

Almost \$10,000 for mass alert system

BY MICHAEL MOORE

The Côte St. Luc city council approved a nearly US\$10,000 contract with American-based Everbridge Inc. to install an automated mass-alert system that will warn residents of emergencies.

The contract, passed at the city's February 10 council meeting, calls for a one-year term at US\$9,247.59 plus a one-time installation fee of US\$739.81. Côte St. Luc also holds three, one-year options at the yearly fee.

"This will enable the city to have an application whereby all current phone numbers which are known within Bell and otherwise known publicly will be called and inserted into the system. Other residents will be able to opt in, hopefully as many as possible," said Councillor Glenn Nashen.

The city will be running a publicity campaign this spring to encourage people with an unlisted number or cell phone to join the system, which will have a test run in March before being implemented in April.

The multi-lingual service won't be limited to only Côte St. Luc numbers, thereby enabling relatives outside the city to keep tabs on their loved ones.

"The benefit of that is if somebody living out of town has an elderly parent in Côte St. Luc, they can opt in and add their phone number as well so they can find out if there's an emergency in Côte St. Luc. They can then call their parent to advise them on what to do and what can

be done," said Nashen.

Tax bills coming late

Newly named Finance portfolio head Steven Erdelyi announced residents' annual tax bills will be mailed and subsequently due a month later than usual.

Erdelyi blamed the hold-up on the delayed release of the agglomeration's budget, the island-wide regional council that funds services like fire, police and public transit.

Residents' tax bills will now be mailed out by February 28, with the first payment instalment due March 28 and the second on June 27.

Still waiting on Bill 60

Côte St. Luc is still waiting to present its brief at the ongoing Bill 60 hearings being held in Quebec City, Mayor Anthony Housefather told council regular Irving Itman during the opening question period.

"Thus far we have not been called and many other organizations we know of have not been called," he said. "They seem to be either moving at a snail's pace or at a pace that doesn't really include the organizations that are opposed to the charter."

Housefather has been a vocal critic of the proposed Charter of Values that would restrict religious symbols in the public sector. Two months ago, Cote St. Luc banded together with other municipalities to denounce the bill, calling it a "Charter of Shame."

Erdelyi reviews city initiatives

BY ISAAC OLSON

Côte St. Luc's new SeeClickFix program, which gives residents the opportunity to report Public Works issues online or through an app, has netted 214 entries and now, explains Councillor Steven Erdelyi, the city is evaluating the program to see where it can be improved.

The program was initiated last summer and allows people to use their smartphones, tablet PC or home computer to report issues to the city like graffiti on public buildings or burned out street-lamps.

Along with seeing what has already been reported, residents can follow their

own reported issue until it is resolved. The average wait time to acknowledge those reports, he said, is 6.4 days and the average time to close is 34.3 days.

"Where we have seen things working well are issues like horticulture, graffiti, sidewalk repair and road signs," said Erdelyi.

"Where we have seen our biggest weakness, has been with the streetlights."

Streetlights, he said, are often more than just a burnt bulb as the problem can be in the wiring, underground conduits or with the ballast.

Problems can lead to excavation and

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A Little goes a long way

Tracy Little, an Olympian from the 2012 London Olympics, visited the Amiel Early Childhood Centre in Côte St. Luc February 19, and its main campus, Solomon Schechter Academy, which is based on the north side of Côte St. Luc Rd. near Marciel Ave. Little, a Montrealer, is a two-time synchronized swimming Olympian and three-time World Championship medalist. Now retired from synchronized swimming, she is a personal trainer and fitness instructor in Montreal. Students pose with the athlete after the Olympian spoke about her time as a competitive synchronized swimmer.

Photo: Isaac Olson



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Local dentist blogs about dental floss oddities

BY ISAAC OLSON

By day, Dr. Harry Rajchgot practises dentistry at his clinic in NDG and at the Montreal Children's Hospital, but when he's not fixing teeth, the Côte St. Luc resident is a busy writer who has recently taken up blogging.

As he works to get his first novel published, Rajchgot has started a blog called "1001 Uses for Dental Floss" where almost every day he publishes short articles on dental floss facts and tooth trivia.

For example, on February 10, he wrote about how in 1997, a quick-thinking nurse used dental floss to save her boyfriend's life. He had been bitten by a shark while spearfishing in the Bahamas, wrote Rajchgot, so the woman tied his exposed artery shut with dental floss.

In another post, Rajchgot discussed a German company's decision to market radioactive toothpaste during World War II — a toothpaste, he told the *Free Press*, that he wouldn't even recommend to his enemy.

Dental floss, he notes on the blog, has been used in prison escapes and it is carried by survivalists for its many uses.

"I just thought it was an interesting idea to post quirky things about dental

floss and other things that involve dentistry," said Rajchgot, who has been practising dentistry for 35 years.

"The blog has unusual information on different aspects of dentistry — mostly dental floss. These are things I find mostly on the web."

Having long considered writing a book on the subject, someone from his Westmount-based writing group suggested he start a blog.

He began researching blogging and by mid-January, he started the blog. Overall, he said he is having a lot of fun and as his view count quickly climbs, he has been getting positive feedback from readers.

Along with writing comedic "Purim Spiels" that are performed at his synagogue, Rajchgot is trying to get his first book published.

The book is called *Gravitational Fields*. He said the novel was inspired by his own experiences with his Holocaust-surviving parents and a two-year trip to Israel in the 1970s. The main character, he said, struggles with a failed marriage and recent deaths in the family as he travels in Israel, exploring his parents' past through a series of letters.

To view Rajchgot's blog, visit: 1001usesfordentalfloss.wordpress.com.

Raising the rainbow flag with pride



According to the city's website, "We're proud to fly the rainbow flag outside Côte St. Luc city hall for the duration of the Olympics in solidarity with those who are being persecuted because of their sexual orientation." Throughout the 2014 Winter Olympics, held in Sochi, Russia, gay-rights activists were detained immediately if they spoke out or showed the rainbow colours in public. In the months leading up to and during the sporting event, LGBT activists worked furiously to raise awareness of Russian's anti-gay law, which makes it a crime to discuss LGBT issues in front of minors. Photo: Isaac Olson

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hand. For more information: 514.484.7878, ext. 1725. Join us!

Volunteers needed

The CSSS Cavendish is looking for volunteers for its long-term senior care facilities to help with recreational activities, friendly visiting, medical escorts and feeding.

Volunteers need to have good interpersonal skills, speak English and French, are able to give two to four hours per week and attend compulsory training. A police check is mandatory and character references are required.

Information meetings at the CLSC Benny Farm, 6484 Monkland Ave., Thursday, March 20 at 1 pm and Friday March 21 at 8:30 am.

Info: 514.484.7878, ext. 3146.

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other major repairs. In the winter, he noted, repairing streetlights is more difficult.

"I think it's working well," he said, noting Côte St. Luc is still the only city in Quebec providing this service. "We're trying to work internally on how we communicate. We continue to improve our response time."

Covering cable boxes

Partnering with Bell on nine different utility box locations in the city, a total of eight have been covered with camouflaging decals that blend in with the surroundings, said Erdelyi. Given that there has been no graffiti on the boxes and the feedback from the community has been positive, Erdelyi said the plan is to continue to encourage companies like Videotron to do the same.

2013 snow budget likely leaves surplus

The total snowfall for 2013, based on Dorval measurements, was 249.9 cen-

timetres, which is slightly above the average, said Erdelyi. While the city generally budgets for 239 centimetres of snowfall, the 2013 snow budget will likely leave the city with a surplus, but "we are still waiting for all the bills to come in."

The budget at a glance

The average tax increase for every resident is about 0.9 percent or a difference of about \$55, said Erdelyi, noting the 2014 budget was approved on February 10.

In the capital budget, he said, there has been a focus on emergency preparedness by spending money on the new "reverse 911" service (see story p. 16). A new EMS vehicle will be purchased along with a Public Works vehicle.

There are also, he added, plans for park renovations as well the continued city hall repairs. Sidewalk repair, he noted, is taking up a "much larger" percentage of the budget than in years past.



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