

INSIDE AURORA: Don'ts, if you do

By Scott Johnston

Last week in this space, my colleague Stephen Somerville provided a number of excellent suggestions for those first timers wishing to enter the race this Fall for municipal council.

Reading them over, they all seemed to be things that one should do to help get elected. While important, they were missing some key elements, specifically, what NOT to do.

For example, if you plan to run for council, don't wait until the absolute last minute to submit your nomination papers. Nothing says 'I can't make a timely decision about my own life, let alone on your behalf on some expensive and important piece of Town business?', than being the last one to sign up, especially when you've had many years to decide.

Perhaps even worse, it might also suggest that you tend to dangerously flirt with missing important deadlines, which is generally not something the general public looks for in a politician..

Another potential 'don't'; please don't promise things you can't deliver.

'I'll reduce taxes' is a good example. No one in authority in Aurora has ever reduced taxes, at least, not in living memory. Keeping increases in single digit percentage territory is the usual benchmark for council success.

Promises suggesting costs will go down under your watchful gaze are more likely to generate extensive eye rolling from the electorate than votes. In fact, you'd probably get more votes for honesty with the slogan 'I promise to raise your taxes'. That's one any Aurora politician would be guaranteed to be able to keep.

Another don't is on the issues; don't base your campaign on an issue that will not resonate with the average Aurora voter. Yonge Street and development downtown will pique the interest of most Aurorans. A platform whose main plank is a debate over raising the height of the stop sign on Cliff Road at Deerglen Terrace by two centimetres likely will not.

It's important to be involved and know what's going on in the community, but don't over-extend yourself attending meetings, going door to door, and participating in similar activities while on the campaign trail. You'll know you've gone too far if your kids quietly ask each other who you are on the rare times that you're home during the election period.

Stephen spoke about the importance of good literature, and there are a few don'ts to consider there, as well.

Don't stretch on your accomplishments. Unless you haven't achieved much since then, we don't need to read that you came fourth in your high school spelling bee, no matter how proud of it you may be.

For achievements, it's better to follow the 'B.R. Rule'; be recent and be relevant.

As for visual identify, don't use a photo more than a few years old, or one that has been subject to several hours of intense photoshopping. You don't want people in the audience at the next debate referring to the picture in your pamphlet and asking the folks sitting beside them why you sent your grandfather to represent you as you make your appearance on stage.

If you participate in an all-candidates' debate during the election campaign, it's likely you won't be the first one to respond. In that case, when they get to you, don't point at a fellow candidate and say 'I agree with him', or 'he said what I was going to say', and then sit down.

And finally, perhaps the most important 'don't' of all, although sadly, a bit out of your control; with only 6 councillor positions

available this time around, when the votes are counted, don't come seventh.

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