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CSL council votes 4-2 to enable synagogue register

By Joel Goldenberg

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Councillor Ruth Kovac
City of Côte St. Luc Photo

Côte St. Luc council voted 4-2 Monday night for a rezoning bylaw to enable a new synagogue to be created on Mackle Road, even though it is being generally acknowledged the Fondation Sepharade Kollel Avrechim will very likely not be built in that location.

A register on the synagogue, in which residents can sign to express their desire for a referendum, will take place 9 a.m. to 7 p.m. June 15. More information on the particulars will be sent out by Côte St. Luc.

Councillors Allan Levine, Sidney Benizri, Sam Goldbloom and Mike Cohen voted in favour, while Ruth Kovac and Steven Erdelyi voted against. Councillor Glenn Nashen was absent, but passed on the message he would have voted in favour. Dida Berku, who has abstained from these votes, was also absent.

The vote came after enough signatories — 33 out of 56 eligible residents — signed a petition to spark a register, on which only 17 signatures would be needed to prompt a referendum. Mayor Mitchell Brownstein said if enough people sign the register, there will be no need for a referendum and, as a result, another location will have to be found for the synagogue.

Brownstein said it is the city's mandate to help all residents, and support religious communities. He added that even those who oppose that location for the synagogue want to help its congregants find a new location.

"I assure you now that we're continuing to look into [potential] locations," the Mayor said.

Kovac objected to council passing the bylaw to enable the register. The councillor emphasized that she is not against the synagogue, just the proposed location, as are the 33 residents who signed for a register.

"For me to drag this out to June 15 and ask these same residents to come a second time to say the same thing is a little bit unfair," she added. "We already know we're not going to a referendum."

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