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VOTE 2014: Harold Kim wants to be ?part of team? to plan solid vision for Aurora



By Brock Weir

Harold Kim jokes that his wife often refers to him as ?Captain Justice? in that if he sees injustice going on anywhere, he often wants to step in and see what he can do about it.

Born in Seoul, South Korea, Mr. Kim came to Canada 41 years ago, settling in Aurora from Oak Ridges four years ago, and now he is vying to be one of Aurora's next Councillors.

Mr. Kim joined the Council race early this spring, noting that over the past four years he has become more ?in tune? with what is going on in Aurora and yet, conversely, ?just a little bit puzzled? by some of the things going on and the decision-making leading up to it.

While he has been steadily working on his campaign over the spring and early summer, there was a blip on the radar when Chris Ballard's seat became vacant and he was one of three candidates currently seeking election who put his name forward for the spot. Obviously, it wasn't a successful bid, but it served his purpose ? getting his name out there and showing the incumbent Council and the public at large what is driving him this fall.

?I was just puzzled by some of the procedures and directions that were taken [over the last four years] and I just felt that perhaps I could be part of the team or solution that could help better resolve certain situations or help evaluate which direction the Town should take,? he says.

With a background in finance, Mr. Kim says a large part of his background and experience is in ?due diligence, research and competitive intelligence,? qualities he says will be valuable around the Council table. With this in mind, it is perhaps unsurprising that one of the major issues currently on his radar is the planned Joint Operations Centre, which is due to come up for a thorough Council review next Tuesday, August 14.

?Over the course of several months it has grown [from about $15 million] to $27 million at the last count and reading the pros and cons, and those not advocating for the bump-up, the gist seems to be some people thought because the real estate market is doing so well that the Town could charge higher development charges,? he says. ?Whenever you say you ?could' do something and you're forecasting well into the future, that is too many variables for my comfort level and I do generally believe that you shouldn't spend beyond your means.? I think this is one example where I thought if I had more information and I was there to provide more input and clarification, perhaps people might have a different perspective on the decision that they made.?

Another issue he says would have benefited from better due diligence is the failure of the Heritage Conservation District (HCD) in Aurora's Downtown Southeast Quadrant. Fulsome public consultation, he says, should have been done to gauge the interest of residents most directly impacted by an HCD before any further money was spent on consultants for the work they did.

Looking ahead to the next four years, one of the biggest challenges Aurora will face will be costs associated with infrastructure, Mr. Kim says.

Citing proposed new trunk sewers to carry its load up to Lake Simcoe, he says the only way Aurora will have to pay for it is through property taxes.
?The Town is going to take a significant hit in the next several years and that is an area I would like to tackle and help towards finding a responsible and manageable solution to that.?

Looking at infrastructure on a smaller scale, Aurora neighbourhoods in general need to be better connected, he says, specifically looking at areas such as Stone Road off Bayview Avenue south of Wellington, that are not connected to the rest of the town via sidewalks. An increased emphasis should be put on sidewalks to connect these areas, as well as on trails and an investigation into whether further cycling lanes would be a good investment for Aurora.

Mr. Kim says he sees communities like Newmarket and Markham take advantage of great destinations to walk or cycle to, particularly their respective Main Streets, and that is a vision he would like to see in Aurora. While many view Yonge Street as that ?Main Street? destination, Aurora should look beyond that to really zero in on a destination.

?For a lot of us, it is said people's identities are defined by the communities they live in and I don't think anyone really wants to be defined by Yonge Street,? he says. ?I think [Yonge Street] is more of a place where youth and people could go to for a night on the Town, more of an entertainment area, but I don't think it would be a street where young families can go and make a day of it.?

Looking ahead to the October 27 election, Mr. Kim says he is most looking forward to finding out more about Aurorans, how they feel, engaging voters and, perhaps, being able to provide a voice to people who might otherwise be disengaged from civic discourse.

?I am not vying for a job here; I am offering my services, and if people believe my services are needed, based on my work experience ? and I think character and integrity is very important in a candidate as well ? I could be part of the team to solve problems and create a vision and execute that vision for Aurora. I would be honoured to serve in that capacity.?