

City now offering 3-installment tax payment option

New council tables record \$146-million budget, aims to reduce headcount

By LAUREEN SWEENEY

The recently elected city council presented the city's operating budget January 13 at a record-setting \$145,712,400. Taxes are to be payable by residents in three installments rather than the traditional two.

The total budget includes the city's share of payments for agglomeration of Montreal ("agglo") services such as fire, police, transit and water as well as Westmount's much smaller contribution to the Montreal Metropolitan Community (MMC). These combine to total some 50 percent of overall city expenses.

In delivering the budget speech, Mayor Michael Stern announced that tax bills will now be payable in three installments (rather than two) to allow residents to

spread payments over a longer period "to ease cash flow for households while maintaining the city's financial stability." These dates are March 9, June 9 and September 9.

"The total tax revenue for 2026 is projected to increase by 5.9 percent compared to last year," he said. This is composed of a 3.3-percent adjustment to cover rising operating costs due to inflation and 2.6 percent for an infrastructure and capital work program.

This means that for 2026, the owner of the average single-family dwelling evaluated at \$2,705,159 can expect a tax bill of \$17,808 while the bill for the average condo of \$549,600 would be some \$3,620.

Based on Montreal's new three-year property assessment roll, which includes *continued on p. 3*

Librarian Lach to retire January 23



Donna Lach, assistant director of the Westmount Public Library and Community Events, in her office January 12. See story on p. 2.

PHOTO: LAUREEN SWEENEY.

Work for 2026, 2027 & 2028

City's budget for capital works program hailed as largest ever

By LAUREEN SWEENEY

The city's three-year capital works program for 2026-2027-2028 was presented as the city's largest one ever at a special council meeting January 13.

"Over the next three years, the city plans to invest \$149.7 million in its capital assets," Mayor Michael Stern said. "This represents *continued on p. 2*

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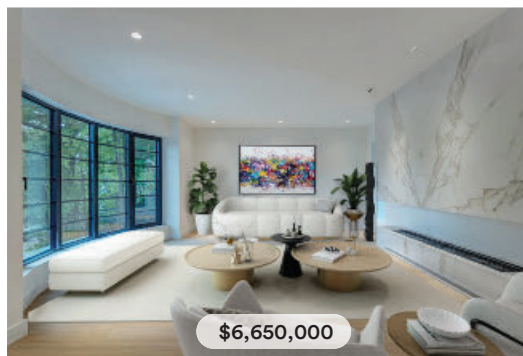
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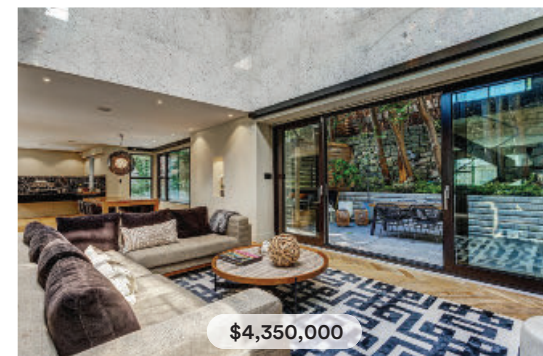
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Donna Lach retires January 23

‘Never the same’ day over her 30 years at the library

By LAUREEN SWEENEY

The long-time assistant director of the Westmount Public Library and Community Events has been bidding retirement farewells to the many members and users of the city’s best-used facility and what had become its thriving department of Community Events, which she headed as part of her job.

What’s up next? She plans to travel and also adopt a second rescue dog.

“As I get ready to leave, my heart is filled with gratitude for all the memories created while working for this amazing city,” she told the *Independent*. “I will never forget the warmth, laughter and unwavering support from my colleagues and the Westmount community throughout the years. It seems like yesterday that I began working here.”

That was when she graduated in 1995 from McGill University with her master’s degree in library information studies and began working here as a part-time reference librarian. She went on to become the programming and outreach librarian, a new position created for the library’s centennial anniversary in 1999, which was also the city’s 125th.

The work is so different every day, she explained. “You never know what is going to happen when you walk in here. I got to know so many amazing people.”

First event was for The Hockey Sweater

The first event she organized was for Roch Carrier’s book *The Hockey Sweater*, she recalled.

By 2014, her position had morphed into

assistant director of the Westmount Public Library and Community Events, “that I truly love beyond words.”

During this time, “everyone has made my time so enjoyable, transforming co-workers and many community members into friends and evolving my work into a

Capital works, cont’d from p. 1

the largest capital investment program the city has undertaken to date.” It reflects the “scale of the infrastructure renewal required across the city.”

Adopted were projects totalling \$48.5 million for 2026, \$47.5 million for 2027 and \$54.1 million for 2028.

The capital works program has long been regarded as a blueprint for funding “what and when” major projects are funded and carried out depending on priorities and changing needs.

Their funding requires a balanced approach, the mayor said. Over the three

truly meaningful experience. I would like to thank my colleagues and this amazing community for motivating me and making each day memorable.

“I truly will miss you more than words can ever convey.”

See photo on p. 1.

years, the city anticipates adopting loan by-laws totalling some \$84.6 million along with some \$59 million funded directly from current operations (“pay-as-you-go”) and the remainder from government grants (TECQ).

Work listed for 2026 by category totalling some \$48.1 million is listed as follows:

- \$31,820,300 for roads, water mains and sewers;
- \$5,828,500 for buildings;
- \$1,081,400 for the Project Office;
- \$2,850,000 for vehicles;
- \$1,266,900 for parks;
- \$4,270,000 for Hydro Westmount;
- \$936,000 for IT.

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Finance commissioner Antonio D’Amico, left, and Councillor Jonathan Chomski, whose commissionership includes infrastructure, in discussion between the two special council meetings January 13.



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Why switch of council from Monday to Tuesday?

BY LAUREEN SWEENEY

City council switched its meeting nights for 2026 to Tuesday from the traditional Monday, “for operational efficiency,” city director general Julie Mandeville told the *Independent* last week.

Though the dates for this year were approved by council December 8 without comment, she explained that the change “allows staff to finalize files and gives elected officials an additional day to review materials before decisions are made.” As

well, “it reduces scheduling pressure in weeks affected by statutory holidays on Fridays or Mondays.”

The resolution was moved by Councillor Jeff Shamie stating that “Under the Cities and Towns Act, the council shall hold regular sittings at least once a month and council shall determine the schedule, setting the date and time of each sitting, before the beginning of the calendar year,” as follows, each at 7 pm:

- January 13;
- February 3;

- March 17, changed from another date adopted earlier;
- April 14;
- May 5;
- June 2;
- July 7;
- August 4;
- September 9, a Wednesday owing to Labour Day;
- October 6;
- November 3;
- December 1.

Record budget, cont'd from p. 1

Westmount, the total value of local properties has increased 5.6 percent. With the general residential property tax rate per \$100 of valuation, the tax rate for 2026 is listed on the city's website at \$0.6583, compared with the 2025 rate of \$0.6548. As a result, in general, tax bills will thus be increased by a higher tax rate and a higher evaluation.

Breaking down costs of services

“The central challenge in preparing this year's budget was to create the fiscal room required to address rising operating costs and necessary infrastructure investment while maintaining service levels and exercising restraint for taxpayers,” Mayor Stern said.

Since this is the first budget of the current council mandate, it was decided that the mayor would present it rather than the council's finance commissioner, city director general Julie Mandeville told the *Inde-*

Editor's note

Distributors' donation sent to Resilience

At the suggestion of one of them, I had originally planned to give the earnings of volunteer distributors who chose to do so to Westmount Public Security's holiday food drive (see November 11, p. 5). This money was earned when these volunteers distributed our paper door to door during the strike by Canada Post last fall.

Despite several attempts, including an in-person one, I have not been able to find out to which entity this cheque should be made out. Insert city-newspaper communication joke here.

Seeing last issue (p. 4) that “remaining items” from the food drive were given to the Resilience day shelter on Atwater, I sent the \$800 cheque to them early this week. At the specific request of one distributor, a cheque for \$200 went weeks ago to the Welcome Hall Mission in St. Henri. – DP.



Mayor Michael Stern, centre, presents the city's operating budget. He is flanked by councillors Gurveen Chadha and Shawn Moss.

pendent.

The city's 2026 budgetted costs for local operations are led by remuneration at close to \$35 million. Departmental expenses of more than \$21 million are topped by Public Works at \$12.6 million. Pay-as-you-go financing accounts for close to another \$15 million.

Citing some of the year's budget highlights, the mayor said “the city will operate with reduced overall headcount” with an aim to not automatically replace departing staff but to re-assess positions as they become vacant.

Costs in the Engineering department are being reduced “through a shift away from external consultants toward direct investment in infrastructure work. On the other hand, funding has been increased for the library and Community Events as well as Urban Planning” to complete the next phase of an overhaul of by-laws and an inventory of built heritage.

Mayor Stern described these as areas that matter “deeply to our community.”

A breakdown of revenues and expenditures can be found on the city's website under 2026 operating budget.



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LETTERS TO THE EDITOR

POTHOLE CITY (1)

I'm writing to share my concerns about the condition of several roads in the city. Many streets are in very poor shape, with large potholes and deep cracks that create real safety risks for drivers and pedestrians and cause ongoing vehicle damage.

I recognize that the city has already done what it could to repair numerous roads across Westmount, and I appreciate the efforts made by Public Works teams under challenging conditions.

I also fully understand that during the winter months repairing entire streets is complex and often not feasible.

At this stage, however, the situation has become unacceptable, and we cannot wait until spring to patch all the craters. Beyond the inconvenience, this situation has become a public safety issue that deserves continued attention. It is unfortunately a full-time job.

A structured monitoring process, supported by a coordinated team effort, would greatly improve outcomes. Providing Public Works teams with additional tools, resources and budget would support more durable repairs. It may also be beneficial to involve the Public Security team in this effort, as they regularly patrol the city and could help identify and report hazardous conditions in real time.

Temporary fixes alone are no longer sufficient for the scale of the problem we are experiencing. A proactive, well-coordinated maintenance strategy would greatly benefit the community.

Driving back home or in Westmount

was once a calming and positive experience; now it's like being in a war zone: very unpleasant and absurd.

I appreciate the city's attention to this matter and look forward to seeing continued action, improvement and communication to the residents in this file.

JEAN-FRANÇOIS EMMANUEL,
UPPER BELMONT AVE.

POTHOLE CITY (2)

Recently, I drove up Côte St. Luc Rd. from Decarie eastbound towards Westmount. The long road up was amazingly smooth, with not a pothole or bump along the way. But, the moment I crossed Victoria and into the city limits of Westmount, The Boulevard became an absolute mess, riddled with craters, potholes and too many bumps to count.

With all the taxes we pay in Westmount, I am not fully understanding why a major thoroughfare such as The Boulevard is such a disastrous mess, particularly when contrasted to Côte St. Luc Rd. in the CDN-NDG borough of Montreal.

JOE RUSSO, SHERBROOKE ST.

MORE DETAILS IN
POLICE REPORT, PLEASE

In the Police Report of your December 2 issue (p. 25), you wrote of gym locker break-ins at a Sherbrooke sports facility, and of taxis demanding unfair, and possibly criminal, fees to return misplaced phones.

Which gym? Which taxi companies? It's not only professional journalism to provide these details, which you surely must know,

but also very helpful to your readers. I use Uber when needed, but even if I didn't, those taxi companies would never get any business from me. And knowing the gym would allow patrons to be more on guard.

In fact, I think that if you did an article on the facilities that local gyms provide for keeping users' valuables safe, it would be popular. The YMCA had/has small, no-charge mini-lockers in sight of its front desk with just enough room for a wallet, phone and keys. Very convenient, because almost everyone prefers not to travel without those items and also not to have to lug them around during a workout and shower.

Details please.

ALEX SIMONELIS, SHERBROOKE ST.

Editor's reply: We do what we can. We do not have infinite time with the police each week, nor do they have to talk to us or answer each and every question that may occur to us, including those that come up afterwards. They also choose to hold back certain details. For clarity: we appreciate the time that they do afford us. – DP.

WHY CAN'T MAYOR APPROVE
IMPORTANT \$3K EXPENSE?

The 16 households of the old train station complex [at the foot of Victoria Ave.] have long endured sewer infrastructure issues, with the ongoing risk of black-water flooding threatening both property and public health.

Over the past 25 years, these residents have contributed approximately \$2,000,000 toward municipal infrastructure, yet a

modest \$3,000 expense to clean and monitor the rear sewer pipe, well within Westmount's 2025 operational budget, remains unresolved.

Following the municipal election on November 3, 2025, Mayor Stern personally reviewed our email and approved the \$3,000 expense within 50 minutes on November 19, a responsiveness never before experienced and a rare example of decisive leadership.

Yet, at the December 8 council meeting, it was declared that the mayor's approval "is not applicable" and that the matter would not be escalated further. In less than three weeks, a timely and cost-effective measure to protect 16 households went from approval to dismissal.

It is unacceptable that such a reasonable, low-cost solution to safeguard 16 households and uphold long-standing civic responsibilities remains stalled. The city must honour the mayor's prompt and considered directive, proceed with the approved maintenance, and demonstrate the accountability and responsiveness owed to residents, particularly in light of the mayor's public statement indicating that his role does not include authority or oversight with respect to [this] matter.

DIANA HERNANDEZ, ST. CATHERINE ST.

Correction

In a story January 13 on the Manoir Westmount bazaar (p. 4), the spelling of the activities supervisor's name should have been Olena Vovk.

WESTMOUNT INDEPENDENT

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Reverse speed bumps?



The intersection of The Boulevard and Victoria on January 18.

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Westmount Rotary built Manoir as its 50th anniversary project

Cllr. Aronson asks: Could a ‘Tupper lots’ seniors’ residence be its 100th?

By JENNIFER BALL

Councillors Shawn Moss and Matt Aronson joined the Rotary Club of Westmount on December 17 to examine the club’s creation of the Manoir Westmount independent seniors’ residence and to inspire members to consider the city’s Tupper parking lots in the southeast sector as the site to undertake the creation of a second.

The reasoning went: It would be much easier to build than what the club achieved in 1979, when it carved into Victoria Hall and demolished two houses to build the current 125-unit residence.

Councillor Aronson motivated members of the Rotary Club of Westmount, which was founded in 1930, by saying, “I’m here today to suggest that your greatest work – your building work – might not be finished.”

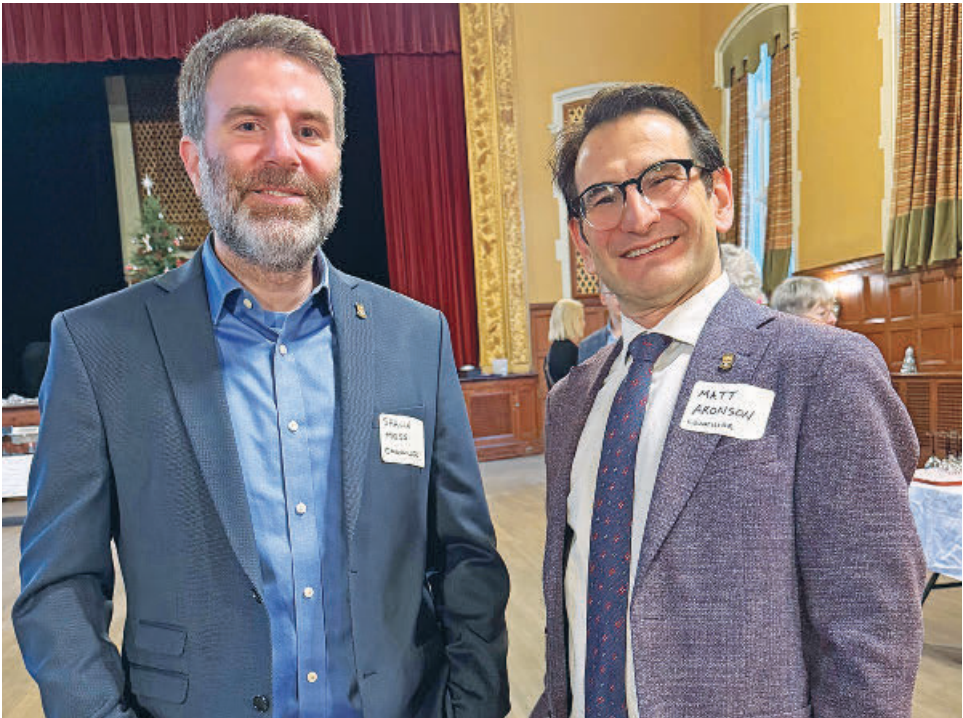
Some Rotary history

From Rotary archives, it is known that the club commissioned a study in 1974 to understand if Westmount could benefit from a seniors’ residence. Controversy arose when the blueprints called for using Victoria Hall’s basement level to house dining facilities and lounges, and for the demolition of two houses on Lansdowne Ave.

A total of \$5 million was raised privately (\$24.1 million in 2025 dollars) and two years later, on October 12, 1979, Lieutenant Governor Jean-Pierre Côté cut the ribbon. Within 12 months, every unit was occupied.

The 2021 census data indicates that 5,575 of Westmount’s 19,658 residents were 65 or older, representing 28 percent of the population. Add those aged 55 to 64, and more than four in 10 Westmounters are approaching or already in retirement.

According to research that Councillor



From left, Councillors Shawn Moss and Matt Aronson at the December 17 Rotary Club of Westmount luncheon at Victoria Hall on December 17.

Aronson provided on the cohort:

- median income for a Westmount resident over 65 is roughly \$71,000 per year,
- nearly 4,000 Westmount households rent – 46 percent of all households,
- nearly half of Westmount renters spend more than 30 percent of their income on housing – the threshold beyond which housing is considered unaffordable.

Councillor Aronson suggested to the club that another distinct asset, valuable both to the immediate locality and to the community at large, could be created were the Rotary Club to build a “Manoir Westmount #2” in the southeast sector where the city owns two parking lots.

The lots are between Tupper St. and

Dorchester Blvd. on both sides of Gladstone Ave. (see February 18, 2025, p. 16 for an aerial view).

Councillor Aronson asked Rotarians to reflect on what their 100th anniversary project could be.

Inspiration

“I came here to tell you that you’ve inspired me and hopefully to inspire you. I’m asking this club to form a feasibility committee. Not in five years. Now.”

He went to propose a timetable that included breaking ground by 2027 and cutting a ribbon by 2029.

“It took you two years to go from referendum to ribbon-cutting for the Manoir. You showed us all it can be done. And perhaps... it can be done again.”

Jennifer Ball, the reporter who authored this story is a member of the Rotary Club of Westmount and the president of the Manoir Westmount board.

Semyrozum wins judo bursary



From left, Patricia Demers, executive director of the Aléo Foundation; Roman Semyrozum and Sergio Pessoa Sr., the provincial coach of Judo Québec.

PHOTO COURTESY OF ALÉO FOUNDATION.

Westmounter Roman Semyrozum was recently awarded a \$2,000 bursary by Gymnastique Québec, Judo Québec and Parasports Québec for his achievements in judo.

The award was for his first-place finish in his age group at the Junior Panamerican Games held in San Salvador, El Salvador in September of last year, but he also came first in his event at the Montreal Cadet Panamerican Cup November 14.

The funds for the bursary were raised during the Marathon Beneva de Montréal, which was organized in conjunction with the Aléo Foundation, a group focussed on supporting student athletes.

Semyrozum is following a family tradition. His father, Volodymyr, is a former judo competitor turned trainer.

“My father inspires me every day!” he is quoted as saying in a French-language press release dated December 11. – WI

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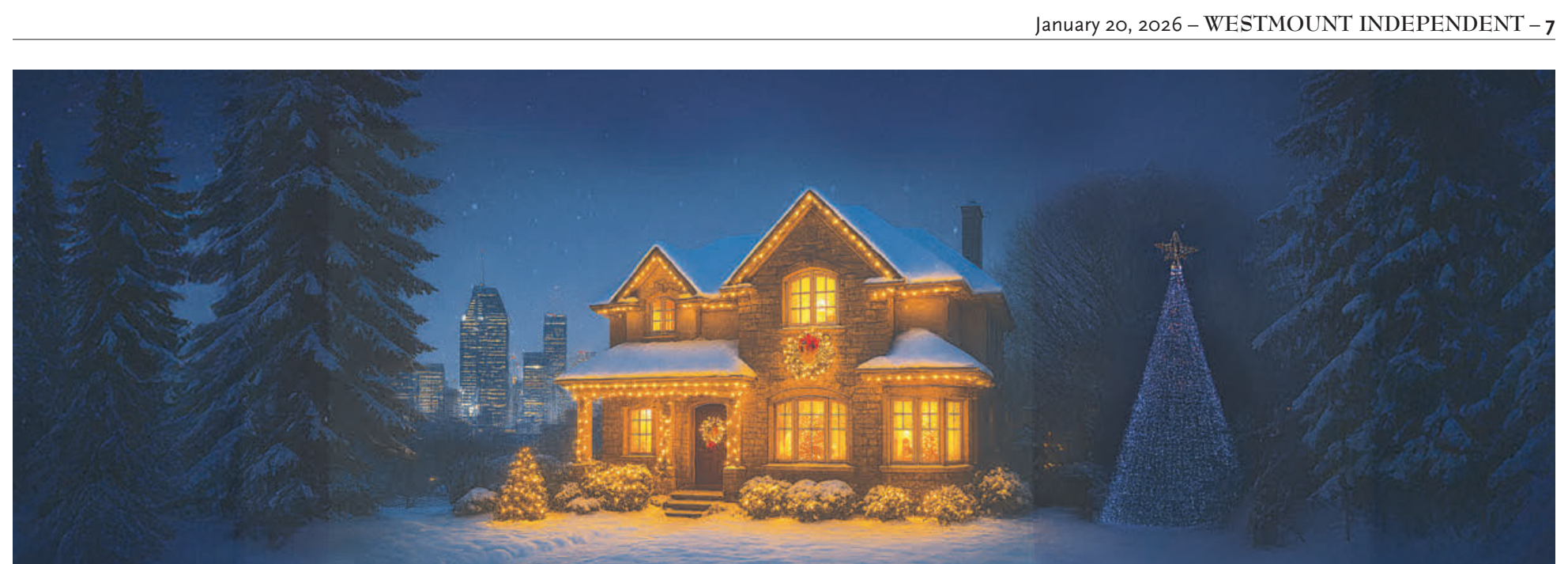
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Westmount osteopath launches new book on ‘Unwinding Bone’

By MARTIN C. BARRY

Friends, clients and relatives of Victoria Ave. osteopath Scott Sternthal gathered at the Barakaris café/restaurant on Sherbrooke St. in NDG on December 11 for the launch of Sternthal’s new book, *Unwinding Bone*, which is a guide to biodynamic skeletal therapy for professional osteopaths.

Osteopathy uses hands-on techniques like massage, stretching and joint manipulation to treat musculoskeletal issues. Its primary aim is to improve the body’s natural healing by focusing on the connection between structure (bones, muscles, tissues) and overall function.

Canadian rules different

Currently, only the USA allows osteopathy to be practised as a branch of mainstream medicine. In that capacity, American MDs who are licensed osteopaths (DOs) can also prescribe drugs and perform surgery. Everywhere else, including Canada, osteopaths are restricted to manual techniques.

In a blurb by the publisher, Human Kinetics, *Unwinding Bone* is described as “a comprehensive, practical resource on biodynamic skeletal therapy (BST) – a gentle, non-manipulative approach that

engages with bone as dynamic, responsive tissue.

“Rather than focusing on the move-

ment of bones, BST emphasizes the movements within them, helping practitioners identify and treat bones that have lost their

natural elasticity and vitality and preparing the skeletal system for further manual treatment.”

Sternthal, who is credited as BST’s developer, “breaks down complex concepts into clear, practical information in this hands-on guide for physiotherapists, manual therapists, osteopaths, chiropractors and bodywork professionals,” according to the publisher.

In December, *Unwinding Bone* was the #1 new release on osteopathy in the US, according to Sternthal.

Back pain

In his practice, Sternthal sees clients suffering from lower back and neck pain, as well as other more general health issues like digestive problems.

While acknowledging that osteopaths don’t fully understand the underlying causes of their clients’ health problems, he said “we have techniques to address the symptoms.”

Sternthal has been an osteopath for more than a dozen years. He said he chose osteopathy as a career after deciding he didn’t want to spend too much time in hospitals. “I wanted to focus more on the wellness part of health,” he said.



Victoria Ave. osteopath Scott Sternthal, left, is seen here with his parents, Gloria and Barry Sternthal, at *Unwinding Bone*’s official Montreal launch at the Barakaris café/restaurant on Sherbrooke St. in NDG December 11.

Sum Gourmand – South Korea, in Westmount



Retail Review

VERONICA REDGRAVE

In my role as a roving reporter, part of the fun is discovery. Westmount is full of newness.

My most recent find was an armchair traveller moment: I went to South Korea. Jade Seo has opened Sum Gourmand on St. Catherine, but her creations are already well known in Montreal. For the past five years, Lufa Farms has carried her SUM Lab line of marinades and sauces.

“The lab is my kitchen,” she said, where she cooks Sundays and Mondays, “as well as early mornings.”

Jade brings fresh Bento box (i.e. re-useable) lunches, soups and sauces to her shop.

One super seller is *onigiri*. The traditional “sandwiches” are rice with savory fillings, with their triangular shape wrapped in *nori* (seaweed).

“As many high school kids come in, these are often sold out daily. And they’re healthy,” she adds.

Another of Jade’s specialties is *kimchi*. International media has touted the benefits of this versatile ingredient’s probiotic



Jade Seo.

qualities. Jade offers a choice: *kimchi* made with cabbage, radishes or *napa* (white cabbage). (She suggests beginners start with the *napa*’s milder taste.)

Jade’s mother Oksun Koh is helping for a few months. “Her *kimchi* is really fabulous and I am learning from her.”

In the spring, *kimchi* courses will be offered as well as making *onigiri*. “We’re inviting children to take part as well.”

Jade’s home-cooked offerings include dumplings and pancakes that customers pick up and cook at home. Or choices can be heated in the shop as SUM offers take-away environmentally friendly utensils. SUM Gourmand seats 40 and has already been used for private parties.

Meals can end with a sweet note. *Yuzu* (Japanese for “lemon”) cheesecake is a best seller, sitting mellow yellow beside my other fave: chocolate.

Lastly, Joohyeong Seo showed me the renowned line of Camellia teas. I’m sipping my green tea as we speak.

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9 Lives

LYSANNE FOWLER

Here is young Bambi, presently at the Montreal SPCA cattery while awaiting a new family. She is a stunning grey-and-black tabby with huge green eyes, a white shirt and necklet. Bambi is also accessorizing with perfect white booties!

She is a sweet three-year-old – affectionate and playful. Bambi is very healthy, up to date with her inoculations, spayed and

Precious Bambi



microchipped.

Please refer to the Montreal SPCA website at www.sPCA.com, then scroll to her identification page from her identification number, 2000371015, for details and adorable photographs of her. Then you can plan your visit with her as the shelter is open every day, from Monday to Friday from 3 pm to 8 pm, then Saturday and Sunday from 11 am to 6 pm. It is located at 5215 Jean Talon St. West, Côte des Neiges, Montreal H4P 1X4.

The cattery adoption coordinators are waiting to meet with you to discuss adoption and your interest in bringing Bambi home with you. Please pack up your carrier or browse through the selection of models and sizes at the in-house boutique, where you will also find foods, accessories and toys in order to have everything you need in one trip on your way home.

Your neighbour,
Lysanne

Pickle, cute and sweet



Westmount
A-dog-tions

LYSANNE FOWLER

I am not sure about the Pickle name ... she is too cute as a precious black-and-white shih tzu-Lhasa type to be a pickle. But her name is easily personalized because she has so many wonderful qualities: affectionate, playful, companionable. Petite Pickle is presently in a foster family for the Montreal SPCA, enjoying their home environment as she was sensitive when she transitioned to the shelter.

Please go to their www.sPCA.com web-

site, then refer to Pickle's information page from her identification number, 2000351090, where you will find more adorable photographs where she is posing very well!

Please do not hesitate to click on the "Fill out the form" black rectangle to open the information request page, presenting all they need in order for the adoption coordinators to get back to you with more information and answer your questions to move towards adoption.

Pickle is a very healthy four-year-old, up to date with her inoculations, spayed and microchipped. She is a delightful friend, in need of loving arms and a cozy daily routine. Please reach out for her.

Your neighbour,
Lysanne



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Raising money for breast cancer research

'Carol for a Cure' turns 15, adds \$10k to its \$100k-plus total

Again this December, a small group of amateur singers gathered on the steps of National Foods on Sherbrooke St. in Victoria village to raise funds for breast cancer research at the Cedars Cancer Foundation.

Having just completed its 15th appearance, Carol for a Cure was founded by Zoë Mintz in memory of her mother, Rochelle, who passed away from triple-negative breast cancer in 2016 after living with the disease for seven years. (Triple-negative breast cancer cells test negative for three receptors, which means that this form of the disease does not respond to common breast-cancer treatments.)

Since its inception, the event has raised more than \$100,000, including over \$10,000 this year, to support research aimed at improving detection and outcomes for patients.

This year's event carries added weight.



PHOTO COURTESY OF Z. MINTZ.

A member of Mintz's family – her cousin – was recently diagnosed with stage IV triple-negative breast cancer and was in attendance, highlighting the ongoing and urgent need for continued research.

"Breast cancer doesn't stop when the holidays come, and it doesn't stop with one generation," said Mintz. "I lost my mom

to this disease, and now my cousin is living with it. Singing together is our way of turning grief into action – and of showing our kids that research isn't abstract. It's personal, and it's lifesaving."

All funds raised will be directed toward liquid biopsy research led by Dr. Catalin Mihalciu, Rochelle's oncologist. – WI.

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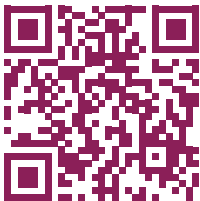
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Police Report

Police investigating possible art theft at Belvedere Circle home

By MARTIN C. BARRY

town) borough.

Burglars use residents' ladders

Although police at Station 12 on Stanton St. are confirming that a significant number of valuable art works are missing following an apparent robbery at a Belvedere Circle home, they are withholding any further information because the incident is still the focus of an active investigation.

Station 12 community relations officer Cst. Mike Yigit confirmed some facts about the incident reported by *The Gazette* late last week, including that valuable paintings stored at the home were removed following a break-in said to have taken place on December 30.

According to *The Gazette* account, the home's owner, a recluse, had passed away on December 24 after being assaulted around a month earlier.

Citing anonymous sources, including an expert in Canadian art, the report said the paintings included at least one by revered Canadian artist Emily Carr as well as works by Group of Seven artists Frederick Varley and Arthur Lismer.

"I know the case," Yigit said in a phone interview with the *Independent*. "But there's not much I can tell you right now because it's an ongoing investigation and I don't want to jeopardize anything."

"What I can confirm is that a gentleman passed away, that he had some art works, and there's an ongoing investigation to see that if some things went missing, whether it was with permission or not," he added.

As for the reported dates, he said "the dates are not clear so far. We're still figuring out the dates."

The Gazette initially identified the house as being in Westmount. It is in fact just east of the border, in the Ville Marie (down-

Police at Station 12 filed reports for several attempted and successful household break-ins over the recent Christmas holidays, including two that were notable because the perpetrators used ladders that had been left in places where they were easily accessed.

"Every year around this time, we get a few more break-ins in this area, and oftentimes the criminals are using ladders belonging to the owners that have been left in a shed or an open garage," said Yigit.

"So, something for people to know is that even if they are at home, if they do have a ladder, perhaps it would be a good idea to lock it up and secure it so that no one else gets access to it."

Law enforcement officials as well as household insurance industry experts also advise home owners to not leave tools such as hammers, screwdrivers or crowbars lying openly around outside as they can easily be used by burglars to break in.

Be careful at gyms

Cst. Yigit is repeating a piece of advice he's offered in the past to people storing valuables in lockers while working out at the gym: you do so at your own risk. This comes after a recent upsurge of locker room break-ins at a local gym, including at least one in which a padlock was cut off.

Locker rooms are especially vulnerable, he noted, as there are usually no surveillance cameras because of privacy concerns. "So, when you go to the gym, keep it to a minimum, don't bring any expensive jewellery or watches," said Yigit.

Jeep stolen

While a wave of vehicle thefts that impacted Westmount last year appears to have largely receded, Station 12 received a report about a Jeep Wrangler stolen around 4 pm on January 13 from a parking spot near the corner of Grosvenor Ave. and Sherbrooke St.

Shoplifters active

Finally, shoplifters continue to be active at Westmount retail establishments. In a recent incident, staff at the Bureau en Gros office supplies store on St. Catherine St. discovered after viewing security camera footage that three suspects who walked in on January 15 walked out without paying with a boxed Epson printer.

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Social Notes

VERONICA REDGRAVE

Atwater Library cocktail marks 197 years

Library board members noted included **Helgi Soutar, Carol Christie-Olsen, Helen Malkin, Daniel Boyer, Geoff Dowd, Peter Dunn and Marian Scott.**

Noted in the packed room were former

Westmount mayors **Peter Trent and Karin Marks** with her husband **Brian Puddington**, and then-mayoral candidates **Michael Stern** (now mayor) and **Lynne Casgrain** with **Julius Grey.**

Also present were **Dora Koop and Stephen Phizicky**, former city councillor **Nicole Forbes**, **Donna and Ross Fraser**, **Janice Winslow, Bev Bradley, Elizabeth Wirth, Diane Sharp and Yves Langevin, Mary Leslie and Ian Aitken, John Ayles, Susan McGuire, Susan and Richard Hart, Adrienne and John Peacock, Scott Pritchard, Cynthia Price Verreault, and Martha Harrison and Marc Boivin.**

Enjoying the Dave Turner Jazz Trio were **Dagmar and Ronald Guttmann, Gail Grant and Sam Stein, Julia Gersovitz, Linda Leith, Bruce McNiven, Peter McNally, Gabriel Safdie, Lori Baird, Morag and Peter Howlett, the Macdonald Stewart Foundation's president Jean-Pierre Ouellet, and executive direc-**

tor Thomas Leslie; Marilena "Leni" Lucci, editor-in-chief of *The Gazette*; and the library's Third Century Campaign chairs **David Angus and Richard Pound**, there with his wife **Julie.**

Also noted were **Lawrence Cannon**, COO of event sponsor **Nova Steel**, and his wife **Dominique Arvisais; Lorne Steinberg**, also an event sponsor; **Bob Johnson and Alicia Lorente** with daughters **Julia and Sandra Johnson, Cheryl and Dave Stenason, and Nancy Tkalec and Anthony Jenkins.**

The silent auction continued on p. 14



Guest of honour John Blachford with Atwater Library executive director Lynn Verge.

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Remembering Serge & Réal, Greene greats of fashion



Social Notes

VERONICA REDGRAVE

A long time ago, in a galaxy far, far away, couture reigned on Greene. Serge Senécal and Réal Bastien opened Serge & Réal Couture there in 1987.

Their fashion creations had a cult-like following of Montreal’s “swans” – Truman Capote’s word for society ladies who lunched – wearing gloves, of course.

Designing for high-profile figures such as Governor General Jeanne Sauvé and Jacqueline Desmarais, their fame soon spread throughout Canada as well as New York.

Their designs mirrored the era. Hall-mark pieces ranged from gorgeously glamorous ball gowns and chic cocktail suits to exquisitely tailored jackets and pant suits.

Listening to requests from their snow-bird fans, they opened another salon in Palm Beach.

Trained in Paris, they created a signature style that entailed the impeccable construction of simple, elegant pieces. Retiring, they closed the Greene site in 2014.



Serge Senécal and Réal Bastien in 2014.

PHOTO: RALPH THOMPSON.

(We covered it in the *Westmount Independent* of February 25, 2014, p. 16.)

Full disclosure. I knew them well. Serge and Réal were often at my home for dinner.

As elegant as their collections, they were charming – and fun!

The tasteful tastemakers are no more. Réal passed away last summer, and sadly

Serge just left us in December. One wonders what they would think of today’s sweat-shirt-clad selfie soliloquys.

Remembrance of things past.

Social notes..., cont'd from p. 13

room was packed. Along with bids for Habs games and vacation packages (Manoir Hovey, Auberge St. Antoine in Quebec City, and Marriott Montreal Château Champlain), the array of Scotch offered was impressive.

From Springbank’s “17YO Campbeltown Single Malt” (valued at \$3,000) to Hart Brothers’ “Finest Collection Linkwood 22 Year Old” (\$250), all items had multiple keen bidders.

After the cocktail-*dînatoire* catered by Intermezzo, Dunn’s smoked meat sandwiches were drippingly delicious. The library is, in a way, the centre of an ongoing urban challenge: the proposed development of “SODO” (south of Dorchester) area, with towers possibly dwarfing the library’s heritage building. Blachford made reference to Club Sportif MAA’s selling of its air rights for a real estate project as one proposed idea for the library.

Listeners seemed aghast at the thought.

Correction: St. Andrew’s ball has debts

Oops. *Colpa Mia*. I wrote (December 30, p. 30) that the Viennese Ball was the only deb ball in Montreal. Not so. The St. Andrew’s Society of Montreal has been holding a deb ball for over 120 years and still does so annually.



Bruce Bolton; Ronald and Dagmar Guttman flank John Blachford; Elise Moser, Marian Scott and Terry Mosher (aka Aislin); Lawrence Cannon.



Mary Hughson, Stephen Phizicky, John Aylen and Pierre Besner. Dave Turner Jazz Trio.



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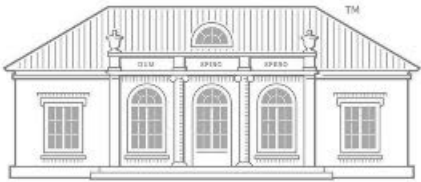
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