

After a half-century, Aurora Bridge Club set to play last game in town



By Brock Weir

After over 50 years of being an outlet for card-savvy players from Aurora and beyond, the venerable Aurora Bridge Club is preparing to deal its last hand in its namesake town.

On Friday, September 29, the venerable and continually growing group will total up their scores after nearly 50 years in the former Aurora Public Library building on Victoria Street before their move to Newmarket. Nevertheless, they hold out hope that some day they will be able to return.

The move is not a decision the Aurora Bridge Club has taken lightly, but a decision that had to be made as their current home will soon meet the wrecking ball paving the way for Library Square.

The Club has been searching for a new home within Aurora's town lines since Council reiterated its decision to demolish the old library and adjacent seniors centre earlier this year.

While Council also tasked staff with helping groups using the facilities, including the Bridge Club, find new homes, the sheer size of the club's regular games made it a challenge to find suitable space within Aurora.

'We are very disappointed that the Town of Aurora could not find space within Aurora for our club,' says Anna Kennedy, President of the Aurora Bridge Club. 'I find this unacceptable as we have spent 50 years in Aurora and I do not believe the Town does enough to support its senior population.'

Nevertheless, available Town facilities could not accommodate all members without cutting games and the number of members able to participate.

'We looked at everything in Aurora, looked at every church that was available, had four real estate people looking for us in Aurora, had the Town, after we asked them to find something, and the only thing we came up with was Trinity Anglican Church,' says Ms. Kennedy. 'But they could not accommodate all of our games. We would have to lose two games on Wednesday if we stayed there and they wanted \$500 more for rent.'

After placing an ad in *The Auroran* looking for more space, they received a bite from the Newmarket Veterans Association.

Although they were reluctant to move to Newmarket, their space just off Main Street proved to tick all the necessary boxes.

'We're devastated,' says Ms. Kennedy of the move. 'We're still keeping our name, we're not changing it, and we're saying to the Town, 'You don't have a spot for us now, but we're hoping you have a spot for us in the future.'

Each year, she says, the Bridge Club will offer a PowerPoint demonstration to Council driving home their message that they need space and they want to come home.

The last time they presented to Council, Councillor Sandra Humfries dubbed the club 'Aurora's best kept secret' and these are words Ms. Kennedy says have stuck with her, steeling her resolve that 'this will never happen again.

'As long as I am president, people will know they have a bridge club in Aurora,' she said. 'I decided then and there that if we have to move, we're going to be moving with people knowing we're there. We will be contacting Councillors continuously letting them know that even though we are in Newmarket, we are the Aurora Bridge Club and they should remember us. If they really want to do

something for seniors, they will find us something.?

Indeed, the benefits that bridge provides to our aging population has been key in their fight to find a place to stay in Aurora. While the club appeals far beyond just the senior demographic, it is a significant portion of the membership.

?For our seniors, it gave them a place to go. They can go to the Seniors' Centre, but they can only play bridge once on a Monday and that is not ACBL bridge,? says Ms. Kennedy, noting the American Contract Bridge League allows participants across North American to see how they stand against groups across the continent. ?Seniors are becoming a greater population in the world today and we should be focusing more of our Federal, Provincial and Municipal dollar towards seeing that they stay healthy. They have a lot to offer our community still today. Even though they might be over 70, they are a vibrant community unto themselves.

?It is so stimulating to our seniors because they go out and get a vibe from it that's ? can I say it is as good as marijuana? It gives them a hit you don't get elsewhere and I think that is why they come back.?