

New arena project unveiled at MoWest council meeting

By CHARLES MONTGOMERY
The Chronicle

At last week's Montreal West public council meeting, Mayor Campbell Stuart announced that a group of local residents would be launching an ambitious project to build a new arena in Montreal West.

"The idea of the new arena is obviously that the old facility is very much outdated," said Stuart. "Certainly this group of people ... on their own initiative, decided that they are willing to undertake this enormous task of designing, fundraising and building this building."

The group, led by resident Andrew Michelin, hopes to take advantage of provincial, and federal grants and also private donations, to get the new arena built. Preliminary estimates put the project's price tag at around four to five million dollars.

"We all owe them a tremendous vote of thanks," said Stuart. In his new role as Special Projects Manager, Pat Mann will serve as the liaison between the arena project group and the town. The Chronicle will go more in depth on the arena project in the weeks to come.

Lachine resident, Gaétan Montmigny was honoured by council for his work in helping to shut down the Chenail asphalt plant, which, for a long time, sent pollutants into the air by MoWest. "It's an honour for the Montreal West Environmental Action Committee to publicly acknowledge Mr. Gaétan Montmigny who has such an inclusive sense of community and has made a real difference to the quality of life here in Montreal West," said councillor Elizabeth Ulin.

"Not only did he have information and terrific energy, he also inspired others with his passionate commitment to the cause," said Ulin. "Mr. Montmigny kept the group informed about the developments while attending every single Montreal, Lachine, Côte St. Luc and Montreal West council meeting."

Mayor Stuart read a letter written by Westmount Mayor Karin Marks on behalf of the Association of Suburban Municipalities, which was sent to Nathalie Normandeau, the Quebec Minister of Municipal Affairs.

The letter criticized the current organization of the Agglomeration Council, and called for restructure into an entity based more on the old MUC system. One passage read: "Il suffit d'examiner le fonctionnement inadéquat du conseil d'agglomération à Longueuil et les pratiques allant à l'encontre de la démocratie à Montréal."

Later it said: "Nous, les 15 villes reconstituées, recommandons le rétablissement d'une structure CUM qui serait modifiée pour refléter la réalité actuelle."

"So we're making it very easy for them, we're saying ... give us the MUC back, with increased powers over the things which have now been determined to be island wide," said Stuart after the meeting.

Stuart said that the MUC may not have been perfect but it is a far more efficient system, that people are all familiar with, as opposed to the confusing Agglomeration. "The Agglomeration idea, itself, has no fans that I'm aware of," said Stuart. He did concede that a strong electoral threat in Quebec City might be one of the only ways to stir major reform into action.

Also at the meeting, Stuart and finance councillor Colleen Feeney said that they would ask the Quebec government to modify an offer made to provide interest free loans to the town to reimburse citizens for a proportion of the money they paid due to large tax increases. "This is akin to borrowing money to pay for groceries, and it's not appropriate," said Stuart.

"What we are proposing to do in this resolution ... is to ask the government of Quebec to consider whether or not they would provide the same kind of interest payments for a long term loan, I believe somewhere in the neighbourhood of about \$900,000, in order to help us with what we really need in our town which is infrastructure improvement," said Stuart.

In his commissioner's report, councillor Joseph McKenzie announced that he was working with an engineering firm to develop a long term priority-based infrastructure plan for the town. "It's basically going to be on a needs analysis, and we'll deal with the more severe issues first and move on from there," said McKenzie.

He also said that work on the Sheraton Drive water lines would begin in the coming weeks, but that major work planned for the Westminster 'hump bridge' would have to wait until after the winter, probably in April.



Chronicle, Martin C. Barry Councillor Elizabeth Ulin congratulates Gaétan Montmigny, a Ville St. Pierre resident whose efforts helped close a nearby asphalt plant in 2004, which had been a source of many complaints from Montreal Westers.