

Cote St. Luc mayor to get an earful

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Full text:

A Cote St. Luc resident who objects to a 250-per-cent hike in overnight street parking permit fees expects to meet Mayor Anthony Housefather today in the hopes of getting him to reconsider the increase.

"I hope I can persuade him to get council to make a fair and equitable decision," said resident Steve Matlin, who spearheaded a grassroots movement calling for a lower fee.

The group, the Citizens Against Unfair Increases in Overnight Parking, came into being in the wee hours of Feb. 6 when founding member Matlin prowled the chilly streets distributing flyers to cars parked overnight.

"It was bitter cold," he said. "But I had to go out at 4 a.m. because I was only interested in those who park overnight on the street."

Matlin's flyers read: "We can fight city hall, but we have to do it as a team."

It worked. About 35 residents responded and several came out to a council meeting in mid-February, which ended with citizens shouting down the mayor and leaving before public security officers could remove them.

They protested against the 250-per-cent hike from \$120 to \$420 a year since the fall, calling the rate "unjustified, too expensive and having a significant impact on peoples' quality of life."

Prior to 1995, overnight parking was outlawed. After that, parking was permitted at \$50 a month. When Cote St. Luc merged with Montreal, that fee dropped to \$10.

Housefather has defended the deterrent objective of high permit fees, saying they are necessary from a public security standpoint as well as facilitating street cleaning and snow-clearing.

But councillor Steven Erdelyi said the drop in permit requests since the rate hike has been negligible, so those people who apply for the permits need them.

"We shouldn't be hurting our citizens in this way," he said.

Overnight parking has dominated the last two monthly council meetings.

"If Mayor (Gerald) Tremblay can renege on changing the name of Park Ave. to Robert Bourassa, Housefather and company can take a second look at this," said resident Syd Knecht.

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