

The Uxbridge COSMOS



Volume 16 No. 48

YOUR UNIVERSE

Thursday, December 10, 2020



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Patrick Bryant Broker of Record

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A FEAST FOR THE EYES - The Optimist Club of Uxbridge threw open the Elgin Park gates to the 13th Annual Fantasy of Lights last Saturday evening. Hundreds of cars lined up on Elgin Park Dr., waiting for a chance to marvel at the spectacle of displays like this one, which was set up by the Graham Family. The Fantasy of Lights runs every evening - including Christmas and New Years - until Jan. 2, 2021, from 6 to 9:30 p.m. For more, visit uxlights.ca

Photo by John Covers

Inside Your Cosmos

Is new ball diamond fair or foul? ... page 8

You can still get ticked page 11

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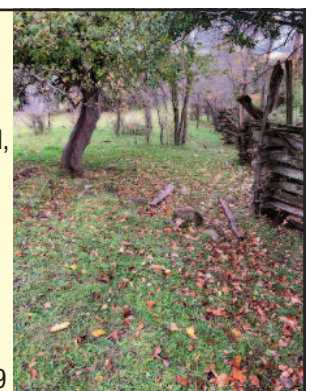
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Council & Committee Meetings

Meeting Schedule for December 2020

Thurs., Dec. 10, 1 p.m. to 5 p.m.
BUDGET MEETING

Fri., Dec. 11, 1 p.m. to 5 p.m.
BUDGET MEETING

Mon., Dec. 14, 10 a.m.
COUNCIL MEETING

Tues., Dec. 15, 1 p.m. to 5 p.m.
BUDGET MEETING

Wed., Dec. 16, 7 p.m.
COMMITTEE OF ADJUSTMENT
MEETING

Thurs., Dec. 17, 1 p.m. to 5 p.m.
BUDGET MEETING

Fri., Dec. 18, 9 a.m.
UXBRIDGE MUSIC HALL
BOARD ADVISORY MEETING

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- ◆ Shop ahead online and coordinate your curb-side pick-up.
- ◆ Take a selfie in front of Santa's sleigh at Rutledge Jewellers.
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Retail locations along the Uxbridge Holiday Shopping Trail have received the Safe Travels Stamp from the World Travel & Tourism Council. Please practice safe physical distancing at all times.



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Flu shots popular on the early winter to-do list

by Justyne Edgell, Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Still planning on getting a flu shot this year? It's not too late and still highly recommended by doctors.

In what has been an unprecedented year for viral transmission, despite province wide shortages, there has apparently been a large increase in the number of flu shots given, and an extremely low number of influenza infections.

The Government of Canada FluWatch Report recently reported that "to date this season, 32 influenza detections have been reported, which is significantly lower than the past six seasons, where an average of 2,170 influenza detections were reported between weeks 35-48."

Between Oct. 16 and Nov. 7, the Uxbridge Health Centre ran flu shot clinics that focused on seniors and those who are considered high risk.

"We gave eight shots every 15 minutes, resulting in 812 flu shots, and we continue to give shots out to any patients who come into the clinic for an appointment. I would estimate our total number of doses given so far at 1,000," reports Debbie Edgell, the clinic's chief administrator.

Edgell also said the Centre delivered its entire allocation of high-dose vaccines to as many seniors in Uxbridge as possible, including running specific clinics for the residents of Shobrook Gardens and Douglas Crossing.

Some local businesses were also proactive in getting their employees the vaccine. Pat Higgins, owner of Uxbridge Canadian Tire, set up a clinic for all his employees and their families with the help of Zehrs Pharmacy manager Gary Smith.

In a Facebook poll looking at Uxbridge community flu shot numbers, more than 70 per cent of those who responded said they have already received their flu shot this year. However, with a provincial shortage, some who wished to get the high dose vaccine, had to settle for the regular strength instead.

"I wanted the high dose, but it wasn't available a number of times when I went, so I settled for the regular dose. I didn't want to wait any longer, as I felt it would be good to be protected from the flu when COVID was in the community," said Uxbridge resident Leland Davis.

This year was the first to see pharmacies allocated the high-dose vaccine. In previous years, the high-dose was only available through a physician's office. The Uxbridge Health Centre reports that this has encouraged people to shop around for their vaccine, to see where they could get the strength they wanted.

Sameer Remtulla, owner and pharmacist at Pharmasave Uxbridge, notes that they delivered as many doses this October as they did in the whole of last year.

"I think less people were going to their physicians this year, as well as many are working from home, and the fact that we had high-dose meant they could come here as well."

Remtulla says those who still want to get the shot should book an appointment online. Regular, high-dose and intranasal are all available.

The Trail Capital I.D.A has also had a busy season.

"We have given out a total of 312 shots and 100 out of those were high-dose," says owner and pharmacist, Hank Parsaniya, who also mentions he only has five high-dose vaccines remaining.

If you are still in the market for a flu shot, visit your pharmacy online or contact your family physician's office.



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Our two cents

COVID and taxes - likely bedfellows this year

The *Cosmos* regularly covers the budget discussions held by Uxbridge council. When it comes to deciding what to spend money on and then dinging the taxpayer for the required dollars, it's not a job we'd like.

Imagine, if you will, sitting around the kitchen table with your family and, after some discussion on the family budget, coming to the decision that the repaving of the driveway means the kids can't have that new swing set they have been asking for. Not only that, but they have to pay back some of their weekly allowance to help you pay for the driveway. You're going to have some extremely unhappy family members.

Now do the same with a whole community.

Whatever decisions council makes at budget time, you can be sure there will be some taxpayers out for blood.

It's really at budget time that councillors earn their pay, questioning various department heads about items in their budgets, sometimes not liking the answers they receive, but always having to make the final hard decisions. They have to walk a line between approving only essential expenditures and delaying some costs in order to allow what some might consider non-essential.

This year's budget talks are going to be coloured - saturated, in fact - by the fact that COVID-19 upended the normal flow of operations of practically every aspect of the township. Not one department was spared the effects of cutbacks, shut-downs, and staff lay-offs. Revenue from the pool, arena, and all the various community halls has been slim to none. So - you can bet your bottom dollar (which might be all you have!) that taxes are going to go up this year. And it might, just might, be the biggest tax hike we've seen in awhile.

Very few people attended the budget meetings when they were held in person, pre-COVID. That's too bad, because budget discussions are interesting and, being slightly less formal than a normal council meeting, sometimes fun. The budget discussions will be online this year, starting today, in fact, at 1 p.m. A full schedule of all the discussions, which are open and accessible to the public, can be found on page 2. Go to uxbridge.ca, and right there on the home page is a link to the budget discussions - just follow the instructions, then sit back and watch the fun/drama unfold.

If more people were aware of what goes on in these discussions, they would be less likely to vilify our municipal government when they see an increase in their taxes. This year we can vilify COVID-19 instead.

When one of these disappears, A LOT disappears.

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9,500 copies of The Cosmos are published each Thursday in the Township of Uxbridge: 8,800 delivered by mail, 700 available in stores and boxes.

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Canada



From the MP's desk

column by Jennifer O'Connell, MP

Looking to the future

Last week, Chrystia Freeland, the Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Finance, released our government's Fall Economic Statement. You can read the full document at budget.gc.ca

The government's priority continues to be fighting COVID-19 and protecting Canadians' health and safety as cases surge in Ontario and across the country. To that end, the federal government has provided an extraordinary amount of support to provinces and territories to fight the pandemic through the \$7 billion Safe Restart Agreement, as well as the procurement of over 38 million rapid tests, which is three times the total number of tests performed in Canada since the pandemic began.

I know that there are a lot of questions regarding Canada's plan for vaccinations, and I want to use this opportunity to clarify some misconceptions. The fact is, Canada has secured the most diverse portfolio of vaccine candidates of any country in the world, with agreements for up to 429 million doses from seven leading candidates, including Pfizer, AstraZeneca-Oxford and Johnson & Johnson. Moderna's CEO also recently stated that Canada was among the first countries to pre-order its vaccine doses, and that we are guaranteed some of the first batch of vaccines. Once Health Canada determines a vaccine is safe and effective, the federal government will be ready to deploy it and make it available, for free.

Just like annual flu shots, provinces and territories have the responsibility

to provide immunization to their respective populations, and they have the capacity and authority to do so.

Given the scale and diversity of potential COVID-19 vaccines, our government is also working around the clock with provinces and territories through a new National Operations Centre that is focused on the vaccine rollout. This will allow us to ensure provinces and territories have everything they need to begin immunization and to ensure they are ready to receive the vaccines once they arrive in Canada. For months we have

"There is light at the end of the tunnel."

been preparing for this rollout and have already secured materials to send to provinces and territories, such as syringes, refrigerators, freezers and dry ice for transportation. Until vaccines are approved by Health Canada and distributed, it's important to maintain the health and safety protocols that we've been practicing, including wearing a mask, washing your hands and maintaining a 2-metre social distance.

In recognition of the tragic deaths from COVID-19 that we saw in the spring, the Fall Economic Statement moves forward with a plan to set new national standards for long term care homes and seeks to establish a new \$1 billion Safe Long-term Care Fund that will help provinces and territo-

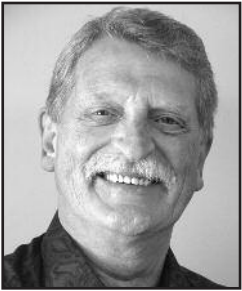
ries protect seniors and our most vulnerable. This was an issue that I worked on with my colleagues throughout the summer and fall months, as long-term care homes in our community have dealt with COVID-19 outbreaks.

The Fall Economic Statement also provided an update on the Canadian economy, showing that the Government of Canada's unprecedented investment has effectively managed to stabilize the economy through the crisis. Nearly 80 per cent of the jobs lost at the start of this crisis have been recouped, and bankruptcies are well below levels prior to this pandemic. However, many businesses continue to face significant challenges. The coming months will be difficult and ongoing fiscal support will remain necessary deep into 2021 in order to protect jobs and prevent widespread permanent losses in our economy. This includes the Canada Emergency Rent Subsidy Program, which is supporting small businesses, charities, and non-profit organizations.

Once the virus is under control, the Government of Canada will also invest in a three year growth plan to jumpstart our recovery. Time-limited investments will build Canada out of this recession towards an economy that is cleaner, more inclusive, more innovative and more competitive. There is light at the end of the tunnel, and we will get through these tough times, together!

As always, my community office, located at Unit 4-1154 Kingston Road in Pickering, is available to assist you in your dealings with federal departments. Please don't hesitate to call us at 905-839-2878 or at 1-855-275-2860.

On behalf of the Government of Canada, I want to wish you and your family a Happy Holidays, a Merry Christmas and a joyous and prosperous New Year!



Am I Wrong?

column by Roger Varley

The simplest pleasures lift the spirit

Before I get into this week's column, an apology. Last week, I incorrectly stated that budget discussions would start that week. In fact, they begin today (Thursday). I regret any inconvenience my mistake might have caused.

But that is/was just one of the multitude of things - small and big - that have led most people to decide they just want to forget 2020 altogether. For nine months now, we've had to deal with COVID-19 and it shows no sign of going away any time soon. We've had to put up with a whole year of the Brock Street culvert disrupting traffic and shopping in the downtown area. We've also had to put up with a whole year of Donald Trump raging, lying, bullying and doing his best to spread the coronavirus during the U.S.'s interminable election process - and it's still going on. Brexit isn't going as they had hoped, people are protesting their governments around the world and glaciers and ice shelves are melting apace.

That's why last Saturday evening was such a welcome respite from all the crap the world has been dumping on us lately. It started for me when I heard the sound of children laughing and giggling outside my window. I donned my hat and coat to go and investigate and - lo and behold - there was a gaggle of kids outside HBee Architecture's store on Brock Street, visiting with Santa and Mrs. Claus. The North Pole's most famous residents - (Mrs. Claus bore a strong resemblance to councillor Pam Beach) - were seated in a cozy living room setting inside the store window while using a microphone to talk to the children outside. They even brought one of their elves (Tourism Development Coordinator Lisa John-Mackenzie) to add to the scene.

The children were just as happy and excited to see Santa as ever, even if they couldn't sit on his knee.

Then I noticed flames shooting up down the street and, investigating once again, I found a fire department-approved patio fire sitting on the sidewalk in front of Blue Heron Books and The Bridge Social. Not one to miss an opportunity, I purchased a

coffee and joined others (fully masked and social distanced) around the fire for a chat.

Having had my spirits raised somewhat, I decided to take a look at the inflatable Santa Clauses along Campbell Drive. I lost count, because I was too busy smiling. It is such a fabulous example of a neighbourhood coming together to lift each other's spirits.

Now that I had seen the Santas, I had a taste to see what was going on in Elgin Park. Amazingly, but perhaps not surprisingly, traffic waiting to enter the park for the Optimist Club's Fantasy of Lights stretched from the Elgin Park Drive entrance down to Main Street and north on Main Street to Reach Street. A similar lineup of cars stretched south down Main Street as vehicles waited to turn left onto Elgin Park Drive. Inside the park, the drive-through was almost bumper to bumper.

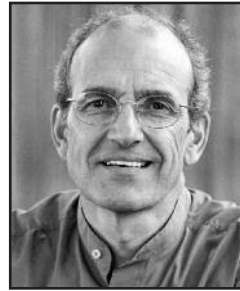
My understanding is that Santa and Mrs. Claus will be back again this Saturday and there will also be a mini version of The Nutcracker at the book store.

And all around town, it seemed as though everyone had chosen to turn on their Christmas lights at the same time. It was almost as though someone had thrown a switch (pardon the pun) and Christmas was here.

I returned home with a smile on my face. That evening did wonders for me, because I had been in a funk over the silly mistake I had made in my column. It made me realize that no matter what the world throws at us, it offers us a small helping of joy to alleviate the pain every once in a while. It is up to us to recognize those moments - especially when they are unexpected - and grab hold of them tightly, savouring every second. It sure beats dwelling on life's down side.

I offer a heartfelt "thank you" to all those who have done their bit to bring a little joy into this rather dark world. It seems to me we could all use more spirit-lifting moments.

Tell me, am I wrong?



The Barris Beat

column by Ted Barris

Where feathers lie

They stood there, almost as if frozen. The look on their faces was the best appearance of innocence they could muster. Most kids are pretty good at trying to look innocent. And though the evidence of a massive pillow fight between the two sisters was everywhere, when we suddenly caught them at it, well, you probably know what we got.

"OK, who's responsible?" we asked.

"Nope," said one, and she quickly turned to her sister.

"Not me," said the other.

I experienced a similar feeling of disbelief, on the weekend, when I read a quotation in the *Toronto Star* from MPP Steve Clark. The minister of municipal affairs was responding to criticism from David Crombie, the outgoing chair of the province's Greenbelt Council. Crombie announced on Sunday he was resigning because of the Conservative government's plans to limit the ability of conservation authorities to assess environmental impact of developments.

"(I've) been steadfast in my commitment to protect the Greenbelt for future generations," said Clark in the *Star* story.

Previous to the announcement that he was stepping down, and 24 hours before six other members of the Greenbelt Council also resigned, Crombie wrote a letter urging Minister Clark to withdraw "Schedule 6" of the budget bill before it went before the Legislature this week. Schedule 6 is a portion of the bill that gives the provincial government the authority to amend the Conservation Authorities Act, i.e. to override anything the Greenbelt Council - in its wisdom - recommends. Crombie emphasized in his resignation that conservation authorities help to balance environmental protection and economic growth. He called the government's use of Schedule 6 "high-level bombing" of watershed planning, land-use planning, and all the work that conservation experts have conducted to preserve Ontario green space for the past 30 years.

"(I've) been steadfast in my commitment to protect the Greenbelt for future generations," Minister Clark told the *Star*.

At issue here are what are known as MZO's - Ministerial Zoning Orders - which give the minister unilateral power to override any planning that local conservation authorities propose, as well as determine the way in which land can be zoned and then developed. And when the minister implements the MZO, s/he eliminates any further opportunity for those who understand the environment (where politicians generally don't) to appeal. MZO's are the provincial equivalent of presidential executive orders which trump everything - and I choose that word specifically.

It's perhaps worth noting, that Minister Clark

has implemented 35 such MZO's - imposing the government's development policies - near a number of environmentally sensitive lands. So, his protestations about being committed to protect Greenbelt may be somewhat vapid.

But I believe there's something more Orwellian in the Ford government's treatment of the environment than meets the eye. David Crombie has also directed the public's attention to the means by which this instrument of absolute power - Schedule 6 - has become law. It's tucked inside a Trojan horse budget bill. It's not a bill about judging conservation measures versus compatible development, i.e. management of the environment. It's the budget bill!

And if all this seems a bit too familiar, harken back to the years of the Stephen Harper Conservatives when they ran a minority federal government in 2008. They called them "Omnibus" bills. In short, Harper would routinely include clauses in a bill he knew might provoke the Opposition, and in so doing spark a federal election. Then, even when he won a majority, Harper continued the practice of lumping many disparate bits of law into one bill, making it impossible for Parliament to properly consider each piece of legislation. And the Liberals complained vehemently.

"Stephen Harper has used Omnibus bills to prevent Parliament from properly scrutinizing and debating his proposals," Trudeau claimed. "We will bring an end to this practice."

Then, once in power, didn't the Trudeau Liberals bring in a massive budget implementation bill in 2019, the very device over which they'd pilloried the Harper Conservatives? In it, as well as budgetary items, the Liberal federal government tucked in new rules about the treatment of asylum-seekers. Hidden between the dollars and cents were proposed new rules that might deny many refugees full hearings and/or facilitate their summary removal.

"It's a dramatic turnabout for Canadian refugee policy, and one that deserved fulsome public discussion," a *Maclean's* magazine editorial noted. "Pro or con, this isn't something a government should be hiding on page 274 or a 392-page bill."

Conservation authorities by their *nature* are not political. They are created by bipartisan legislation with the sole purpose of furthering the conservation, restoration, development and management of Ontario Greenbelt watersheds. The fate of their judgements shouldn't be squirrelled away in a budget or Omnibus bill and left to ministerial whim.

The pillow feathers of an unfair fight are scattered all over the place, no matter how much the minister doth protest.

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Gatherings with friends and extended family can carry an increased risk of getting and spreading COVID-19. Consider celebrating outdoors or virtually with others that are not part of your household.

Know the gathering limits in your area before you choose to entertain with family and friends indoors. Indoor gatherings are not permitted in regions in Grey-Lockdown.

For all gatherings with anyone you do not live with:

- maintain 2 metres physical distance
- wear a face covering
- avoid potlucks or shared utensils
- ensure everyone washes hands regularly, including before and after meals

Self-isolate if you are sick, even if your symptoms are mild and ask guests to stay home if they feel unwell.

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Ontario 

Seniors get 'centre without walls'

by Roger Varley

Councillor Bruce Garrod announced this week that Eric Nidd has been installed as the new president of the Uxbridge Seniors Club. He takes over from Linda Knapp.

Garrod said Nidd's first move was to obtain a \$5,000 grant which will allow the club to set up "a centre without walls." The money will be used to arrange a series of virtual gatherings where seniors can listen on their phones or computers to experts on a number of different topics. Garrod said it would be similar to the Communi-TEA lunches the seniors' club held at the beginning of the year before COVID-19 forced an end to that program, but without the participants coming into close contact.

Garrod said it took Nidd only 48 hours to secure the funding. He said the program is intended to engage seniors who are isolated and noted similar programs are being run in the south end of the region.

The councillor also said that MPP Peter Bethlenfalvy will be making an announcement tomorrow (Friday) regarding another grant, but preferred not to give any details until the announcement is made. He indicated, however, the grant likely will be for an amount similar to that received for the Communi-TEA initiative, which was about \$12,000.

On another front, Garrod said the township's age friendly committee is purchasing about eight or 10 iPads which seniors will be able to borrow from the library, with instruction. He expects the iPads to be available sometime in January.

On top of all that, Garrod said he is seeking a federal grant to establish a lounge area at the senior's centre.

"We're trying to get these things done while the centre is still closed," he said.



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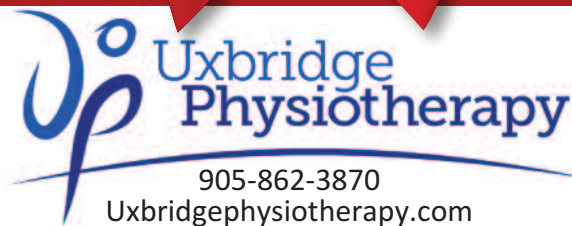
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Residents strike out over Fields of Uxbridge ball diamond plan

by Justyne Edgell, Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Last month, on Nov. 4, a conceptual plan for the Fields of Uxbridge ball diamond was presented at a public open house, but local residents didn't respond with "Let's play ball!" In fact, several residents who live around the proposed diamond location raised some concerns with council - and struck out.

An updated conceptual plan was

presented to council on Monday during a deputation by Landscape Planning Landscape Architect. The new plan removed a proposed softball diamond, and revealed a new orientation for the remaining hardball diamond. The original plans had home base placed northwest; the new plan has it facing south.

When asked why the orientation of the ball diamond changed, the planning team noted that safety was one of the main priorities. Along with a

paved access route for emergency vehicles, this plan reportedly provides the appropriate solar orientation for optimum player safety.

The planning team also mentioned that this orientation will allow for proper grading, which is a concern in the area, as it has a high water table. Along with the addition of new landscaping and berms, this plan allows for existing conifers to continue as they are, minimizing the impact on the natural landscape.

The new plan also shows the addition of storage units and portalets, which can be moved even closer to the back stop, where they could better serve the ball diamond as well as the skatepark and pump track.

Amanda Ferraro, director of community services, noted that high quality LED lighting is scheduled to be used. The lights will be 60 feet tall and cast straight down, with the ability to control the spill off.

Residents of the area adjacent to the proposed diamond were apprised of the proposed changes before Monday's deputation, and say they are unsatisfied with the plan.

Dustin Wood, a resident of Colby Rd., wrote to the *Cosmos* on behalf of a group of residents, mentioning that while they are all in support of the updated community facilities, the new orientation plan provides a few challenges.

Adjacent to the skatepark, with the home plate backstop tucked towards the intersection of Main St. N. and Colby Rd., the residents have several concerns. The first is limited accessibility for the elderly and people with mobility issues. They say the recently built washroom pavilion on the soccer fields is a fair distance away and cannot reasonably be expected to be utilized by users of the baseball diamonds.

Residents also feel there are risks to

general public safety, both in terms of skate park users and people utilizing the proposed parking lot (i.e. danger from fly balls), and from the ability of emergency services to reach potential injured persons on the playing field in a timely manner.

Finally, they are worried about the maximized impact of the field usage on their neighbourhood (i.e.: light pollution, late-night noise from tournaments, potential for trespassing on neighbouring properties, use of trees as washrooms as a result of reasonable access to the washroom facilities, etc.)

Both Ferraro and Landscape Planning Landscape Architects said they listened to all resident concerns.

"We've really taken the complaints and concerns and tried to minimize the impacts as best we can," said Ferraro. "The old orientation just does not work. It causes a handful of

...continued on next page

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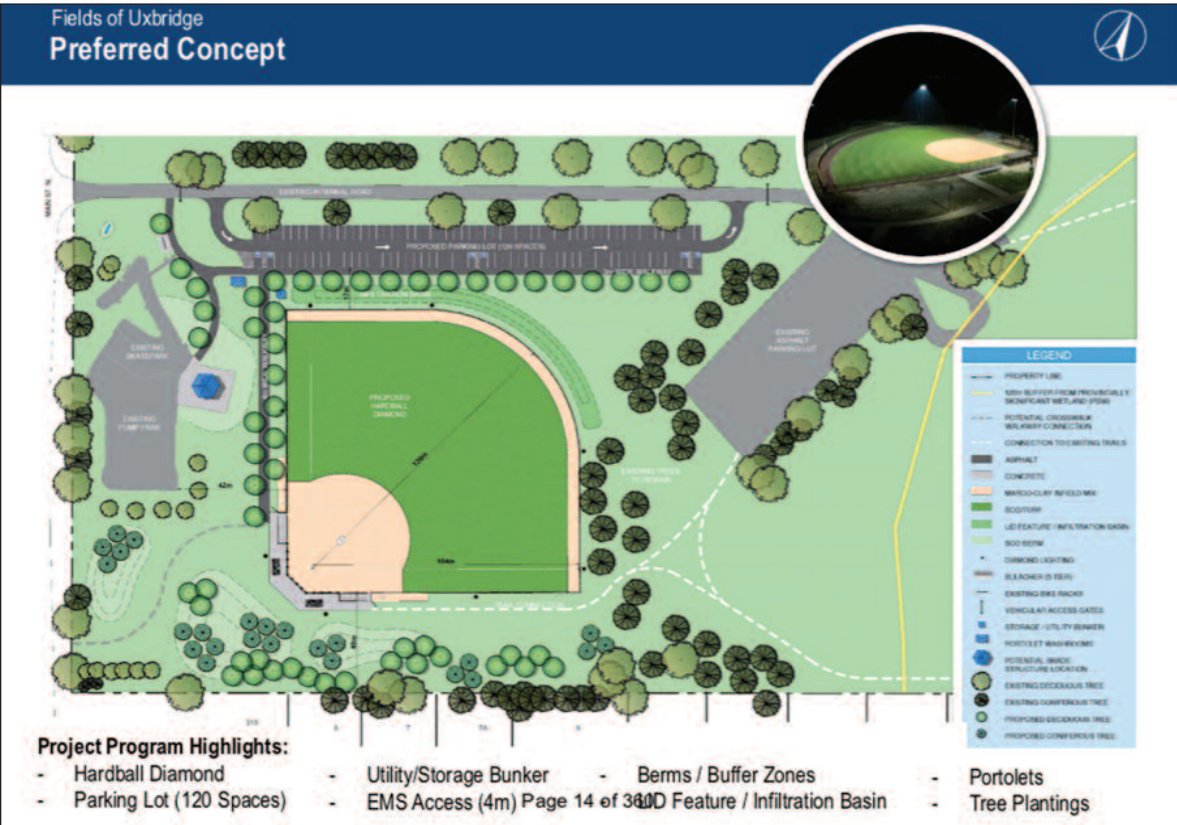
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Play ball, from previous page

problems, and player safety is of paramount consideration.” Wood questions why the Township is not taking advantage of the new washroom and picnic facility. “Why are they looking to incur additional and ongoing costs related to the rental and maintenance of portable washroom facilities? If drainage and excavation is an issue, why was our preferred orientation recommended as a part of the Fields of Uxbridge Master Plan study conducted in 2016? Was the grading and drainage not a known issue at that time?” After doing some of his own research, Wood discovered that many major league ball diamonds don’t fol-

low the preferred solar orientation as proposed in Monday’s presentation. And Wood maintains that “the player safety argument seems somewhat hollow as their preferred orientation only “protects” right handed batters at a certain time of day.” Councillor Bruce Garrod finished

off Monday’s discussion by saying that he stands with the residents: “This plan seems to be good for the players but not so much for the surrounding residents.” Council then suggested adding a resident to the planning committee to be a voice for the neighbourhood.

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- Across**

 - 1. Strip
 - 5. TBS rival
 - 8. Junk pile
 - 12. It may be guided
 - 13. "Lucy in the ___ with diamonds" (Beatle song)
 - 14. Compound
 - 15. Voice level
 - 16. Hasten
 - 17. Mention
 - 18. Fair
 - 20. Winged
 - 22. Mix breed dog
 - 23. Thanksgiving spud
 - 24. Renders unclear
 - 27. Anticipate
 - 31. Going on in years
 - 32. Crowd disapproval sound
 - 33. In shock
 - 37. It might be cut by a politician
 - 40. Another name intro
 - 41. Street abbr.
 - 42. Player on the links
 - 45. Dictator, e.g.
 - 49. Rephrase
 - 50. Do-it-yourself ___
 - 52. Still-life piece
 - 53. Hubs
 - 54. Roger Clemens' statistic
 - 55. "___ the Nation"
 - 56. Remnant
 - 57. Misty May obstacle
 - 58. Kindergartener
- Down**

 - 1. Impale
 - 2. Droop
 - 3. Hatchback
 - 4. Denver player
 - 5. Bridal party members
 - 6. Word with mask or doo
 - 7. Nautical response, ___ cap-tain (2 words)
 - 8. Pack up your tent and leave
 - 9. Division
 - 10. Speck of dust
 - 11. Implored
 - 19. Turned over ground
 - 21. Calif. airport
 - 24. Slithery creature
 - 25. Common street name
 - 26. Federal health agency
 - 28. Go back
 - 29. Gentle sound
 - 30. Large weight
 - 34. Rubenesque
 - 35. Live on the edge of existence
 - 36. Shade
 - 37. Short taps (2 words)
 - 38. Brown, e.g.
 - 39. Made desolate
 - 42. Neuter
 - 43. ___ Eaters
 - 44. Human parasite
 - 46. Traveling
 - 47. Throat
 - 48. Yard shader
 - 51. Infuriate

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The Nature Nut

column by Nancy Melcher

Don't get ticked!

Many of us are still taking walks along our beautiful trails despite the freezing temperatures and snow. Those pesky mosquitoes are gone, yet the risk of being bitten remains. You don't feel a tick bite so it's worth preparing for walks with prevention in mind.

Ticks are small spider-like insects. We think of them more as a pest of our pets, but humans can also be targeted. Adult females need protein to make eggs, and they get it by feeding off animals, including small mammals (mice, chipmunks, squirrels), birds, deer, our pets, and ourselves. That alone wouldn't be a problem for us, but ticks carry deadly diseases and transmit them through their saliva.



Five female blacklegged ticks at various stages of feeding. Unfed female at far right, totally engorged at far left.

The best way to deal with ticks is to avoid contact. Wear light coloured long clothing to help see any ticks. Tuck trousers into socks and wear close-toed shoes. Spray clothes and exposed skin with insect repellents that contain DEET or icaridin, even in the winter. Walk in the center of trails and avoid high grass and deep leaf litter. Shower within two hours of returning from your walk and examine target areas thoroughly.

If you do find a tick, remove it immediately. Use fine tipped tweezers, grasp close to the skin, and pull upward with steady even pressure to avoid breaking off the mouth parts. Thoroughly clean the bite area and your hands with rubbing alcohol or soap and water. Put the tick in a plastic bag or small container and take it to the Durham Region Health Department office for testing for diseases. Seek medical help immediately if you're unable to remove the tick yourself.

There's lots to do on the trails around town. Get out and enjoy the scenery - just take a few precautions to keep yourself and your loved ones safe and healthy. Watch the video <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZXLnp61Dmgo> and read more from the Health Department <https://www.durham.ca/en/health-and-wellness/lyme-disease.aspx>.

"An ounce of prevention" is indeed the best approach to avoid getting ticked off!

Nancy Melcher is The Nature Nut. Send details of your sightings or questions about the natural world to: general@melcher.cx



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TOWN HALL

by Roger Varley

Notes from the December 7 Council Meeting

Flag policy to be reviewed again: Following a letter from resident Dave Jones, council agreed to have staff once again review and update the township's flag policy as it relates to the lowering of flags.

Jones said the township should be lowering flags to half-mast when a police officer dies on duty. Councillor Bruce Garrod agreed, saying Jones "has a great idea," adding that the policy should extend to all police officers and emergency workers. His motion to have staff review the police

passed unanimously.

The flag was lowered to half-mast recently when an OPP officer was killed on Manitoulin Island.

The cost of loving: It will cost couples a little more to be married as of Jan. 1, 2021. In a report to council detailing changes in some of the charges the township makes for various services, clerk Debbie Leroux noted that fees for marriage licences and wedding ceremonies at the township offices will increase to bring Uxbridge's fees in line with neighbouring municipalities.

The cost of a marriage licence will increase to \$135 from the current \$125, and the cost of a wedding ceremony will be boosted \$25 to \$300.

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