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BROCK'S BANTER: It?s all over but the shouting

By Brock Weir

Or, so said Geoff Dawe at Town Hall on Monday night before poll numbers started to roll in.

It has become something of a tradition in Aurora for candidates to gather at the place where local laws are minted to see how the next year is going to shape up, and this year was no exception.

The vast majority of men and women vying for a place at the table ? Mayoral and Council candidates alike ? congregated in the public galleries, some accompanied by their supporters, some accompanied by their families, some flying solo, to experience democracy in action.

There is always a unique energy in the air, a combination of excitement and nervousness that is palpable, and it is an energy that often gives way to dread when the inevitable disappointment sets in for a great many people in the room. After all, there are always more candidates than seats at the table.

?I always find this to be the most nerve-wracking part of the whole process and it is a tough process to start within,? said Mayor Dawe at the start of the evening. ?It's all over but the shouting, so you just have to wait.?

The waiting ultimately didn't pay off for Mayor Dawe, however, but I'm sure there will be plenty of shouting from some quarters as the next four years takes shape. If there weren't, it simply wouldn't be Aurora.

There shouldn't be a lot of shouting though. Everyone involved in this process did a wonderful job of putting their positions forward, stating their cases on why they are the best person for the position being applied for, and how they stood out from the crowd.

They should all be congratulated for having the grit and determination to throw themselves out there, hoping to be, as the saying goes, the change they want to see in the world. And we, in turn, should all be thankful for their efforts to put action into our democracy.

Unfortunately, this action and excitement, along with the introduction of internet voting, didn't ultimately set Aurora on fire as far as voter turnout goes, but the 17,446 people who did cast their vote made their decision, and they made it pretty decisively.

Looking back over the past eight years, I think congratulations are certainly in order for the outgoing Mayor Dawe, as well as his two-term deputy Councillor John Abel. Although their relationship was far from harmonious, particularly over the last four years as both men jostled to either maintain or take over the Town's top job, they provided steady leadership in a rapidly growing and evolving community.

Congratulations are also in order to outgoing Council members Paul Pirri and Jeff Thom who, over the past eight and four years respectfully, also ably represented Aurora, while, in some cases, injecting a jolt of youthful vitality into some of the many issues facing the Town.

The next four years will be a time of significant change, particularly as Aurora addresses growth, continues the march towards build out, and tackles some pretty hefty big ticket items that are coming down the pipe, including the ongoing renovations at the historic Aurora Armoury and the continued development of both Library Square and the rest of the Cultural Precinct area.

Although he has been at the table for the past four years as a Councillor, it will be interesting to watch how Mayor-Elect Mrakas will handle these issues, all of which remain pretty divisive Town-wide.

Perhaps this time around it is a bit easier to predict how things will go. The top four vote-getters in the Council race are, after all, incumbents who have clearly expressed their views on each of these issues.

As has John Gallo, who returns to the Council table after a break from 2014-2018 following the loss of his mayoral bid to Mr. Dawe.

The newcomer, Rachel Gilliland, has also been clear on many of her views, but with Ms. Gilliland and Mr. Gallo occupying one third of the Council seats, it remains to be seen how these new (or, at the very least, refreshed) voices and perspectives will change the dynamic.

In the end, it will be up to the new Mayor, once the 2018 ? 2022 term of Council is sworn in this December, to build Council cohesion.

In his victory speech on Monday night, Mr. Mrakas often referred to the sense of ?community? that helped him along the way. He was referring to the community as a whole, but the Council table is a community unto itself, representing the wider one outside of Town Hall.

The strength of one, in my opinion, is often reflective of the other, and it is a tall order for anyone steering the ship.

?I am tired of screaming at the TV, first of all,? Mr. Mrakas told The Auroran in 2014, when he first dipped his toe into municipal waters, running for a seat on the last term of Council, of why he decided to put himself forward. ?Secondly, I figure I can't criticize

unless I throw my name into the hat and decide to put myself in the positions to make decisions.
?My point of view is to just make a decision and stop referring it. Unless you have absolutely no idea what is going on, there is no reason to refer. You have the information in front of you to make a decision and I think that is what the people want ? to have people there making decisions instead of letting staff do all the decision-making.?
The people of Aurora made their decision on Monday night. It may not have been the decision that some people wanted, but the majority has had their say.
Like Mr. Mrakas and why he ?threw his name into the hat in the first place,? it's hard to criticize unless you cast your vote.
Now, Mr. Mrakas is a world away from ?screaming at the TV? as he said he was four years ago. Now eyes will be on him as he prepares to take the helm.