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West Nipissing This Week



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A crowd of nearly 250 parishioners filled the Franco-Cité cafeteria last Tuesday to discuss the fate of Sacré-Coeur Church.

Sacré-Coeur's fate still up in the air

A crowd of nearly 250 parishioners filled the Franco-Cité cafeteria last Tuesday to discuss the fate of Sacré-Coeur Church.

"I wasn't expecting that many people to show up," said Bishop Jean-Louis Plouffe of the Diocese of Sault Ste-Marie. "I think the community is very preoccupied with this whole thing. It truly took them by surprise. Some members of the parish had been going to that church their whole life, and all of a sudden we had to close it. The roof structure and the stairs were deemed unsafe. We didn't have much of a choice."

The parishioners have been attending mass at Our Lady of Sorrows church since September, when their centennial church was closed for safety reasons as the diocese waited on an engineering report to see what was involved in repairing the building.

That report was completed in November, and on Dec. 6 and 7, those attending mass were given a letter with their church bulletin, asking them to vote on three options, from completely renovating and fixing the church, demolishing and building a new church, or demolishing the church and building an extension to the office space, with costs ranging from \$3.45 million to \$ 6.2 million.

"The reason we held the meeting last Tuesday was because some parishioners were dissatisfied with the three options," said Bishop Plouffe.

The survey results showed 60 per cent in favour of repairing the existing church; 7 per cent wanting to demolish and rebuild a new church; and 23 per cent favouring demolition and an addition to the office space. However, ten per cent of the parishioners who voted were

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Businesses want better snow removal in downtown core

BY ALLISON ROY
TRIBUNE

Council will be looking at enhancing winter maintenance in the downtown core, during February's budget deliberations, after discussing a letter received from the West Nipissing Chamber of Commerce.

The letter explains that the Chamber of Commerce has been approached by several business owners about the current schedule and process of snow removal in the downtown core, suggesting high snow banks impeded local shopping during the pre-holiday season.

"Current sidewalk conditions are impacting our community's ability to access businesses in a safe and comfortable manner. The height of the snow banks are steadily increasing during one of the busiest times of year for our local merchants," the letter states.

Signed by Chamber president Kathleen Thorne Rochon, it requests the Municipal Public Works Department review and evaluate the current snow removal schedule, poli-

cies and procedures.

During council's Committee of the Whole meeting on January 16, Director of Operations Marc Gagnon went over the process and policies with council, explaining they follow the municipality's minimum road maintenance standards and monitor weather conditions and weather forecasts every 24 hours.

"Once we become aware that there is at least 10 cm of snow that has accumulated on our roads, we prepare to dispatch all of our crews for snow removal and plowing and sanding," he explained.

According to Gagnon, they have 24 hours to clear all the roads based on minimum standards, however it takes crews in West Nipissing approximately 10 to 12 hours. With regards to icy road conditions, it was explained that they have 16 hours to treat the roads, and Gagnon said this target is met 100 per cent of the time.

Gagnon reported that there was 213 cm

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Shots fired at a local business

BY ALLISON ROY
TRIBUNE

The WN Police is investigating a dangerous incident in which shots were fired into a local business, and asking for the public's help in identifying the culprits.

WNPS Inspector Ray St. Pierre explains that sometime between the early evening of January 8 and the early morning of Friday, January 9, someone fired three shots at a glass door at a local construction company located West of Sturgeon Falls.

St. Pierre says the business owner returned to the office in the morning on January 9 and noticed the damage, then called police to report the incident.

According to Inspector St. Pierre, two of the three shots went through the glass door. He believes the projectiles were not bullets from a firearm, judging from the holes in the thick glass door which did

not shatter, though the projectiles were not recovered.

"It would appear that it's more consistent with a pellet or bibi [gun]," he says, adding that it could have been fired from a slingshot as well.

The investigation is hampered by the fact that there is no surveillance at the business site, and no witnesses have come forward so far. Consequently, there are no suspects at this time, but police are appealing to the public for any useful information.

"We're hoping someone would have seen something, either a passerby, somebody walking," St. Pierre says.

He adds that this type of occurrence is uncommon, with the last similar incident occurring in the early summer of 2014.

Anyone with information can contact police at 705-753-1235 or Crime stoppers at 1-800-222-8477 (TIPS).

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Sacré-Coeur's fate still up in the air

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dissatisfied with the options and not content to settle on these three scenarios.

"That ten per cent led to last Tuesday's meeting. Some of them felt their voices weren't being heard. Some of them needed more options before deciding on the future of the church and the parish. So we provided a forum for people to share their comments, thoughts, options, and ask any questions they might have. We needed to hear their options," said Bishop Plouffe.

Hear them he did, as the floor was turned over to the crowd who had many suggestions: stay at the Our Lady of Sorrows Church while the parish figures out its next steps; move the mass to Cache Bay; move the parish to the WN Child Care Corporation building on Michaud Street; hold masses at the Franco-Cité cafeteria and so on.

One option that got the crowd reacting was that of moving back to Resurrection Church on the corner of Nipissing and Third. This would mean buying back the building, which was sold off in 2008.

"They are all good, and possible actions," said Bishop Plouffe. "But the main thing we need to remember is that big decisions won't happen overnight. The meeting was a step in the right direction. Now, the immediate action we have to take is to elect both a finance committee, and a parish pastoral council. The parish pastoral council will (...) discuss what's best for the spirit of the church. (...) The finance committee will (...) discuss the monetary part, if those options are possible, fundraising ideas, where, how, and when they will fund-raise."

During the meeting, it was stated that parish priest Basil Agré would be forming the committees, and people were asked to signal their interest or propose names. Bishop Plouffe then clarified that, since Father Agré is fairly new to the community, he will determine who is named to the finance committee.

"A qualification for the male or female on the committee, will be that they have to be esteemed by the community, a well respected community member," he specified.

A letter will be attached to the church bulletin this upcoming weekend, asking parishioners for nominations.

Businesses want better snow removal

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of snow dumped in West Nipissing last year between January and April. With that, there were 10 occurrences of snow removal, with 7 of those in the downtown core.

Done at 4 a.m., the snow removal takes around 5 hours and costs approximately \$8000 each time. Gagnon added that the last snow removal was done on December 23 (at the time of his presentation). He also mentioned that the municipality changed the type of winter sand they use, as the pit used in previous years has been depleted, and they use about 22,500 metric tons of material to treat the roads.

"The sanding of our roads is one of our major activities that we do throughout the winter months, and sidewalks, the sand that we're using this year met our standards and is actually working extremely well," he said, but added that they did have to readjust the sanders.

Councilor Denise Brisson congratulated the Public Works staff and asked how priorities are set. Gagnon said they do the main arteries first, then make their way to other streets.

Councilor Yvon Duhaime concurred that the crews do a good job. Referencing the letter, he pointed out the primary concern was with the downtown core during the Christmas season.

"I was hoping we could have done a little more effort to clean at least Main and King, and a little bit of William and Queen, just so that it would have been ac-

cessible at that particular time of year," he agreed. "I was hoping that we could come to a solution to help the merchants in the downtown core."

Duhaime suggested a study be done on the cost of increasing service.

CAO Jay Barbeau said he had also heard comments with regards to the downtown core, adding that the issue could be looked at as a budgetary item during upcoming budget deliberations.

"I think council needs to be aware of the fact that the commercial class exists and a strong downtown is the key to all communities (...) and there might be an exploration of potentially looking at whether the downtown wishes to have a discussion about enhanced services," Barbeau said.

Duhaime, who owns a building in the downtown core, reiterated that the commercial sector is classed separately and pays more taxes.

He also pointed out the employees on payroll get

paid the same amount whether they are ditching or removing snow, adding that any additional overhead cost would result from hiring another company to do the snow removal. He also disputed the stated cost of \$8,000, saying the snow removal actually costs around \$3000 to \$4000.

"In essence we are still paying these guys, they are still going to be on the roads with trucks and they will still be doing something," he said.

Barbeau offered an explanation with regards to the \$8000 and said that Duhaime was correct if the intent was to keep the budget status quo and just reassign resources.

"We have a tendency for council, for budget, to unit cost everything so that when you're at council and you make statements that you want to reduce, increase, keep status quo, we have our calculations down," Barbeau explained.

Mayor Joanne Savage concurred that the issue should be revisited at budget delib-

erations, where they will be better able to decide if enhancing services is feasible.

Councilor Guy Fortier said that as a business owner outside of the downtown core, he removes his own snow and has a little trouble sympathizing, but he understands the point.

"A local business owner pays property tax twice," he said, "do they get that much more service than the average taxpayer, no, (...) I think we should be looking at what we can do to help our businesses remain successful in West Nipissing."

He suggested using the Quebec City model, where the snow is brought to the middle of the road then picked up with loaders right away.

Councilor Jamie Restoule said the report was clear and that business owners also receive twice the service.

After discussions, it was agreed that different options would be presented to council during budget deliberations and a letter of response would be provided to the Chamber of Commerce.

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Lavallée Julien (1936-2015)

It is with great sadness that the family announces the passing of Julien at West Nipissing General Hospital in Sturgeon Falls, Friday January 9th 2015, at the age of 78 years. Son of the late Josephat Lavallée and of the late Délima (née Lurette)

Lavallée. Julien will be missed by his sister Estelle from St. Catharines, Marie-Jeanne Martel of Sturgeon Falls and by his brother Roméo (Gilberte) from Sturgeon Falls. Predeceased by his sisters Cécile, Yvonne, Claudette, Mona and by his brother Lucien. The family received friends at the Théorêt Bourgeois Funeral Home, Sturgeon Falls, Wednesday, January 14th 2015. The funeral service followed in the funeral home chapel. Donations to the Canadian Cancer Society would be appreciated (cheques only).
www.theoretbourgeois.com