

No decision by 'this' council on artificial-turf soccer field at WAG

BY LAUREEN SWEENEY

No decision has been made "by this council" concerning the possible use of artificial turf at the Westmount Athletic Grounds (WAG), Mayor Christina Smith said at the council meeting August 2. Various types had been under evaluation.

"We don't have a final report because that would entail moving to the next step," she told questioner Roger Jochym, who has been opposed to artificial turf. A resident of Lewis Ave., he has been asking for an answer since the city had requested a study on various new types of turf.

Jochym's latest question concerning whether the city had a final report and had made a decision, he said, was based on the "approaching [municipal] election" November 7.

Two years ago, members of the Westmount Soccer Club had packed the council

chamber November 4 to drive home a request for the installation of a field of "organic artificial turf" at the WAG behind Westmount High (see story November 12, 2019, p. 1).

At that time, they were told their letters had been received, and the city administration had been asked to look into options available, and their impact on the environment, health and neighbourhood.

Because types of fillers used in a synthetic field were new and evolving, then director general Benoit Hurtubise told the *Independent* that the city had "mandated a specialist to provide us with all the types of new filler available and in use" (see story March 17, 2020, p. 1).

Independent review

This, Hurtubise reported, was a specialist from an independent laboratory that tests the *continued on p. 7*

Feldman, Rapoport, Rolain seek EMSB seat



The election of the English Montreal School Board (EMSB), whose headquarters on Fielding Ave. and Côte St. Luc Rd. in NDG is seen August 26, has finally been re-scheduled for September 26. The district including Westmount is the only one where the candidate was not acclaimed last year. There are three candidates: incumbent Julien Feldman, Irwin Rapoport and Thomas Rolain. For coverage, see p. 17.

PHOTO: MARTIN C. BARRY.

Daily average August 25 highest for month

Heat wave fails to drive actual number of pool users to current limit

BY LAUREEN SWEENEY

Last week's high temperatures set record-high reservations and attendance for August at the city's pool, according to Sports and Recreation director Dave Lapointe. This is despite the fact that actual counts indicated attendance at one time never reached the current COVID limit of 150, although reservations did.

"It's very surprising, especially during a heat wave," he said. This was because of many no-shows who did not cancel their reservations.

While the total daily average attendance for August was 454, he said, the daily average for the previous seven days was recorded at 618 with the highest day being 660 on August 25.

On that day, for ex- *continued on p. 7*

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Violation of permit costs company \$1,300

A construction company has been issued a ticket for \$1,300 for violation of a permit to occupy the street outside 3535 St. Antoine St., Public Security officials said. This is the former Selby campus site of Dawson College. In verifying the use August 24 of three lanes rather than two as its permit allowed, officers asked that the equipment be moved, but returned the next day to find nothing had changed. It was also discovered that the permit had expired.

Public Security drives 2 heat-struck persons home to NDG

BY LAUREN SWEENEY

Two older persons, described as affected by the heat, were driven last week to their homes in NDG, Public Security officials said.

The first incident, August 19, involved a 73-year-old man found at the bus stop on Sherbrooke at Redfern at 9:19 am. He had "no idea how he got there," Public Security officials said. He appeared very fatigued

and was given a bottle of water and driven home to his wife. He lived on Royal Ave.

"We're always on the lookout for people affected by the heat," said Public Security director Greg McBain. "We have a supply of bottled water, which we give out daily, including to those who are homeless."

In the second case, officers received a call August 24 at 12:25 pm for a "disoriented" woman claiming to be looking for a dog at Victoria and de Maisonneuve. She was taken home to an apartment on Old Orchard, where the dog was found safe and sound with her son.

Toronto woman falls, found in distress

A call for assistance to Public Security resulted in the discovery of a woman described as distressed and leaning against a tree at Sherbrooke and Kitchener August 23 at 3:35 pm.

Shaking, she was reported to have fallen, scraped her knee, cut her upper lip and chipped a tooth. She and members of her family accompanying her, including a grandchild, were all in town from Toronto, officials said.

She was given medical assistance and they were directed to the MUHC super-hospital's Glen site.

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Missing cat found on Kitchener roof

A cat that had been missing for three days was spotted by someone who had seen the owner's flyers to say it was on a house roof at 362 Kitchener, Public Security officials said.

After receiving the information from the cat's owner August 22 at 8:49 am, officers climbed a ladder to the roof but could not see the cat.

On the way down, however, they noticed it on an adjacent garage roof. When they climbed toward the cat, it became scared and jumped off to where the waiting owner was able to retrieve it.

The "grateful" woman reportedly told officers that she would never let it out again.

Four found in park after midnight curfew

Four 20-year-year-old men were ticketed \$78 each for breaking Westmount's midnight parks curfew August 22, according to Public Security. They were found in possession of alcohol and sitting around a table at 1:47 am in Queen Elizabeth Gardens.

Public Security uses emergency key to help woman

A woman who participates in Public Security's "Bonjour Westmount" call-checking service for seniors was found to have fallen in her dining room August 22 and was unable to get up without assistance.

Officers were notified of her need for help when they received a call from her son in the US via a medical alert bracelet she wore.

Because the woman had left an emergency house key in a lockbox at Public Security, officers were able to smash it open

and use the key to gain entry, where they helped her into bed until a caregiver arrived on duty.

"This shows how the woman was able to receive quick attention and how important it was for her to wear a MedicAlert bracelet and to have left the key in a lockbox, said Public Security director Greg McBain.

6 off-leash dogs ticketed in Summit Woods

Tickets worth \$225 each were issued for at least six dogs being walked off leash in Summit Woods between August 18 and August 25, according to Public Security reports.

A campaign has been under way to crack down on dog walkers at the summit who fail to follow the mandatory leash law that remains in effect in the summer in the area until 5 pm (see story August 24, p. 3).

Of the six tickets, one was issued to a Westmount resident, the other five to residents of Montreal such as NDG and the Ridgewood area.

Water leak discovered by neighbour

A water leak at the apartment building at 4200 Dorchester was traced August 22 to a defective water line that had been hooked up in one of the units, according to Public Security reports. The leak was discovered and Public Security called around 1:40 pm when a nearby resident noticed water leaking from a balcony roof. The ceiling of the unit below appeared soaked.

Swastikas removed

Park users "erased" portions of swastikas that were noticed on a walking path in Westmount Park August 23, according to one participant. They were drawn in chalk.

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To improve sidewalk accessibility

Coin parking meters removed in handicap spots

BY LAUREN SWEENEY

The coin-operated meters for handicapped parking have recently been removed to improve sidewalk accessibility, Public Security director Greg McBain explained last week. As a result, cars displaying the blue-and-white handicapped permits will now have free parking for up to four hours.

“We’ll be strictly monitoring appropriate use of the spaces,” he said. All are lo-

ated in commercial areas.

The idea, which he said had evolved from his attendance at meetings of the Westmount Accessibility Advisory Committee, is in keeping with the city’s policy of accessibility, improved use of the sidewalks, including in the winter with better snow removal and no longer requiring users to hunt for change.

According to minutes of the city council’s general committee meetings, McBain told council members July 19, it was rec-

ommended that once the meters were removed, the spaces would be free of charge to eligible users.

They had remained in place when the city installed its pay-by-plate parking system in 2016 (see story April 19, 2016, p. 1). This was because the meters for disabled persons were lower in height and deemed more accessible.

Even these, however, have proven to become obstacles to some persons with disabilities.



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A “new style” handicapped parking space on Victoria near de Maisonneuve.

PHOTO: INDEPENDENT.

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Naughty cat, vigilant dog



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Council's perennial goal is liveable city, pandemic or no



Councillor's column

ANITRA BOSTOCK
DISTRICT 1

When the COVID-19 pandemic broke, the world was unprepared, and communities across the globe faced the disturbing reality that life as we knew it had to change, seemingly overnight. It was frightening, particularly for communities like the city of Westmount, where a significant percentage of the population is over the age of 65 years.

Though overused, there is no better word than *unprecedented* to describe the work undertaken by our city employees and city council to ensure the security of our community in the face of the greatest health threat to humankind since the Spanish flu epidemic of 1918.

Vulnerable seniors

As commissioner of public security, I am proud of the collaboration that has taken place between Westmount council and city employees. I believe the most meaningful example of our work together came in the form of efforts to protect our most vulnerable seniors during lockdown. During those challenging days, Public Security officers went above and beyond, by handing out masks to residents, calling isolated seniors, grocery shopping and travelling door to door delivering food to those seniors with no other means of support.

I am proud of how council ensured that Westmount would continue to flourish as a community. We christened a new outdoor skating rink in Westmount Park, added additional security patrols at Summit Woods, introduced parkettes on Greene Ave. and in Victoria village, and reopened the popular toboggan run at King George Park so that residents could socialize safely outside.

And I am also proud of the work done by council in our efforts beyond the pandemic. We introduced a Back-to-School Safety Campaign in all districts, assisting the police and Public Security in handing

out traffic safety pamphlets to drivers in school zones. We advanced the work of the Westmount Accessibility Committee, bringing together those with limited mobility to suggest changes to ensure greater accessibility for all.

Finally, I am proud of the work achieved for my district, where crucial infrastructure projects – such as the rehabilitation of Lexington and Sunnyside avenues – are completed or under way. We have also increased the number of Public Security officers patrolling in and around Summit Woods, and on Cedar Ave. and The Boulevard, where speeding infractions are an ongoing issue. And though some capital works projects were put on hold because we couldn't guarantee the work would be done in a timely and cost-efficient manner, projects such as the rehabilitation of Roslyn steps and Devon Park, and a project to address safety and infrastructure issues on The Boulevard have been put out to tender, while planning for essential repair at the Summit lookout is under way.

'Virtual' council

For the past two years, city council meetings have taken place online, another result of the pandemic. Half of this council's mandate has taken place virtually. Despite the challenges presented by Zoom meetings, this council has continued to serve the Westmount community responsibly, with dedication and intelligence, facing each new challenge brought on by the pandemic and in the day-to-day of running of a city.

The face of Westmount city council has certainly changed since the last pandemic in 1918 – five out of eight councillors are female, and we are the most diverse council in history. What hasn't changed since 1918 is council's mandate to ensure that Westmount remain a liveable city, where every resident may flourish.

It truly is an honour and privilege to serve this wonderful community. You can contact me at 514.989.5081 or by email at ambostock@westmount.org. It would be a pleasure hearing from you and learning more about how council can work to make Westmount the best possible community for its residents.

More opinion columns this issue

Councillor Conrad Peart on Urban Planning changes, p. 19

Heather Black on Westmount Park plan/non-plan, p. 19

Hydro Westmount committee founded, ready for eco-initiatives



Councillor's column

JEFF SHAMIE
DISTRICT 3

Over the past many years, Westmount city council has implemented a significant number of actions in its efforts to advance our environmental agenda. For example, drop-off centres in municipal buildings have been set up for the collection and recycling of single-use face masks. And our “Green Summer” program is up and running where residents learn about eco-friendly ways to manage the various types of waste from their daily lives. Every little bit helps but the reality is that our planet continues to be at risk and we – individually and collectively – need to do more.

Advisory committee's mission

In this regard, city council established the Hydro Westmount Advisory Committee last May. Its mission is as follows: “Advisory in nature, the Committee will recommend to Council future strategies and directions for Hydro Westmount, namely a more responsible use of electric energy, the contribution to a healthier environment, the encouragement of electrification of transport and the encouragement of innovation.” By means of an example, the committee will examine sustainable, clean energy initiatives such as electric vehicle strategies and how they can be implemented in our community.

As for the composition of the committee, there are 11 members in total; three members from council (and I am pleased that council asked me to be the committee's chairman), three senior city managers and five citizens who volunteered to share

Turf, cont'd from p. 1

various newer types used around the world to replace the shredded rubber tire component that has been widely used.

“Recognizing that a part of the [Westmount] population opposes synthetic turf,” he explained, all the findings would be presented to the council and studied before any decision was made.

Back in 2007, the possibility of installing artificial turf for playing fields in Westmount Park aroused large and vocal opposition, leading to the formation of the Save the Park! group (see May 16, 2007, p. 5, and July 2, 2008).

their expertise with us.

You might be interested to know that Westmount is one of nine cities in Quebec that operates its own hydro utility (and has done since 1904). Hydro Westmount has served our community well over these past many years but now looking at a significant investment in infrastructure in order to modernize its infrastructure. Here is where the expertise of the advisory committee members will come in. They have been mandated to look at the situation and formulate options that would facilitate the modernization process, both technically and financially.

Charging electric cars

Here is another issue that the committee will look into. Cars are incredibly popular in Westmount, which is in part due to the fact that some sections of our city are not readily accessible by public transit. Yet that does not fully explain why we have over 10,000 cars for a population of about 20,000 residents. One solution would be to encourage the use of electric vehicles. But this is not an option for many of our residents who live in apartment buildings. Landlords are complaining about the expense of setting up charging stations in underground parking lots and are seeking to pass on the costs to tenants. We will ask the committee to look at solutions that will let Westmount lead in terms of the electrification of cars, making it easier for our residents to use safe, clean electrical power.

Westmount has a proud tradition of coming together to meet societal challenges head on. In fact, this is one of our strengths and the joys of living in our community. It is in this context that I am confident that the Hydro Westmount Advisory Committee will foster a positive public policy discussion and lead to the adoption of a pro-active series of eco-friendly initiatives.

Pool, cont'd from p. 1

ample, there were 150 pool users who had reserved for 4 pm, but only 133 actually showed up. There were large differences in most of the other time slots, too, “so people are still not cancelling,” Lapointe said.

The Westmount pool started the season with a limited capacity of 75 (see June 1, p. 1) and has a physical limit of 350 (see July 7, 2020, p. 1).

Despite the return of some lifeguards to CEGEP and university, the pool is expected to stay open until September 6.

Also, somewhat surprisingly, few residents used the Westmount recreation centre as a cooling station.

Looking back at COVID successes—and ahead to in-person events



Councillor's column

MARY GALLERY
DISTRICT 6

Happy Labour Day!

It is hard to believe that four years have passed since I was elected to represent District 6 on Westmount city council. It has been a challenging and stimulating period for local leadership and citizens alike. Having grown up in Westmount, experiencing the city through the lens of government has strengthened my appreciation and love for our vibrant community, our city and our dedicated employees.

Complex issues, tricky timing

This current slate of mostly new city councillors took office with fresh, enthusiastic perspective and lofty ambitions for city hall. We quickly grasped that the issues are often very complex, timing is always a sensitive consideration, and our collective priorities much more nuanced than we had previously understood and appreciated as citizens.

As commissioner of the Westmount Public Library, community events, sports & recreation and culture, I have been privileged to have met and spoken with so many constituents and have learned so much about the contours and touch points of these important community institutions.

I have done a lot of listening – and done my utmost to be accessible and responsive to residents, implementing changes and improvements where possible.

Since March 2020, the pandemic has thwarted many of our plans. Pivoting to operating remotely has made running all aspects of city government that much more challenging. Our council adapted quickly and implemented many new practices, most of which will remain in place: Online Council meetings were live streamed, curbside pick-up was offered at the library, the toboggan runs were machine groomed at King George (Murray) Park, a refrigerated outdoor skating rink was installed in Westmount Park and more public spaces were created in our commercial districts. All of the above served to upgrade our productivity and enhance our quality and standard of living.

Full capacity coming?

I still miss, and look forward to the return of, our in-person meetings, more safe community events at Victoria Hall and having our library and rec centre operating at full capacity.

I am proud of what our mayor, council and all city employees have accomplished through this period of profound uncertainty and instability, and I remain dedicated and committed to working on behalf of my neighbours and constituents.

I trust you all have enjoyed a healthy, happy and safe summer, and look forward to “seeing” you soon.

Letters to the Editor, p. 9

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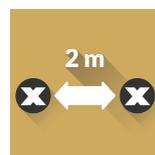
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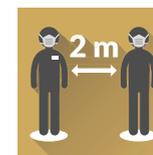


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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

DISMAYING DECISION ON VULGARITY BY *INDEPENDENT*

Re: your August 24, p. 26, election-sign photo

I was dismayed that the *Westmount Independent* chose to publish a photo of a non-official campaign sign.

That a red maple leaf replaces one of the swear word's four letters is hardly amusing. Neither does it soften what is essentially an offensive, rude, antagonistic message.

Isn't it enough that online social media is full of this kind of vitriolic display of opinion, without it spilling over into our community newspaper?

SUSAN KAZENEL, KENSINGTON AVE.

Editor's reply: We don't share a sense of humour. The sight of this message on a flag - draped from a traditional-looking Westmount house and flapping cheekily in the breeze - made me laugh, and seemed to subvert the staid image of Westmount still held by many.

More importantly, in a municipality where residents rarely even put up candidate-supplied lawn signs, this resident's display *happened* and was novel. Even if you don't find it funny, it is newsworthy for this reason. It can't all be good news. It is

of no consequence to me that it is not an "official" sign. Unaffiliated people are as free to express themselves as parties and candidates.

Lastly and perhaps most importantly, there are more important things in my opinion than civility. While I like Justin personally (without commenting one way or another on his politics or performance), I *love* living in a country where we can comment in almost any way on our political leaders. The worldwide list of such places seems to be getting shorter by the day. - DP.

MR. GARNEAU, WHY SHOULD I VOTE LIBERAL?

An open letter to MP Marc Garneau

I met you quite a while ago at Beaver Lake when you first ran for the Liberal Party in Westmount. I was there on a trip with the Yellow Door Seniors' Club. I was impressed with your down-to-earth, honest and very candid approach with people. In fact, I considered you a very good candidate for prime minister because as a well-known Canadian astronaut with all of your capabilities you appeared to be a shoo-in for the job in the future.

I lost faith in you during the whole

SNC-Lavalin scandal when you backed Prime Minister Trudeau, who was found guilty by his own ethics commissioner of overstepping and putting pressure on Jody Wilson Raybould to basically acquit SNC of any wrongdoing. You also backed the ejection of Jody Wilson Raybould and Jane Philpott from the [federal] Liberal Party. As far as I am concerned, these two ladies were the party's bravest, most honest and well-intentioned members, and you guys kicked them out, not your proudest moment.

Mr. Trudeau was given two more passes when he was found to have made himself up in black-face and then his fingerprints were all over the WE Charity scandal. That makes a total of three strikes and yet you still support this prime minister?

What happened to the gentleman I met all those years ago at Beaver Lake? You lost my vote in the last election. Can you explain why you backed Mr. Trudeau through these scandals and didn't have the guts to stand up as the two women you ejected? Why should you get my vote in the upcoming election?

CRAIG CORMACK, NDG



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Public Security discovers water infiltrating into library

BY LAUREEN SWEENEY

Patrollers in Westmount Park noticed two outside sprinkler heads leaking on the east side of the library at 9:28 am on August 21, Public Security officials said. Entering the library, which is closed on summer weekends, they found a small amount of water on the basement floor.

"It turns out the underground pipe that feeds the system had broken but the person who maintains the system turned it off quickly, capped the pipe and turned the water back on," said Bruce St. Louis, interim assistant director general.

◀ The front lawn of the Westmont Public Library on August 23.

PHOTO: INDEPENDENT.

The following day, however, at 4:54 pm a second report stated that officers were called by Public Works to check out the basement again and unlock it. This time, a larger amount of water, but still "minimal," was found in the basement and some boxes not on pallets were wet. Additional water lines were shut off.

The contractor returned Monday morning to make final repairs. "A total of about a dozen books were damaged, ones waiting for the library book sale," he said.

St. Louis credited the presence of Public Security for discovering the latest incidents, noting it was an example of "the untold" story of their value over the years, including tasks such as checking out municipal buildings.

Weeping willow collapses



A worker cuts up a weeping willow in the lagoon in Westmount Park August 23. It had collapsed the evening before.

PHOTO: HEATHER BLACK.

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'Place looks like a dump': Bloomfield Council asked for 'more attractive' fencing at lookout

BY LAUREN SWEENEY

What plan does the city have for the Summit lookout that remains blocked off by construction-type fencing? city council was asked August 2. The lookout that is "a pearl of our city" now looks like "an absolute dump," said Harry Bloomfield, a nearby resident.

"I too want it re-opened," Mayor Christina Smith said but explained that the wire fencing had been installed when the area was closed off last year as a way to prevent it being used as a gathering spot during COVID.

Over the winter, however, the concrete banister had been broken during snow removal operations and the fence is now needed as a safety measure to keep people from climbing over (see story and photo May 18, p. 3) while awaiting an engineering report. More details are expected in the coming days, she explained.

Bloomfield suggested "maybe something a little more aesthetic" could be used.

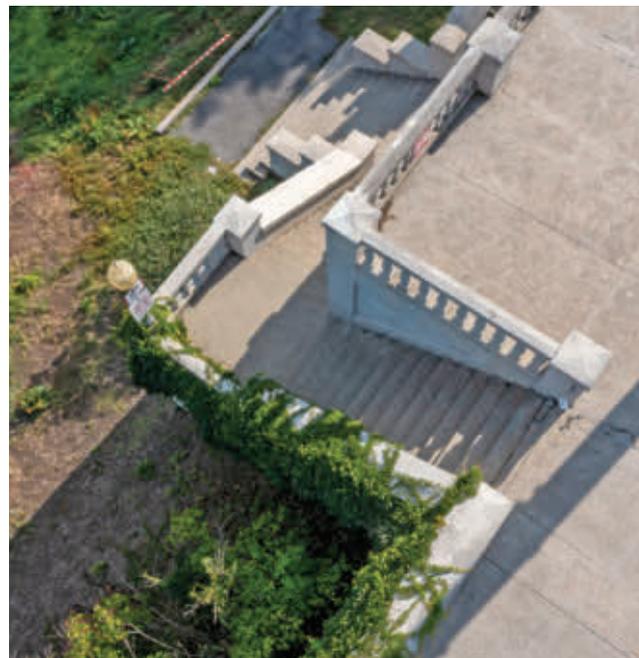
Structural problems

At the July 19 meeting of the council's general committee, Bruce St. Louis, in-

terim assistant director general, and Elisa Gaetano, Engineering director, had provided an update on the condition of the lookout, according to minutes of that session recently tabled August 16.

The lookout and the lower section will be secured and off limits "for an indefinite period," the minutes stated. A report from FNX-INNOV engineering firm "recommended that all access to the lookout

be restricted as long as the structural problems persist." Signage was to be installed to explain to the population the reasons for the closure of the lookout.



Drone views of the summit lookout steps, currently inaccessible and invisible to pedestrians, as seen August 27.

PHOTOS: RALPH THOMPSON.



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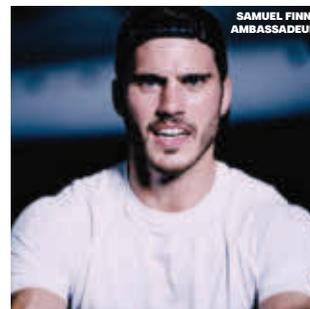
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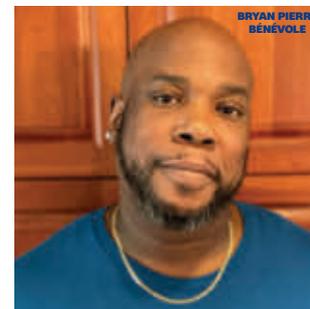
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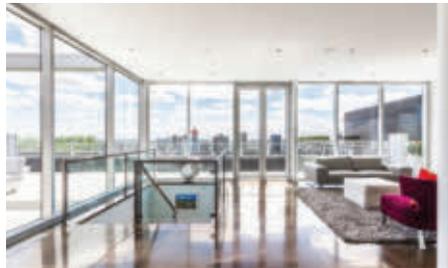
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Westmounters join 'Le Weekend' vs. cancer



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Clare Chiu and family, above left. Above right, from left, Joanie Schwartz and Lesli Green.

PHOTOS COURTESY OF ENERGI PR.

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Westmount residents Clare Chiu, Joanie Schwartz and Lesli Green participated August 22 in Le Week-end pour combattre le cancer, a weekend-long event benefiting the Jewish General Hospital's Segal Cancer Centre.

"[Joanie and I] have been walking together throughout the pandemic, and this was a fun and meaningful way to put our feet to good use – and help kick cancer to the curb!" said Green.

Chiu is a board member of the Jewish General Hospital's Foundation.

The event saw 675 participants ride,

walk and connect while raising funds and awareness.

"Le Week-end raised over \$1.7 million (and counting!) for cancer care, innovation and research right here in our own backyard!" according to an email to the *Independent* from Somya Dixit Anand, group account director at energI PR.



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Joins incumbent Feldman, challenger Rapoport in race

Third candidate Rolain in EMSB Ward 3 election spices up school board contest

BY MARTIN C. BARRY

A late entrant to the race for the Ward 3 seat on the English Montreal School Board (EMSB) has injected an additional element of surprise to an election that has been delayed twice because of the COVID-19 pandemic.

The September 26 election in Ward 3 (which includes EMSB schools in Westmount and parts of central Montreal) had been set to take place last year.

However, it was postponed by the provincial government – first in October and then at the end of November – based on a recommendation by public health officials.

Although nine EMSB commissioners (all members of board chairman Joe Ortona's team) were declared elected by acclamation last September when there were no challengers, Ward 3 was the exception.

While incumbent EMSB Ward 3 commissioner Julien Feldman (Team Ortona) and former PSBGM commissioner Irwin Rapoport (independent) have been candidates from the beginning, last Sunday, only hours before the candidacy deadline, a third aspirant entered the race.

A resident of Claremont Ave., Thomas Rolain is self-employed as a medical science liaison, a position that, he says, involves answering questions related to science and medicine for healthcare professionals, including doctors and nurses, on medical products (such as vaccines).

"I am dedicated to the field of education and I have a strong desire to positively impact our English school community," he said in a statement e-mailed to the *Independent*.

Rolain said he sees the current main issue for the start of the school year as the threat the COVID-19 Delta variant poses



Thomas Rolain on August 26.

to the health of school children.

In an interview last week, Rapoport said he considers it "important that everybody get onto the voters' list and vote and urge their family and friends to also do so. We need to protect our school boards and control our schools and education infrastructure.

"This election isn't just about candidates – it's also the future of our community institutions," he continued, alluding to the provincial government's Bill 40, which replaced the French-language school commissions with service centres, while attempting to do the same with English boards.



Irwin Rapoport on August 27.

Feldman, who's been a member of the EMSB board since 2008, suggested that the council of commissioners will be keeping up the pressure on the Legault government to honour its legal obligations to the board, in spite of the government's intentions.

"I can tell you that the next big confrontation is going to be on public school funding," said Feldman. "So, if necessary, we'll go back to court on that. At the end of the day, we feel very confident and comfortable that as elected officials, we have a level playing field in the court against the elected officials running the government."

Julien Feldman was unavailable for a photo.



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Spikeball comes to Westmount



With a break in the heat wave August 28, four friends Amy Nguyen, Mingze Deng (no top), Augustine Jesmer (green top) and Nicholas Gojo (blue top) were playing a very competitive game of roundnet (also known as spikeball) in Westmount Park. According to Wikipedia, its invention in 1989 was inspired by volleyball and it became popular around 2008 when a sports equipment company called Spikeball Inc., started selling Roundball equipment and promoting tournaments.

PHOTOS: RALPH THOMPSON.

Out in one piece



This slab of walkway stones, background, on de Maisonneuve near Melville seems to have come out in one piece, but will it go back in as smoothly? The work, seen August 30, is likely being done in connection with recent water main re-construction by the city of Montreal on that street.

PHOTO: INDEPENDENT.

We welcome your letters

We welcome your letters but reserve the right to choose and edit them. Please limit to 300 words and submit before Friday 10 am to be considered for publication the following week.

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'Someday' is now at Urban Planning



Councillor's column

CONRAD PEART
DISTRICT 4

Years ago, our Urban Planning department was stumbling under the weight of a continuous stream of permit applications. While in an admirable attempt to stem the tide, the team was forever wanting for more staff, more space, and clearer policies and procedures.

The results were no surprise. In 2018, the École Nationale d'Administration Publique (ÉNAP) reported that residents expressed, "dissatisfaction, even frustration, with the cumbersome, complex, time-consuming and iterative nature of the permit analysis process."

No time for planning

Equally troublesome was the observation that the permit processing workload was so all-consuming that there was little time for actual planning.

Imagine that. Master planning, by-law revisions, zoning adjustments, and various urban planning initiatives were mostly relegated to the "someday" pile.

A re-think was necessary.

At the time, we thought that some targeted tweaks here and there would unlock some quick wins.

The first step was to hire a new employee dedicated to the task of by-law review and revision. At last, we would be able to transition the "someday" stack into an actionable "to-do" list. Soon thereafter, however, it became more obvious that a more comprehensive rework was needed.

I am an architect, so you may have already heard me lean into the following analogy.

As sometimes happens with a home renovation, we started out with a simple refresh project only to realize that many bits of the foundation and structure were rotten once we pulled back the drywall.

Our by-laws have served us quite well over the years – as evidenced by our exemplary architectural and heritage character in Westmount. That said, through accretion and an unintended measure of neglect, they had morphed into a compilation that was outdated, occasionally contradictory, and sometimes misaligned with best practices.

Inconsistent results

It didn't help, either, that a lack of incompletely documented policies and procedures left individuals to develop their

own ways of doing things – leading to inconsistent results.

In the past year, however, our Urban Planning department has changed, though perhaps not yet in ways that might be readily visible to you.

As with most organizations, the global pandemic sparked significant upheaval, most of it unwelcome. Offices were closed. Work sites were padlocked. Non-essential workers worked remotely as best as they were able.

With city hall closed until further notice and work sites eventually re-opened, the permit process needed to resume, and fast – despite the permit counter being inaccessible and staffed remotely. In a very short time, however, the Urban Planning and IT departments collaborated to cobble together and implement an online permit portal. The system is by no means perfect, but it quickly pulled us out of the Dark Ages and closer to modernity.

Most impactful, however, has been the arrival of fresh leadership at Urban Planning.

The nomination of director Michel Larue leverages more than a quarter-century of experience gained from executive roles across various cities. His mandate is to rebuild the department from the ground up.

Changes to structure, by-laws

Additional staffing resources are in the queue. Existing space is being re-allocated and re-purposed. New policies and procedures are either in the planning or implementation phase. We have already seen the fruit of some foundational by-law rework that includes revisions to the Board of Inspections, the Planning Advisory Committee (PAC), and finally, an inaugural by-law for minor exemptions.

With the underlying framework more securely in place, we are better equipped to tackle the more challenging tasks of the Imagine Westmount 2040 project – including much-needed revisions to zoning and architectural integration by-laws. As previously mentioned, Westmount is revered and recognized for its heritage and architectural quality. The changes already in motion underpin its responsible stewardship and set the scene for its modernization.

Without a doubt, there is still much left to do. It is both an honour and a privilege to participate in this ongoing transformation. As a Boy Scout, I learned that you leave a campsite in a better state than you found it.

I believe that we have done so. I hope that you do too.

Westmount Park project: Where is our park master plan?



ECOWatch

HEATHER BLACK

Signs in Westmount Park alert citizens to the need for park refurbishment. For example: lagoon hydraulics must meet current environmental standards – please support a naturalized pond. However in this era of climate change, what is missing is a citizen-approved, park master plan that details environmental as well as citizenship goals.

Missing ecological targets

The current trend in park design is to specify targets for additional trees or shrub replacement. A park-development plan in Austin, Texas, for instance, includes maintaining a certain percentage of the forest canopy and fox nesting sites.

For Westmount Park, targets could include a 10-percent increase in the park canopy as well as a protected buffer zone for nesting ducks – an Environment and Climate Change Canada requirement.

Good design is about problem solving. Erosion reduction by planting native, drought-resistant wildflowers or grasses and selecting rain-absorbing, porous sidewalk materials – both requests of citizens at the November 2019 public consultation – is also an important design concept.

Erosion

In contrast Stantec's selection of granite walkways and an event site on the plateau would only increase erosion by run-off or foot traffic and maintenance costs.

What is missing is a citizen-approved park master plan that focuses on sustainability goals and environmental issues, as well as park use for citizen well-being.

Beaconsfield, for instance, lists among its landscaping goals, "maximizing biomass and mitigating the effect of urban heat islands caused by large paved surfaces." Malmö, Sweden, provides ecological landscaping options – ponds, pollinator plants, or bird and bat boxes – which even private development must respect (Austin, 2013).

Positive citizenship goals

This brings us to the larger issue – what are the attributes of today's citizen? As a member of the Montreal agglomeration, Westmount has recycling-composting targets, which requires citizens to be environ-

mental stewards.

As research shows exposure to nature at an early age results in more pro-environmental action (Collado, 2019), a park master plan must include more nature – not less – with green space to sit and watch ducks, birds and butterflies.

Westmount also needs pro-social citizens – those who lend their talents to improve the community.

Recent research with children demonstrated an "Association between green space quality and prosocial behaviour" (Putra, 2021). America's great park designer Frederick Law Olmsted (1822-1903) also understood the psychological need for citizens to de-stress – or recreate – in nature.

Research confirms that hearing bird-song – and species diversity – improves well-being (Ferraro, 2020).

As living in greener urban areas reduces the probability of heart disease, diabetes or obesity, nature prescriptions – two hours a week – are on the rise (White, 2019). Parks also serve as a respite from urban noise, which raises blood pressure. A well-conceived park master plan then reduces noise throughout the park (Jaszczak, 2021) and protects vulnerable nesting areas – a federal requirement – by establishing activity zones for musical events, children's play areas or dog runs.

For future generations

Lagoon naturalization is also an opportunity to introduce more birds and insects to future generations. But to ensure both young and old benefit from nature, Westmounters need a park master plan with sustainable targets – and landscaping concepts – before the project goes out for tender. Have your say at engage.westmount.org or write your city councillor.

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Notre parc Westmount

Engagé au printemps 2019, le projet de revitalisation du parc Westmount a pour objectif de restaurer et préserver ce havre de verdure au cœur de la Ville. Le parc est un des lieux les plus appréciés par les résidents de la Ville, le projet ne pouvait donc se faire sans l'implication de la communauté.

Un effort a donc été fait pour favoriser la participation du public au projet. Un sondage des citoyens sur le parc a eu lieu du 28 octobre au 15 novembre 2019, et un atelier participatif a été organisé le 13 novembre 2019 au Victoria Hall. Au cours de cet atelier, plus d'une centaine de résidents ont eu l'occasion d'exprimer leurs idées et leurs souhaits pour l'avenir du parc. À la suite de ces consultations publiques, des propositions de concepts d'aménagements ont été présentées au public lors d'une présentation publique en ligne le 18 novembre 2020. Un sondage sur ces concepts d'aménagements a eu lieu du 18 novembre 2020 au 18 janvier 2021. Au cours des dernières semaines, les résidents ont eu l'occasion d'exprimer à nouveau leurs réactions sur certains éléments du projet en répondant à un court sondage. Les citoyens ont également pu exprimer leurs commentaires et opinions directement sur la page Web du projet sur le site engage.westmount.org.

La Ville tient à rappeler que le projet est encore dans une phase de consultations publiques. Les concepts d'aménagements proposés ne sont que des recommandations et sont toujours à l'étude. Ceux-ci ne sont pas définitifs. Toutefois, au cours des dernières semaines, quelques citoyens ont exprimé des inquiétudes, des craintes et parfois leur opposition par rapport au projet. Il est donc important pour la Ville de répondre à quelques questions afin de dissiper tout malentendu ou corriger toute information erronée qui aurait pu conduire à une mauvaise compréhension ou une mauvaise interprétation des objectifs et des intentions du projet.

Pourquoi ne pas continuer de faire simplement de l'entretien ?

Le parc se trouve à un point critique où une grande partie de l'infrastructure est brisée. L'infrastructure, tant en surface que sous terre, approche de la fin de son cycle de vie. Par conséquent, une intervention est nécessaire, notamment la remise en état du système d'approvisionnement en eau (conduites principales et drains), des sentiers, de l'éclairage et des composants électriques. La gravité et l'urgence de ces problèmes indiquent que la simple maintenance ou l'entretien ne suffiraient pas.

Pourquoi est-il suggéré de refaire les sentiers ?

Le mauvais état des sentiers était l'un des principaux commentaires de la première enquête sur l'état du parc. Les sentiers en briques sont l'une des caractéristiques historiques du parc. Au fil du temps, le terrain s'est déformé, entraînant le déplacement des briques. Cette situation a augmenté le risque de trébucher et de se blesser, surtout pour les personnes à mobilité réduite. Il s'agit d'un problème de sécurité. Le simple remplacement des briques ne serait pas une solution viable à long terme et ne respecterait pas les meilleures pratiques de construction puisque la fondation des sentiers doit également être réparée. Les sentiers utiliseront des matériaux durables, en accord avec le cadre naturel et historique du parc, et devraient permettre un meilleur drainage des eaux de pluie. Les sentiers doivent être accessibles à tous.

Pourquoi est-il suggéré de réaménager et réparer l'étang ?

Une trop grande quantité d'eau fuit de l'étang. Il a été créé artificiellement avec une base en ciment qui a été remplie d'eau potable. Cette base présente une fissure qui entraîne une perte d'eau importante. La législation sur l'utilisation et l'économie de l'eau potable nous oblige à intervenir pour remédier à ces problèmes. Il est proposé de reconstruire le bassin avec des matériaux naturels et durables.

Le nouvel étang privilégiera les pratiques durables et sera principalement alimenté par les eaux de pluie.

Pourquoi est-il suggéré de faire un sentier secondaire à côté de la piste cyclable ?

De nombreux piétons utilisent la piste cyclable pour se rendre de l'avenue Melville à l'avenue Lansdowne. Cette situation a été mentionnée par de nombreux répondants lors de la première enquête sur l'état du parc. Elle crée certains conflits avec les cyclistes et peut poser un problème de sécurité. La vitesse des cyclistes et les intersections dangereuses entre la piste cyclable et les sentiers posent également des problèmes de sécurité. Pour remédier à cette situation, nous pourrions éventuellement construire un sentier secondaire (moins large que les sentiers principaux) le long de la piste cyclable pour permettre aux piétons et aux cyclistes de se déplacer en toute sécurité.

Est-ce que la suggestion d'une passerelle au-dessus de l'aire de jeu sera retenue ?

Non. La proposition de la firme Stantec d'une passerelle au-dessus de l'aire de jeu ne sera pas retenue.

Pourquoi est-il suggéré de déplacer la pataugeoire qui est au coin de Sherbrooke et Melville ?

La pataugeoire, située à l'angle des rues Sherbrooke et Melville, est glissante donc dangereuse lorsqu'elle est humide. Elle n'est pas écologique et doit mieux économiser l'eau. Enfin, il est fortement recommandé de déplacer la pataugeoire du coin, et de la rapprocher de l'aire de jeux pour enfants.

Pourquoi est-il suggéré de réaménager l'aire de jeu pour enfants ?

Depuis 2014, des changements aux normes du Canadian Playground Safety Institute (CPSI) exigent plus d'espace ouvert autour des structures de jeux. L'aire de jeux doit être conforme aux normes pour la sécurité des enfants. Le retrait du béton dans cette zone réduira les surfaces dures, atténuera l'effet d'îlot de chaleur et permettra d'ajouter des arbres et des zones à l'abri du soleil dans l'aire de jeux.

Si des travaux ont lieu, est-ce que le parc va être fermé ?

Le parc ne sera pas fermé pendant les travaux. Les travaux se feront par étapes de manière à assurer un accès au parc. En fonction des travaux, certains secteurs du parc pourraient être temporairement fermés au public, mais le parc ne sera jamais totalement inaccessible aux usagers. Nous savons que l'accès au parc de Westmount est très important.

Le parc Westmount ressemblera encore et toujours au parc Westmount. Les aménagements proposés auront un faible impact sur la physionomie du parc. Il n'y aura pas de transformations majeures à l'aspect général du parc. Il sera plus vert et plus luxuriant. Il y aura davantage d'espaces verts, d'arbustes, d'arbres, et de couverture végétale. Le parc sera accessible à tous les résidents, y compris à ceux qui ont des problèmes de mobilité.

L'objectif principal du projet est de préserver ce parc qui est tant aimé par la communauté afin qu'il continue d'accueillir en toute sécurité et en toute sérénité les générations futures et continuer de faire la fierté de notre Ville. Certains aspects du parc nécessitent plus qu'un entretien, et nous ne pouvons plus ignorer la nécessité de réparer l'infrastructure. Le parc Westmount demeure toujours le parc Westmount : un lieu de nature, un lieu de vie et d'épanouissement pour notre communauté !

Le calendrier proposé dans la brochure prévoit que le nouveau Conseil engage un cabinet d'architecture paysagère par le biais d'un appel d'offres. Ce cabinet préparera la proposition de conception qui serait le résultat d'une consultation plus approfondie.

Ville de Westmount

Our Westmount Park

Initiated in the spring of 2019, the Westmount Park revitalization project aims to restore and preserve this haven of greenery in the heart of the City. The park is one of the City's most cherished places, so the project could not be done without the involvement of the community.

An effort was made to encourage public participation in the project. A citizen survey on the park was held from October 28 to November 15, 2019, and a participatory workshop was held on November 13, 2019 at Victoria Hall. During this workshop, over 100 residents had the opportunity to express their ideas and desires for the future of the park. As a result of these public consultations, proposed design concepts were presented to the public during an online public presentation on November 18, 2020. A survey on these design concepts was conducted from November 18, 2020 to January 18, 2021. In recent weeks, residents have had the opportunity to again express their feedback on some aspects of the project by completing a short survey. Citizens have also been able to express their comments and opinions directly on the project webpage at engage.westmount.org.

The City would like to remind the public that the project is still in the public consultation phase. Design concepts remain recommendations and are still under consideration. This is not final. However, some citizens have expressed concerns, fears, and sometimes opposition to the project in recent weeks. Therefore, the City needs to answer a number of questions to clear up any misunderstandings or correct any misinformation that may have led to a misunderstanding or misinterpretation of the project's objectives and intentions.

Why not just keep doing maintenance?

The park is at a critical point where much of the infrastructure is broken. Infrastructure, both above and below ground, is approaching the end of its life cycle. Therefore, intervention is required, including the rehabilitation of the water supply system (water mains and drains), pathways, lighting and electrical components. The severity and urgency of these problems indicate that simple maintenance or upkeep would not be sufficient.

Why the suggestion to redo the trails?

The poor condition of the trails was one of the main comments in the first survey on the state of the park. The brick trails are one of the park's historic features. Over time, the land has buckled, causing the bricks to shift. This situation has increased the risk of tripping and injury, especially for those with limited mobility. This is a safety issue. Simply replacing the bricks would not be a viable long-term solution and would not follow best construction practices since the trails' foundation must also be repaired. The pathways will use sustainable materials, in keeping with the natural and historical setting of the park, and should allow for better stormwater drainage. The pathways must be accessible to everyone.

Why the suggestion to redevelop and repair the pond?

The pond is leaking too much water. It was artificially created with a cement base that was filled with drinking water. There is a crack in this base which results in a significant loss of water. The legislation on the use and saving of drinking water requires us to intervene to remedy these problems. It is suggested to reconstruct the basin with natural and sustainable materials.

The pond will focus on sustainable practices and will be primarily rain-fed.

Why the suggestion to make a side path next to the bike path?

Many pedestrians use the bike path to get from Melville Avenue to Lansdowne Avenue. This situation was mentioned by many respondents in the first survey on the state of the park. It creates some conflicts with cyclists and can pose a safety issue. The speed of cyclists and dangerous intersections between the bike path and trails also pose some safety concerns. To remedy this situation, we could possibly construct a secondary pathway (less wide than the main pathways) along the bike path to allow for safe pedestrian and cyclist movement.

Will the suggestion for a wooden walkway be built over the playground?

No. Stantec's proposal for a wooden walkway over the playground will not be pursued.

Why the suggestion to move the wading pool from the corner of Sherbrooke and Melville?

The wading pool, located at the corner of Sherbrooke and Melville is slippery and therefore dangerous when wet. Not environmentally friendly and needs to improve its water conservation. It is not accessible to everyone. Finally, it is highly recommended to relocate the wading pool from the corner and bring it closer to the children's playground area.

Why the suggestion to redevelop the children's playground?

In 2014, changes to the Canadian Playground Safety Institute (CPSI) standards required more open space around play structures. The playground needs to comply with the norms for the safety of the children.

Removing the concrete in this area will reduce hard surfaces, mitigate the heat island effect, and allow for additional trees and sun-sheltered areas in the play area.

If there is construction, will the park be closed?

The park will not be closed during construction. The work will be done in stages to ensure access to the park. Depending on the work, some areas of the park may be temporarily closed to the public, but the park will never be completely inaccessible to users. We know that access to Westmount Park is too important.

Westmount Park will still look like Westmount Park. The proposed improvements will have little impact on the park's appearance. There will be no major changes to the overall appearance of the park. It will be greener and lush. There will be an increase of green spaces, low shrubs and trees, and ground cover. The park will be made accessible to all residents, including those with mobility issues.

The project's main objective is to preserve this park so beloved by the community so that it will continue to be a safe and serene place for future generations and a source of pride for our City. Certain aspects of the park go beyond maintenance, and we can no longer ignore the necessity to repair the park's infrastructure. Westmount Park will always remain Westmount Park: a beautiful place to meet and celebrate nature!

The proposed timeline in the brochure would be that the incoming Council would engage a landscape architecture firm through tender. This firm would prepare the design proposal that would be the result of further consultation.

City of Westmount



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Two cars, one space



Prince Albert north of de Maisonneuve on August 27.

PHOTO: INDEPENDENT.

Two motorists argued over a parking space August 27 at about 1:30 pm on Prince Albert north of de Maisonneuve. The driver of the grey car at left alleged that the driver of the red one had stolen her spot. He defended himself and objected to her tone.

The passing pedestrian at left sided with the grey car's driver. The red car's driver eventually ceded the space, but not before things became even more heated as his exit temporarily blocked traffic. "Fucking Westmount people!" he exclaimed as he drove off.

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City Views

VERONICA READGRAVE

Three fellows found Fellow Storage



From left, Parker Curry, Marlin Jayasekera and Nihad Kaddoura.

It is said that necessity is the mother of invention. One such innovative idea is the company Fellow Storage, brainchild of Westmounter Parker Curry and his partners Nihad Kaddoura and Marlin Jayasekera.

Recent university grads, they saw a niche in 2017 as their fellow students were not only moving out of their apartments but, in some cases, out of the country.

Thus, left-behind things, including furniture, had to be tackled. And Fellow Storage was born. The team initially moved and stored students' belongings.

"Our services ... evolved from helping eight students to now over 600 clients," explained Curry. Today they handle a wide range of property – "just not grand pianos, as they require very special temperatures and humidity."

Items can be packed in boxes supplied by Fellow or in clients' own boxes, which are then photographed before being moved. The drivers – a team of eight – are trained on how to handle all sorts of pieces,

ranging from antiques to art.

Clients book online – even for banal things like tire storage – and the rest is history.

"We create a digital storage locker and clients can view and manage their items. If something is needed, they book directly through their portal." Fellow Storage has climate-controlled facilities and stringent security. Having grown exponentially each year, the firm's next step is a moving billboard. Soon you will see a massive van ("14 feet high") with the name Fellow Storage driving all over greater Montreal.

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Guest column

Elsa May – pioneer, painter, polemicist

BY BRIAN DOUCETTE

My first thought upon seeing this painting, “The Outcast,” for sale in summer 2019 on my Facebook group – Art Found in Canada – was “suffragette.”

The suffragettes of Canada, the United States and the UK have long interested me, starting with my happenstance purchase of Eleanor Roosevelt’s cupboard. The seller had mistaken my yard sale for an antique store and driven it right to my front door in 2017.

It had been built by Eleanor’s furniture company, Val-Kill Industries, itself a part of her strong belief in feminism and women’s rights.

The experience of researching that piece had taught me about suffragette symbolism, which I recognized immediately in “The Outcast.”

I had also learned that suffragette art was rare. I needed to know more.

We all know of women chaining themselves to buildings in protest. The chain symbolism seen in the painting was also used in cartoons.

Women adorned themselves with broaches in solidarity. Wonder Woman was a suffragette!

Some of my Facebook members deemed the painting a worthless sex-slave portrait or cheap erotica, but the painting had such a sadness. I knew it was more.

I drove the seven hours from Nova Scotia to middle-of-nowhere New Brunswick for her. I was so delighted to see the orig-

inal exhibition label, a great starting point for more research.

Elsa Marjorie May was born in Westmount in 1890, daughter to a wealthy merchant family. At 16, she won the prestigious Royal Drawing Society’s Full Certificate Prize at King’s Hall, Compton, for being talented in all her subjects, especially art.

In 1914, she attended the Art Association of Montreal (AAM) and was taught by William Brynner, one of the best art teachers in Canadian history.

Elsa exhibited at the AAM from 1914 until 1922, only stopping during the Great War, when she joined the British Commission of the French Red Cross. She served as a nurse in England.

At the spring show of 1922, she exhibited Number 190, “The Outcast.” It is oil on canvas. At 40 by 27 inches, it was a painting with a statement. Female artists were not taken seriously, and it was audacious to paint a bare breast – and add a large chain.

Elsa was so courageous for the day. The women of Quebec did not get the right to vote until 1940, and Elsa never exhibited again. One can only assume that “The Outcast” finished her career. Was there ridicule? I am sure there was...

Later, Elsa was busy at gala balls and the SPCA, and acting in plays. In 1928, she worked with Canada Steamship Lines, decorating the Manoir Richelieu in Murray Bay, and later moved on to its passenger vessels.



Elsa May of the Red Cross Tea Room presented a cheque of \$1,750 for an ambulance to Colonel W. Leggat, who accepted it on behalf of the Red Cross. From left, according to the usage of the time, Miss Betty Hart, Mrs. Normand Prentice, May, Miss Martha Allan, Miss Florence Sellars and supporters. \$1,750 in 1940 is worth \$31,128.13 today.



“The Outcast” by Elsa May and its original exhibition label, below.

Elsa stayed with the Red Cross for years, becoming president of the Beaver Hall Red Cross tearoom and the Allied Post goodwill movement. Her membership in the Canadian Club kept her involved with her suffragette ideals. Both led her to raise funds to buy an ambulance needed during World War II. There are many mentions of Elsa in her war role, even lunching with Princess Alice of Athlone.

Elsa stayed in contact with her painting friends. Frances Porteous is mentioned on several trips. Elsa May was never married and died in 1968.

My take

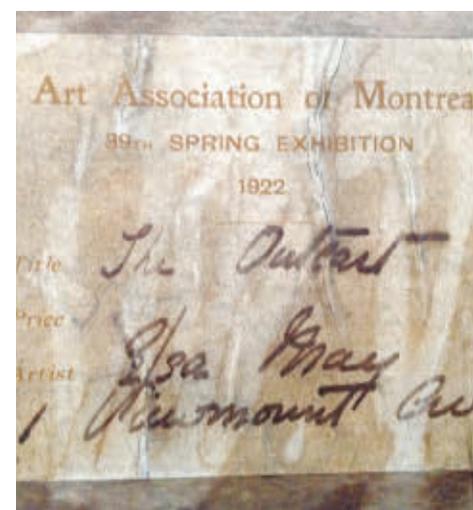
People look at art for many reasons. It can be an investment, a memory, even a status symbol.

I personally see this piece as a snapshot of a time when women had no voice. It must have turned heads at that show. Here’s a very talented trained artist who took her heart and put it to canvas.

You can imagine how much I wish I knew more about her life. The value of this isn’t like a work by a prolific artist such as Mabel May or Tom Thomson. It’s the subject matter she’s expressing. I sent images to many art and women’s rights academics and educators. All could see the suffragette iconography.

I searched the UK and the United States. There’s nothing comparable ... I think I just about summed up Elsa May.

Brian Doucette lives in Northwest Harbour, Nova Scotia.



Elsa May, in “The Outcast” (190), has essayed to visualise grief and despair in a semi-nude figure slung at the foot of a flight of stone steps, with a glimpse of the city—typical of the relentless cruelty of life—beyond. It is not wholly successful in drawing, but it does show imagination and no little ability to express an idea in lucid dramatic form.

SINCERE YOUNG PAINTERS.
The sincerity evinced by the younger painters may, with industry, carry them far. With some ambition has outstripped performance, and others have done well with a difficult subject, such as Elsa May’s “The Outcast,” which shows a partly nude girl with face, hidden by her arm, prostrate on some steps.

Contemporary reviews of Elsa May’s work.

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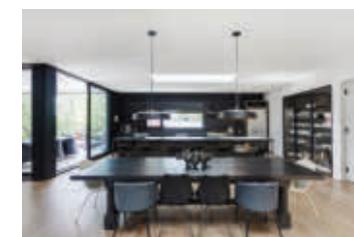
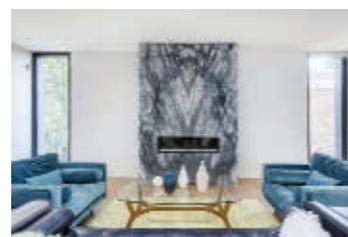
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