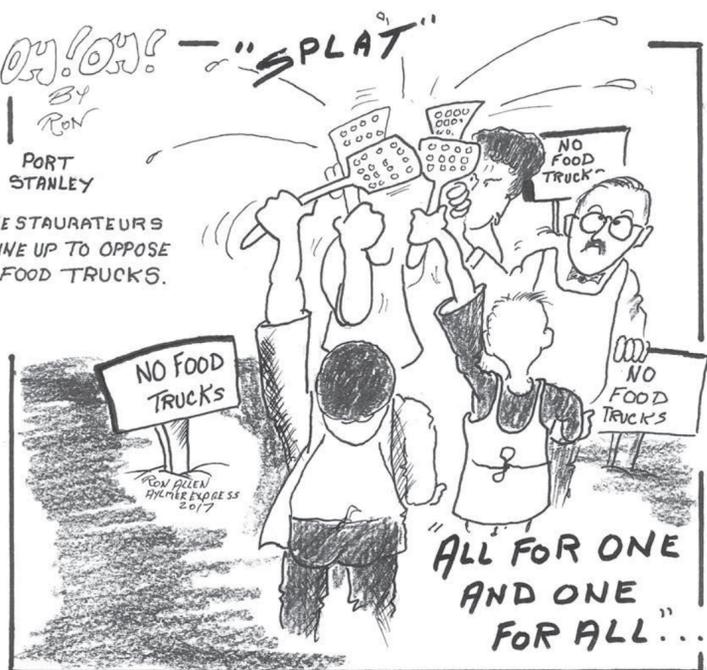
whizzing by at all times?

Try to find a sidewalk in winter. There is already heavy congestion on hockey nights.

You would be better off moving the museum into the old library and building an ultra-modern library next door in a two-storey building.

Invest in the children of Aylmer instead of sending them down a busy highway. Why can't a costly mistake be corrected? Promote Aylmer heritage and not bad politics.

Mark Henwood
Aylmer



Gifts were presented to special guests at the Kingsmill Union School Reunion in August 1966. Pictured, from left, were: Robert Ferguson of Pontiac (who came the farthest), Charles Caswell (oldest male pupil), Mrs. E. VanPatter (oldest female teacher), Mrs. Mabel Stafford Smith (oldest female pupil) and Dr. Eller Mc-Keller (oldest male teacher). This photograph is part of the Kingsmill-Mapleton Women's Institute Tweedsmuir History, Volume Two, courtesy of the Elgin County Archives. Anyone with information on this photograph or to purchase a reprint, please call 519-631-1460 ext. 154. (AE/contributed)

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Councillors speak: Only one from Aylmer stood behind decision

by Craig Bradford
of The Aylmer Express

During The Aylmer Express sponsored public forum on the future of the Aylmer library held last week, town Councillor Ted McDonald maintained a three-year-old offer by the financier of the Aylmer Trillium Park condominium building to house a new library in first floor vacant commercial space was botched by then Mayor Jack Couckuyt and the former council.

The public forum was held on Thursday evening, March 30 at Aylmer Old Town Hall Theatre.

"Hijacked"

"Democracy was hijacked," Cr. McDonald said at one point during the forum about the offer by former Aylmer resident Peter Banman who told the Express in October 2014 that he offered to purchase the remaining almost 6,000 square feet of vacant ground floor commercial space at Aylmer Trillium Park condominiums and donate it to the Town of Aylmer as a gift for a new library.

"You won't read that in the paper," Cr. McDonald said.

In fact, in October 2014, Mr. Banman told the Express he made a verbal offer to a senior town staff member in May 2014 before withdrawing the offer just over a week later.

(The Express investigated the alleged offer made by Mr. Banman and determined no offer in writing had ever been filed and the matter had never been discussed by Aylmer councillors.)

When he first got up to speak during the Express public forum, Cr. McDonald made it clear he was representing himself and was not speaking on behalf of council.

"This is my opinion and my opinion only," he said.

Cr. McDonald was one of only two Aylmer councillors who spoke during the forum that was attended by over 150 interested local residents.

Deputy Mayor Mary French was the other Aylmer councillor who spoke during the forum.

Cr. Barbour was the other Aylmer councillor at the forum but he did not speak.

Cr. McDonald, along with councillors Sheri Andrews, Barbour and Arthur Oslach, at the March 13 meeting to commit a new larger library to hall space at East Elgin Community Complex with the project to be completed and the new library open by Jan. 1, 2018.

Mayor Greg Currie, Deputy Mayor French and Cr. Ann Laur voted against the motion.

The resolution also called for town staff to come up with a way to pay for the renovations to the Complex, asked Malahide to pay for half of the project and asked the County of Elgin for its blessing of the location.

Aylmer and Malahide co-own the Complex and equally share paying for its operation.

Taxpayers of both municipalities pay for the Complex's annual deficit.

Elgin County is responsible for providing public library service and its member municipalities provide space for library branches.

No grants?

Earlier in the meeting, co-moderator John Hueston,

president and publisher of the Express, asked the councillors present, Cr. Pete Barbour and Cr. McDonald (Deputy Mayor French arrived later as she had another commitment that evening), why the town hadn't applied for grant funding from the Dorothy Palmer Estate or any senior government grant program for a new library.

Mr. Hueston also asked to hear from the councillors who voted in favour of moving the library to the Complex, to explain their decision.

Cr. McDonald began his comments at the meeting by saying the town couldn't apply to any grant programs without having made a decision on a specific library project.

He then started talking about Mr. Banman's offer.

Cr. McDonald said he had met with Mr. Banman after he withdrew his offer.

(The county has also indicated libraries should be located in municipally-owned buildings.)

Keeping the existing library open and expanding into space in either the Steam Laundry building immediately to the north was also out of the question, Cr. McDonald said as the county wasn't in favour of a "two-site location."

He said the 13,000 catchment area of the Aylmer library including most of Malahide along with all of Aylmer.

"I campaigned on no debt," Cr. McDonald said, adding his election platform also included opposition to building a new stand-alone building for upwards of \$3-million or building an expansion onto the existing library.

Former Mayor Couckuyt had campaigned on building a stand-alone new expanded library in the vacant green space immediately to the south of the current library.

He lost the October 2014 municipal election to Mayor Currie.

Defeated

"The four candidates who campaigned for that [a new stand-alone expanded library building] were defeated," Cr. McDonald said. "That's democracy."

No prior council before the current one had put money aside in a reserve for a new library, he said.

"We were the first council to do so and to put our money where our mouths are," Cr. McDonald said.

Cr. McDonald then highlighted some accomplishments of the current council over the past year which included buying a used replacement aerial fire truck and paying for the construction of a new public works building "from reserves."

Mr. Hueston said to Cr. McDonald that there had never been a "concrete offer from [Mr.] Banman" and at least two stories on the subject had been published in the Express.

"It was hijacked," Cr. McDonald replied, adding the offer in writing was contained in a series of emails.

A man in the audience shouted out "wasn't there a vote that blindsided the community?"

Cr. McDonald replied the vote on the surprise resolution committing the new library to



Spectators filled the Old Town Hall opera house on Thursday, March 30, as the future of the town library on the ground floor

of that building was deliberated at a public meeting.

(AE/Rob Perry)

the Complex was "perfectly legal to add to the agenda" as "all seven [councillors] voted to add it."

Mr. Hueston said, in contrast, members of the public couldn't show up and speak during a council meeting without prior notice.

Past mayor

Mr. Couckuyt then appeared at a microphone and said Mr. Banman's offer was not made in writing, only verbally, and it was withdrawn.

"I can't understand why you keep harping on this," he told Cr. McDonald.

Mr. Couckuyt said Cr. McDonald hadn't answered Mr. Hueston's earlier question he posed to councillors about the rationale of moving the library to the Complex.

"I still don't know," Mr. Couckuyt said. "Do you think we will be saving a whole lot of money going there? Do the numbers - we'll lose money going to the Complex. As far as debt goes, with the public works building and other projects, the last council built \$7-million in reserves and you had \$5.6-million at the end of the year. The money you are spending is the money that we gave you."

"It is better to have the library right here another five years until we get it right. It's an election ploy to put it out there a year out and shame on you."

Mr. Hueston pointed to the Complex's over \$500,000 annual deficit, some town staff and most police officers showing up on the "Sunshine List" of the provincially mandated public salary disclosure, along with their future lucrative pensions.

"Only the library and the [Aylmer-Malahide] Museum [and Archives] get squeezed," Mr. Hueston said. "Why is that?"

Cr. McDonald replied that Complex General Manager James Allen had reduced electricity usage there by 33 percent.

Mr. Hueston said he had been "55-45" on a downtown library versus a new library moving into hall space at the Complex but then he stepped into the existing library earlier that day and found "eight to 10 people here today on a rotten day."

"I'm not sure the councillors have a good feeling about what this building is about," he con-

tinued.

Mr. Hueston said he wanted to keep the library in the downtown.

"I'm absolutely committed to this community," he said. "[The current library at Old Town Hall] stands us out in the county. It goes against everything I've learned in my life to gut the downtown."

Later on in the evening, Mr. Hueston asked councillors about the cost of a new library.

"What confounds me is there has been hundreds of thousands, perhaps millions of dollars available in grants," he said. "Why haven't you taken advantage of it? Why didn't we go after that?"

Mr. Hueston specifically mentioned the Dorothy Palmer Estate.

Both she and her husband John lived many years in Aylmer before they died and the couple left a \$6.5-million estate that was given out as grants to various community organizations and projects over the past several years.

"St. Thomas got most of it," Mr. Hueston said.

He then noted the annual deficit for the Complex and part of the rationale of moving a library there being to offset the loss.

"Moving money"

"When you move the library to the arena, the money here [the lease paid by the county for the space at Old Town Hall] disappears," he said. "All you are doing is moving the money from here to there. It's the same money, you've just moved it."

Audience member Bill Campbell said in addition to what Mr. Hueston had just said, Aylmer would then be sharing the county lease payment revenue for a library at the Complex with Malahide.

Forum co-moderator, Express Editor Brett Hueston, said the town was receiving \$35,000 a year from the county for the lease of the space at the existing library. A new lease for a library at the Complex, based on 10,000 square feet, would be \$120,000 annually.

But the \$41,000 in hall rentals at the Complex received in 2016 would "go to zero" and with the new lease, the municipalities would have to pay more for utilities and maintenance of

a library at the Complex than Aylmer did with its existing lease for Old Town Hall.

He asked the councillors if they had looked at that before making their decision to move the library to the Complex.

Later in the meeting, Brett Hueston asked either Cr. McDonald or Cr. Barbour to explain why the resolution to move the library to the Complex on March 13 was needed when a prior motion a few weeks earlier approved getting a cost of putting one there.

He said there was no discussion at the March 13 meeting of the "financial impact" of moving the library to the Complex.

"\$1-million decision"

"It was probably the fastest \$1-million decision made without previous discussion," he said.

"It was to stifle any dissent," Larry Jeffery said, another member of ALES.

Cr. McDonald replied that outside of regular council meetings, four councillors cannot meet informally as it would form a quorum and an official meeting.

He said a discussion was held "behind the scenes to build consensus" between the four councillors who voted to put the library at the Complex.

"Before I come to council, I build support for an idea," Cr. McDonald said. "That's good business sense."

"How did council know that without working out revenue?" Brett Hueston asked.

Jamie Chapman said the four councillors who voted for moving the library to the Complex "didn't wait to get the costing."

"That's what we don't understand," she said.

Deputy Mayor French agreed a decision was made with no costing.

Brett Hueston noted the four councillors who voted in favour of the March 13 resolution didn't read the hard copy Cr. Barbour handed out to all councillors near the beginning of the meeting.

In video footage of the meeting he had viewed, those councillors were looking elsewhere while the three who voted against the motion appeared to read what was in front of them.

"Other side"

Later during the meeting, John Hueston asked to hear from "people on the other side of the issue [supportive] with putting the library at the Complex."

He appreciated Cr. McDonald stepping forward to speak for himself, "but that is what the job is, taking it on the shoulders."

"I hoped it would be closer to a 50-50 split," Mr. Hueston said. "I certainly hoped to see more councillors here, to feel the heat!"

Malahide Cr. Chester Glinski approached a microphone.

He said the Complex was Aylmer's primary evacuation centre and Malahide's secondary evacuation centre.

He wondered if enough space for an evacuation centre would be set aside when a library was added to the hall space at the Complex.

Cr. Glinski also doubted the storage, mezzanine and kitchen space at the Complex could be used for a library and questioned if there would be enough space there for a library.

"If you don't use the Complex for an evacuation centre, you would have to find an alternative," he said. "And you would have to buy a generator for the other option."

Deputy Mayor French said Cr. Barbour's motion on March 13 was "legitimate as it was related to the budget."

"We don't know what it will cost," Deputy Mayor French said. "When this [Cr. Barbour's resolution] came forward I only had a few minutes to read it. It was kind of pushed on us. But the decision has been made and I am fine with it. This is going to happen, it [a new, expanded library] is going to the Complex! Maybe it can change. What we are doing tonight [at the public forum] we should have done as a council."

Malahide Mayor Dave Mennill was the last municipal councillor to speak during the forum.

His council found themselves considering two resolutions relating to a library going to the Complex from their Aylmer counterparts: the one in February asking Malahide if they would consider the proposal and a then the one from March 13 that committed a library to the Complex.

"No decision"

"We need to know many other facts," Mayor Mennill said. "We need to know the size, the cost, the rental agreement. We don't want to infringe on current income at the Complex. And what about tournaments at the Complex? There are a lot of unknowns still. Until we know those unknowns, there will be no decision from Malahide."

John Hueston ended the forum by thanking everyone who attended.

"These opportunities can be educational and always make me feel better about our community afterwards," he said. "It helps us engage and know what is going on."

He believed "council was missing something" with the decision to move the library from the downtown to the Complex, especially with so many attending the forum stating they either were against the decision or had concerns.

"The opinions tonight are not reflected in the council decision."

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10:00am	Core & Cardio Workout
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10:15am	Yoga
11:15am	Closing Remarks

Councillor no-shows at library forum

by Craig Bradford of The Aylmer Express

Although all were invited, only two of the four Aylmer councillors who voted in favour of a resolution to relocate the town's existing library to a larger space within hall space at East Elgin Community Complex attended a public forum on the future of the library sponsored by the Aylmer Express on Thursday evening, March 30.



Aylmer Councillor Pete Barbour, left, seated with former town council member John Vandermeersch, right, during the public meeting on the town library. (AE/Rob Perry)

The two-and-a-half-hour public forum was held at Old Town Hall Theatre, above the current Aylmer library which occupies the main floor of the downtown historic building.

Only two of the four Aylmer councillors who voted in favour of a recent surprise resolution to move the library to the Complex by Jan. 1, 2018 attended the meeting: Cr. Pete Barbour, who moved the resolution, and Cr. Ted McDonald. Only Cr. McDonald spoke during the meeting.

The other two, Cr. Arthur Oslach and Cr. Sheri Andrews, who both confirmed with organizers they would attend the forum, were absent without notice.

Other local politicians who attended the meeting included Aylmer Deputy Mayor Mary French, who voted against the resolution, Malahide Mayor or Dave Mennill and fellow Councillor Chester Glinski, all three of whom spoke during the forum.

Malahide councillors Rick Cerna and Mark Widner attended but did not speak.

Aylmer Mayor Greg Currie and Cr. Ann Laur, who both voted against the library to the Complex motion, told organizers in advance they could not attend because they were out of the country that evening.

Before the public forum started, Cr. Barbour told one of the organizers he was thinking

of leaving.

He eventually decided to stay but did not speak even after councillors were asked to several times by meeting moderators John Hueston and Brett Hueston, both of the Express.

"A meeting of council members where there are more than three being a quorum of council is only permitted at the call of the chair or is authorized by the Municipal Act," Cr. Barbour began in explaining why he was unexcused attending the forum.

"Councillors attending a gathering in close proximity could be considered to be an unauthorized council meeting and therefore not permitted," he continued.

"The [Elgin County] Integrity Commissioner [John Maddox] and the [Ontario] Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing provided documentation or an opinion of the potential of having an unauthorized meeting," Cr. Barbour said.

"No one said attend or not attend," Cr. Barbour replied when asked if senior town staff or anyone else told councillors to avoid coming to the forum.

"I asked our CAO [Administrator Jennifer Reynaert] for an opinion," Cr. Barbour said when asked who sought the advice relating to what constituted an unauthorized council meeting.

"That's right," was his response when asked if Ms.

Reynaert then contacted Mr. Maddox and the Ontario government.

It appeared that during the interview, Cr. Barbour was making up his mind on whether or not to stay for the public forum.

"I want to be here because I want to hear what the public has to say," he said.

Cr. Oslach said he had another commitment that began at the same time as the library public forum, a Royal Canadian Legion, Colonel Talbot Branch 81 (Aylmer) tribute service for a local veteran who had just died, Ruth Peters.

Cr. Oslach said as president of the Aylmer Legion, he had to officiate at the tribute.

The tribute at H.A. Keibel Funeral Home lasted about a half hour after which Cr. Oslach said he went home and changed out of his Legion uniform.

He disputed that he had indicated to a public forum organizer he had planned on attending.

Cr. Oslach said he did not respond to an email message he received from the organizer but talked to Express Editor Brett Hueston at length on Saturday, March 25 at the Aylmer and East Elgin Home, Garden and Rec Show held at the Complex.

He remembered indicating to Mr. Hueston he "may or may not attend" the public forum.

"Because I checked the [town's] procedural bylaw," Cr.

Oslach said when asked why he didn't come to the public forum on the library. "I read the parts on quorums and meetings and one sentence stuck out to me...does a meeting include informal gatherings? Most of time it doesn't, however if the business of the meeting does involve matters in front of council it can be seen that way."

He confirmed he had received an email from Ms. Reynaert that contained the advice Cr. Barbour had referenced from Mr. Maddox and the Ministry of Municipal Affairs and Housing.

"It could be deemed as an official [unauthorized] meeting," Cr. Oslach said.

"I decided not to go for that reason," he said. "And I didn't go because the decision has been made [to move the library to the Complex] and if I went I would have no comment anyways."

Cr. Sheri Andrews confirmed she originally replied to the email invitation from a public forum organizer stating she would attend.

She later changed her mind.

"I didn't attend the meeting because it wasn't a sanctioned meeting by the town but one advertised and sponsored by The Aylmer Express," she said.

Cr. Andrews made her decision not to attend the forum after doing some "due diligence" and having "made some inquiries with authorities on meetings and what is allowed and not allowed."

"I called some of our governing bodies of council and received an email not indicating what we should or should not do and I made my decision with that," Cr. Andrews continued.

"I did it [not attending the forum] to avoid any possibility that we were doing any further advancement of council business contrary to decisions we had already made," she said.

Community stands up for library downtown

CONTINUED FROM PAGE A1

required a tutor.

The child would walk from her school to the library to meet with the tutor.

Ms. Chapman, who had been explaining her own experience, said now imagine the same scenarios but with the library at the Complex instead of downtown.

"They can't get where they need to go," she said.

Later during the meeting, Ms. Chapman asked councillors about their vision for the future.

"I hope that includes our children," she said.

"The library is a meeting place, a place for them to go and grow," Ms. Chapman said. "It's also a place for seniors. It frustrates me to no end that it is treated as a throwaway."

"Greenest bricks"

Mary Jane Lampman wondered how councillors could make a decision to move the library to the Complex without finding out an estimated cost for renovations.

She pointed to the adjacent Steam Laundry building as an option for the existing Old Town Hall Library to move and expand into.

If that option was chosen, the Aylmer-Malahide Museum and Archives could move into a larger space in the vacated Old Town Hall Library, Ms. Lampman suggested.

In contact with the Amish

community, she said they wanted the library to remain in the downtown as the Complex was "too far for their horse and buggies to go" safely.

ALES

Kirk Barons of the Aylmer Library Expansion Supporters (ALES) wished councillors had done some research before making the decision to move the library to the Complex.

He also disagreed with the process by which Councillor Pete Barbour's resolution was introduced.

"This building is a jewel, a centrepiece," Mr. Barons said, adding building an expansion to the existing library to the west would showcase Old Town Hall.

"Seniors and children are not going to a library almost out of town," he said. "Teachers are not going to take their kids to the Complex."

He said many towns "suffer with arena deficit" and urged councillors to not "sacrifice culture and learning" in an attempt to reduce that deficit.

A number of downtown agencies like Aylmer Community Services, Employment Services Elgin and MCS use the existing library, he said. The library is also used by many local residents as a "community gathering place" in a "safe and convenient" setting.

Mr. Barons said elementary teachers, community groups and seniors have indicated

they want the library to remain downtown as did the Amish community.

"Wild spenders"

Shirley Pearson said taxpayers needed to know the cost of whatever was decided about the future of an Aylmer library.

She called the members of the previous council "wild spenders" with discussions of building a new stand-alone library that would have cost more than \$3-million.

"The library has already cost us too much money."

She suggested the two re-elected councillors, Cr. Barbour and Cr. Arthur Oslach, should "wear the cost of past and current spending."

"Let them retire at the next election and let them spend their own money," Ms. Pearson concluded.

"100% affordable"

Larry Jeffery of the ALES disagreed with Ms. Pearson and said the current council had kept tax increases to the "rate of inflation or even lower."

Mr. Jeffery said most councillors that were elected to serve this term campaigned on not saddling the town with a \$3-million debt for a new library.

"That was fear-mongering," he said. "\$3-million is 100-percent affordable."

He asked any councillor or members of the Aylmer Taxpayers Advisory Committee to

challenge his facts.

"There was no gnashing of teeth paying for a \$2-million fire hall," Mr. Jeffery continued. "We needed a new fire hall so we built one with no effect on our taxes. We spent \$1.5-million on a new public works building from reserves and are moving some municipal employees out there and our taxes aren't affected."

If a new 10,000-square-foot library was established it would generate \$120,000 in revenue in annual lease payments from the County of Elgin, Mr. Jeffery explained.

Over a 20-year amortization, those lease payments would pay 80 percent of the cost of a new library, he said.

Former Mayor Jack Couckuyt had calculated paying for a new library would have cost \$8 a year for every Aylmer resident, Mr. Jeffery said, adding his own calculation came in at \$6 per person but that didn't include maintenance or utilities.

"We fooled around and missed Palmer [Estate grant] money and Canada 150 money," he continued. "But there are still opportunities for grants."

He said a new library in Shedden received grants from the Ontario Trillium Foundation and Green Lane Trust.

The community could also launch a fundraising campaign.

"Money is out there," Mr. Jeffery said. "People like

CONTINUED ON PAGE A9



Abe Harms, Executive Director Aylmer Mennonite Community Services



Lisa Dyck



Tom McKenney



Colleen Sawyer

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Community stands up for library downtown

CONTINUED FROM PAGE A8
libraries. They are willing to fork some out. I'd rather have the library where it is than make a 50-year mistake out there [at the Complex]."

Only one
David Ritchie, an Aylmer area resident for 41 years and a long-time library member, said Cr. Barbour believed three out of five of Aylmer's schools would be closer to a library at the Complex than the existing one in the downtown.

He measured the actual distances with an odometer and an Internet mapping service and discovered only one would be closer — Immanuel Christian School — the farthest west of the five.

"Sick and tired"
Bob Nesbitt gave the four councillors who passed the resolution to move the library to the Complex credit because "they stood up and voted."

He disagreed with Mr. Jeffery about the cost of building something new, figuring it would be more like \$4-million, adding there was "lots of [existing] space in Aylmer for a new library."

Mr. Nesbitt was also "okay" with putting a library at the Complex.

"I'm just sick and tired hearing about the library," he said.

"Red flags"
Linda Charlton said she had been paying attention to Mala-

hide's meetings and minutes. She noticed councillors there had passed a resolution asking Aylmer for more information about relocating the Aylmer library to the Complex, a facility the two municipalities co-own and share the costs of operating equally.

The Aylmer resolution to move the library to the Complex by Jan. 1, 2018 sent up "red flags for Malahide," Ms. Charlton said, adding it was "confusing how this can be a foregone conclusion without knowing what is needed on both sides, Aylmer and Malahide."

"Not right"
Steve Blankenship's first thoughts about moving the library to the Complex were that it was a "great" idea to help eliminate the twin-ice pad's annual deficit.

Then he had second thoughts. "It's not right moving it out there," he said, especially with no public transit or designated bicycle lanes going to the Complex.

He suggested adding onto the existing Old Town Hall Library into Bear Park to the south or north through Cooper's Alley into the Steam Laundry building.

"It seems council has been sitting on their hands and have made a snap decision to solve all our problems," he concluded.

Petition
Bill Murch had two numbers

he wanted to tell the audience about: 958 and 6,259.

The 958 represented the number of signatures a petition he had drawn up had generated the two weeks prior as of 2:45 p.m. of the day of the public forum.

"Aylmer council should locate the new library in the downtown core area," read one line of the petition.

The second number of 6,259 represented the monthly foot traffic through the front door of the Aylmer library as of that afternoon.

Mr. Murch said both numbers would be bigger by the end of March and the petition would be presented to Aylmer council at a future meeting.

"Without going into details, I can say that along with the schools, Aylmer council is not very popular with the local pickleball players," Mr. Murch said, referring to a sport played in hall space at the Complex. "Councillors should remember that pickleball players carry paddles and know how to use them."

The remark generated some laughter from the crowd.

Mr. Murch said one name on the petition caught his attention as it was from a woman he knew has a disability and is a regular library visitor.

"However she has not been sleeping because she is afraid that the library would move out of the downtown to the East

Elgin Community Complex," he said.

"Audacity"
Allan Cross couldn't believe the "audacity of council" with their decision to repurpose the hall space at the Complex as a library after so many local residents and businesses contributed generously to the fund-raising campaign to help pay for the facility as it was now, including naming rights on the halls.

"Take a look"
Pat Musclow volunteers at the Aylmer library and therefore believes she had a good handle on exactly who uses it.

She was glad that Mr. Harms spoke on behalf of the Mennonite community as they, along with women, seniors and children, were the main users of the library.

Ms. Musclow had "never seen anyone on the current council use the library" and invited them to visit the facility "to take a look at what goes on" there.

"Education is the number one function of the library," Ms. Musclow said, adding that any day the library is open when school lets out, all the computers there are being used and there are people perusing books in the shelving.

"These people aren't going to use a library at the Complex," she said.

If a library does end up at the arena, Ms. Musclow believed a spotlight, at a "\$500,000 cost," was needed there due to the heavy traffic.

"Listening?"
Chris Mayhew, who retired in 2014 after 30 years as the supervisor of the Aylmer library, had one question for the councillors who "bravely" chose to attend the forum.

"Have you been listening?" she asked. "Have you been listening at all? Is it making a difference? These are the people you are leading and are governing for."

"Half my life"
Eric Hueston, 26, said he attended but wasn't able to speak at a meeting three years ago on a new design for a stand-alone library building.

"This debate has been going on for half my life," he said. Not having much need for a library growing up, Mr. Hueston said that changed when he moved to London to attend college and had new expenses to pay for on his own.

He found himself at London library branches "a lot more," especially the downtown main branch.

After college and back in Aylmer, Mr. Hueston saw that the future of his hometown library was still going on.

A few years ago, the town was contemplating "a stand-alone library idea, equal to or better than the St. Thomas li-

brary." "My gut reaction was that is a lot of money at \$2.7-million," Mr. Hueston said.

In recent years, he had started visiting the Aylmer library. "It was a zoo, it was great," he said, adding the place was packed on a Saturday.

"The concept of a library being dead is only as dead as you want it to be," Mr. Hueston said after listing a number of uses for a library.

"A [future] library will be organic, it might not look like it does today but there will always be a necessity for one," he continued.

The best towns he had visited had active downtowns which included a library.

Mr. Hueston said Aylmer councillors were willing to "throw money away" at an arena and sports but were unwilling to invest in a library which stood for education and culture.

He also questioned how councillors came to the decision to choose the Complex as the location for a new library.

Looking to "settle down" soon, Mr. Hueston had wanted to do so in Aylmer but due to what was happening in town, he was now considering moving elsewhere like Tillsonburg, Woodstock or Stratford, communities that had their "own stand-alone properly built place" for a library.

"User experience"
Curtis Van Kasteren, the

"youth IT [information technology] intern" at the Aylmer library, said something had to be done with the town's current library as it is "running out of room."

"It seems money is the biggest factor when the user experience is the most important thing," he said.

A student of product design, Mr. Van Kasteren said the focus should be on making the library experience "easier, more useful, more peaceful."

He then compared a library to high-end coffee at well-known café chains.

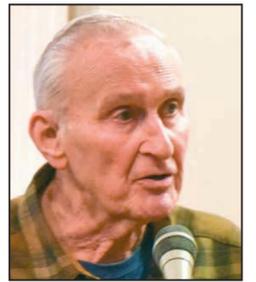
"People don't mind paying a little bit more," Mr. Van Kasteren said. "They're not paying \$7 for a coffee, they are spending \$7 for an experience. If you make a great experience, the money will come. User experience is what it all boils down to."

Customers
Bill Campbell said successful businessmen ask their customers what they want.

"Obviously from this meeting, the customers want the library downtown," he said.

Mr. Campbell noted Aylmer taxpayers are only responsible for half of the Complex's annual deficit.

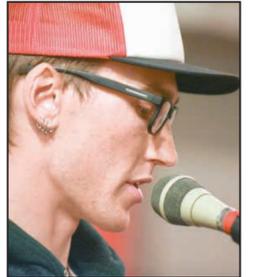
Moving a library there would be giving half of the county lease payment to Malahide which was "not in the interest of Aylmer taxpayers," he said.



Allan Cross



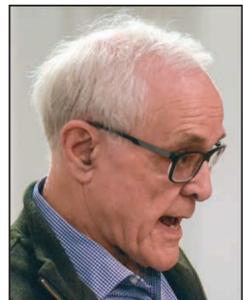
Pat Musclow



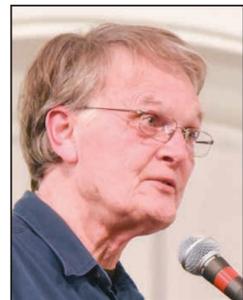
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Shirley Pearson



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Lunch Items

- Virginia Ham
- Roasted Turkey
- Carved Beef
- BBQ Chicken
- Shrimp
- Variety of Salads
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Express-O-Gram

CANADA 150 PARADE SATURDAY

Aylmer is getting an early start on this country's sesquicentennial with a parade Saturday at 11 a.m. down the main drag. It leads to Optimist Park for a tulip festival which includes lots of entertainment and attractions for children.

Even we have been pressed into the service for the parade (leave the tomatoes home). Hopes for good weather and participation.

Perhaps, with the strong Dutch heritage here, a seed or bulb rather, for a continued expanded project annually.

Enjoy the show.

NOT JUST ANOTHER DAY

We can't remember the exact circumstance but it was in her kitchen when she let slip a comment that opened a window on her keen intellect. It was like the silent chief slipping out a word to Jack Nicholson in "One Flew Over The Cuckoo's Nest". But the word was out and we never saw her the same again, adding a layer of complexity we had overlooked. Not that we'd ever thought her a moron. She was smart and sharp, but far more engaged and politically astute than we'd realized. Her strict upbringing had patterned her as shy and deferring – to a point – defined by strong principles and moral code. But she was all about her children, husband – family.

She's been gone many years yet with us every day in her courage and kindness, her generosity and boundless love for family and friends. Of course, we loved her back with all our heart. She was the lifeblood of the family and the backbone too.

We think of the comment about what a great dancer Fred Astaire was and then the rejoinder that Ginger Rogers, his partner, did it all – backward – and in high heels. Well, that's women for you – too often unjustly in the background and mothers even moreso.

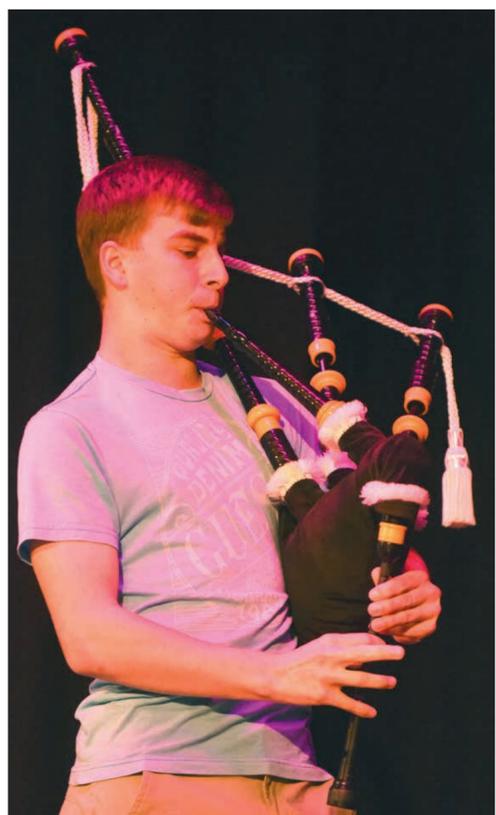
So in our own inadequate way, we name a day for you – better than nothing. But behind it all is our marrow-deep love and respect. The world revolves around you, or should.

Happy Mother's Day, mothers. You really are the best.

NO FOOL LIKE AN OLD FOOL

A week ago we spoke at a meeting to send a message to the Thames Valley District School Board not to close any local public schools (well perhaps South Dorchester which would almost certainly be lost to a new school in Belmont), in

CONTINUED ON PAGE A4



Adam Walker, left, of East Elgin Secondary School was joined by a fellow piper and a drummer, not pictured, rehearsing Wednesday, May 3, for EESS's annual Talent Show the following night. They played a rousing version of the Scottish anthem. More pictures are inside. (AE/Rob Perry)

Library at Complex torpedoed

by Craig Bradford
of The Aylmer Express

It was over nearly as abruptly as it began. In another unexpected turn of events, Aylmer and Malahide councillors, sitting together as the East Elgin Community Complex Interim Board on Wednesday evening, May 3, passed a resolution to not move the Aylmer library to hall space at the Complex. It was an unusual "negative" motion, calling on councillors to not take action.

Aylmer Councillor Pete Barbour, who earlier this year spearheaded the surprise push to place a new, larger library at the Complex, moved this simple resolution: "that the relocation of the Aylmer library branch to the ECCC be not supported."

Malahide Cr. Max Moore seconded the resolution and requested a recorded vote.

All but one of the 13 councillors present voted in favour of the motion.

The sole nay vote belonged to Aylmer Cr. Sheri Andrews.

All of the other Aylmer councillors who previously voted in favour of moving the library to the Complex voted to stop it: Cr. Barbour, Cr. Ted McDonald and Cr. Arthur Oslach.

Town Deputy Mayor Mary French was absent.

After it was shelved a couple of years ago, the idea of putting a new, larger library in hall space at the Complex was put back on the table during an Aylmer council meeting in mid-February.

The concept became reality

when on March 13 Cr. Barbour introduced a surprise eight-clause resolution that committed a library to the Complex during a meeting that was supposed to be reserved for draft budget deliberations.

That motion was approved in a 4-3 recorded vote.

The already mentioned four councillors voted in favour of the resolution while Mayor Greg Currie, Deputy Mayor French and Cr. Ann Laur opposed it.

Malahide councillors had also changed their minds about having a library at the Complex.

In February, township councillors voted 5-1 to support in principle the proposal by Aylmer to move the library to Complex.

Cr. Mark Wales pointed out the township had been the first to recommend to Aylmer the use of the Complex, jointly owned by the two municipalities, in 2014.

The first public hint that town councillors were beginning to lose their resolve on putting a library at the Complex came during the Monday, May 1 meeting when Mayor Currie and Cr. Oslach talked about either abandoning the idea (Cr. Oslach) or putting the brakes to it for now (Mayor Currie). The reversal also follows much public protest of the move to take the library out of the downtown.

"Don't feel it"

In an almost 10-minute soliloquy during the May 3 Com-

plex board meeting when a staff report on the implications of the Old Town Hall library moving to the Complex was being discussed, Cr. Barbour didn't provide any specific reasoning why he had changed course other than the proposal didn't have the full support of all councillors.

"If a library is chosen for here, we need the belief and support of all the people around the table here and I don't feel it," Cr. Barbour said at one point.

He then asked that a decision be made by the end of the meeting that "the joint committee does not endorse the library here and put it to rest."

Cr. Barbour mused that if Aylmer officials "ever had to do this again," they should have reached out to Elgin County, which provides the public library services, and to Malahide to find out if they supported the concept of a library at the Complex.

"Aylmer should have come up with a definitive plan and went to the [Elgin] library branch and said, let's write up an agreement," he said.

Then the town "should have written up a real estate offer for Malahide," Cr. Barbour continued.

"We tried to be the nice guy rather than conduct a business transaction," he said.

"With the consent of the board, if the support's not there, let's stop it tonight and leave it there," Cr. Barbour concluded.

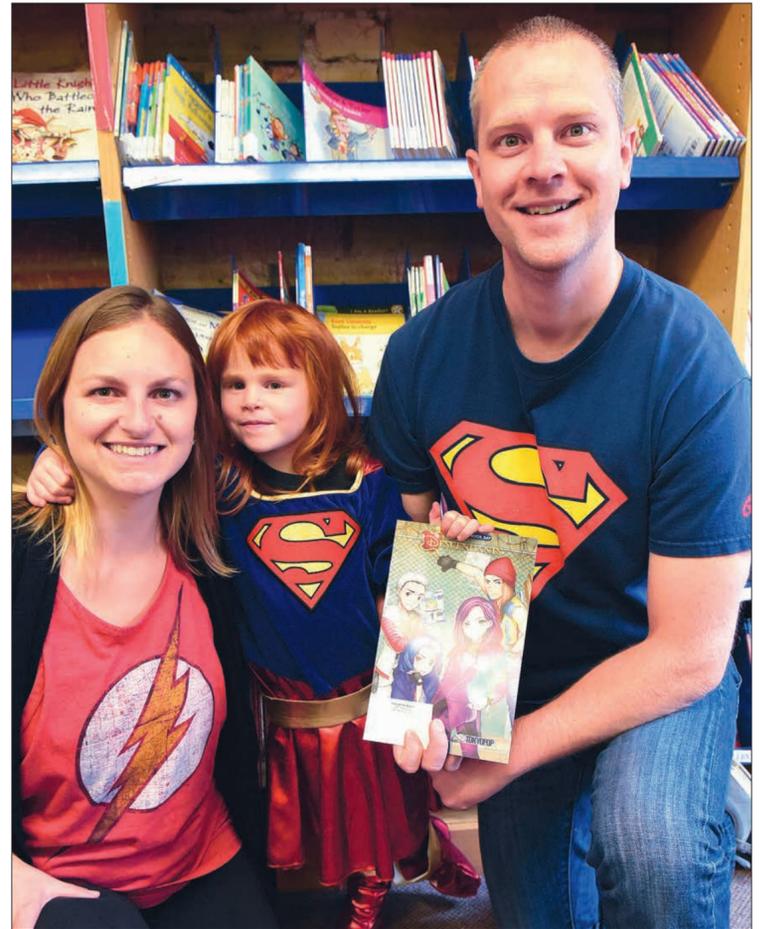
Prior direction

Meeting chairman and Malahide Mayor David Mennill began his response to Cr. Bar-

bour that board members were "wearing our Complex hat tonight and not our council hat" and referenced a resolution

passed during the board's January 2016 meeting that township Chief Administrative Officer

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"Flash" Beth Telfer, left, "Supergirl" Cara Telfer, 6, and "Superman" Mike Telfer of Malahide dressed up for Comic Books Day at the Aylmer library on Saturday morning, May 6. Librarians reported a steady stream of adults and children coming in, many dressed as superheroes or even supervillains, to pick up free comic books. (AE/Rob Perry)

School versus school at TVDSB

by Rob Perry
of The Aylmer Express

Thames Valley District School Board trustees held two nights of public hearings lasting a total of six hours last week to hear from over 50 speakers arguing over which schools in Malahide and Central Elgin should be closed.

The board is considering, among other changes, closing South Dorchester and Springfield elementary schools in Malahide and New Sarum and Sparta schools in Central Elgin.

Two large new elementary schools are proposed for Belmont and the southeast of St. Thomas.

Sparta would see its pupils sent to Port Stanley Public School, and replaced by French Immersion pupils on what's likely to be a temporary basis.

Springfield parents came out in the largest number to speak passionately about keeping their small rural school open.

Among those testifying were parents who believed their special-needs children would be lost in a larger school.

Belmont parents, whose children go to South Dorchester Public School, argued the need for a school in their own community had been recog-

nized by the board eight years ago, and the time had come to build it.

They contended that retaining the status quo, which would include keeping Springfield open, was the worst possible choice, though Springfield parents have through a board review process always said they understood and supported Belmont's desire for a school of its own.

But they didn't want that to come at the cost of their school, and didn't believe a large school was needed in Belmont to satisfy the provincial government's funding requirements.

Sparta parents argued their school, near its full capacity, shouldn't be drained just to fill up Port Stanley Public School, which would be operating at far below capacity if not for the temporary presence of an overflow of French Immersion pupils from overcrowded Pierre Elliot Trudeau school in St. Thomas.

Port Stanley parents wanted their school kept open too, and pointed out that, unlike Sparta, theirs was on municipal water and sewer services.

Sparta parents couldn't understand why a well and

septic system at their school could be an issue, if French Immersion children were to be relocated there.

Meanwhile, New Sarum Public School parents lined up to laud the quality of the education pupils received at their school.

Many said they had moved into the school district just so their children could go there, and didn't want to transfer them elsewhere.

They also pointed out that their school was near full capacity, and the cost per pupil to the board annually was equivalent to the Thames Valley average.

Trustees are expected to make a final decision on recommendations from their senior administrators at a meeting Tuesday, May 23, at the board administration centre in London.

However, they were also to be given an opportunity to question administrators on the proposed changes at a committee meeting Tuesday night, May 9 (see next week's Express for coverage of that).

For extensive coverage of the public hearings last week, see the second section of this week's newspaper.

Wet spring could mean higher risk of collisions with farm machinery

by Rob Perry
of The Aylmer Express

Malahide Councillor Mark Wales, a past president of the Ontario Federation of Agriculture, worries that the wet spring so far this year could mean increased farm machinery traffic on local roads at the end of May, and a higher risk of crashes involving aggressive drivers trying to get by the slower-moving equipment.

Inspector Brad Fishleigh, commander of Elgin Ontario Provincial Police, presented his annual report to township councillors Thursday, May 4.

Cr. Mark Widner raised the problem of farm equipment being cut off on roads by other traffic.

Insp. Fishleigh said that was a great concern, because in recent years some serious and even fatal collisions had involved farm vehicles.

The OPP put on an educational campaign each year to warn motorists of the presence of slow-moving vehicles on road, and the dangers of being too aggressive in passing them.

"It's difficult," he said. "There's not much more we can do, other than educate people

and react when something happens."

Cr. Widner suggested making a video showing a 15-foot wide piece of equipment trying to negotiate local roads with other vehicles backed up behind and then dangerously passing it.

Inspector Fishleigh said his detachment would be happy to work with farm groups and safety agencies on a project like that.

Cr. Wales said that given the weather this year, farmers were going to have a "very

CONTINUED ON PAGE A3

"Honesty prevails" with return of deposit pouch

by Craig Bradford
of The Aylmer Express

David Luthy was relieved and thankful after a deposit pouch containing cash and cheques he lost turned up at the Aylmer branch of the Royal Bank of Canada.

On Monday morning, May 1, Mr. Luthy, who is the long-time manager of Pathway Publishers, an Amish business northeast of Aylmer, was being dropped off by a close friend at the Royal Bank to do his weekly Canadian currency deposit.

Pathway Publishers distributes books in communities in both Canada and the United States.

Several years ago, Mr. Luthy was given a black "in-house" Royal Bank deposit pouch that he has used for his weekly banking business ever since.

"Apparently when I got out of the passenger seat with my briefcase, I obviously dropped this right in front of the Royal Bank," Mr. Luthy said, adding his friend had parked the car directly in front of the bank on Talbot Street.

"It had rained so there was a lot of moisture by the curb," Mr. Luthy continued. "I went into the bank and opened up my briefcase and couldn't find the pouch. So I went back to the Aylmer Express where I had had been before for an hour and a half."

Almost every week, Mr. Luthy visits the Express office for photocopying, mostly historical documents.

But back at the Express, no pouch.

Mr. Luthy returned to the Royal Bank to find his pouch

wasn't there either.

Mr. Luthy then returned home to look for the pouch when a neighbour immediately came up his driveway to tell him someone from the bank had left a message that his missing pouch had shown up there.

"So with great relief, I said that's fine."

The friend who had given him the original ride into town from his Glencolin Line home had returned to his own home so Mr. Luthy quickly arranged for another driver for his immediate return to the Royal Bank.

"I thought I should go in and confirm that the cash was still there," he said, fearful someone had opened the pouch and taken the money.

It was close to noon that same day when he returned to the bank.

"I went in and they said yes, it's right here and it's wet," Mr. Luthy said. "The cheques will have to dry out and all of the cash was there. Honesty won the day."

He doesn't know who found and returned his deposit pouch.

When the pouch was returned to him, Mr. Luthy discovered that it had been damaged with one of the zipper clasps

broken and one of the binder clips holding the cheques and cash together squashed.

"The pouch must have been run over," Mr. Luthy said. "It could have been my friend who ran it over when driving away."

"I brought the cheques home to dry out but I deposited the cash immediately," he continued.

"It made me feel really good," Mr. Luthy said about the complete recovery. "Honesty was always a virtue. In the times we are in, that's somewhat hard to find. The general population is not as religious as it once was when I arrived here 50 years ago."

"Religion has been put on the shelf mostly. Society isn't what it was as when I was growing up. It's wonderful to think that honesty is still present."

"I would have paid it back myself," Mr. Luthy said if the cash had been taken.

"I would say I appreciated your honesty," he said he wanted to tell the person who returned the pouch. "I was raised and told honesty is the best policy. It's good to know honesty is still alive on Planet Earth. I am really glad someone would do that. Honesty prevails!"

OVER 50 SPEAK

Final public input for TVDSB pupil accommodation review

FULL COVERAGE IN SECTION B

OCNA • Cat. PC30 – Community Service

Entry – Aylmer Library Public Forum

History: Several Aylmer councils have been working towards building a new library in town for over 13 years (none successful thus far). After a period of latency on the issue, the newspaper started to receive many Letters to the Editor each week in response to council beginning to talk about getting something done, but only amongst themselves with no community input. Aylmer Express saw the public wanted to speak more on the issue, but council were giving no such opportunities– and decided to hold a public forum on the matter. The day after the facility was booked for the event, council brought forward a surprise motion to move the downtown library to 6,000 sq. ft. of rental hall space at the arena (on the outskirts of town) with no public discussion or reason behind the decision – no financial, logistical or architectural plans. (Library committees and studies had recommended 10,000 sq. ft., and previous plans had been for additions or stand-alone building downtown)

Event: Held in the theatre space above the current library, Aylmer Express welcomed anyone who wished to speak to have their say. The newspaper used advertising, news story and editorial column space to bring awareness to the event and welcome/encourage participation. Hundreds of area residents showed up, leaving standing room only. Guests of all ages spoke, airing concerns on difficulty accessing the “new” location on the edge of town, questions of secrecy and potential collusion on council, feeling unheard and overlooked by elected representatives and more.

Result: Weeks after the meeting was held, council reversed the decision the move the library to the arena. They are now considering additions to the current building, or a stand-alone building. The town just held their own public meeting last night to ask what people thought of two potential locations (before making a decision that would affect thousands of residents).