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VOTE 2014: Candidate Terri Briggs wants to bring a sharp eye for numbers to the Council table



By Brock Weir

Aurora resident Terri Briggs has spent the past 25 years diligently involved in Scouting, spending the last 12 years running the program out of Regency Acres Public School.

Although she initially got involved in the movement through her children, now that they are grown she soldiers on, believing fully in the importance of the lifeskills scouting impart to kids.

?I like what scouting has to say to the world,? she says. ?It teaches life skills to children and I think it is good value for your money.?

Ms. Briggs wants to bring this eye for a good buck to the Council table. An accounting clerk and trademark agent by trade, she sees a number of financial issues on the horizon at Town Hall and this is something she would like to be a part of.

?Aurora currently has reserve funds that are being held and obviously there is a decision to be made on whether to spend them or invest them,? she says. ?I am sure that is going to be an issue that is foremost on the table.?

Helping to drive this urgency is the recently approved Joint Operations Centre. Although she says the price tag for the $26 million facility ?seems a little bit high? ? and this is including not just the building but the land and land improvements to make it possible ? steering the project ahead will be paramount.

Compounding the issue is the ?awkward position? Aurora finds itself in as it is getting closer and closer to build-out. With borders essentially fixed on all sides, Aurora will be forced to look for new and different ways to grow, and part of that growth will have to include a healthy infusion of business dollars.

?It is nice to see that Bulk Barn has moved into Aurora, it was great to see State Farm, and now that they have been bought out they are still going to stay, but we need to encourage and attract those kinds of businesses that will provide that economic growth for the Town,? she says. ?I would like to be part of the revitalization for Downtown. I saw some of the reports, the ideas are great, but some of them are, in my opinion, just cosmetic and shouldn't be at the top of the list.

?In any report there are always the needs and the nice-to-haves and I think some of the cosmetic things are nice but not absolutely necessary. Flower pots and benches aren't going to attract people to Downtown if there is nothing for them to do there. I want to be

on that committee to have input on what is most important. Everyone wants to see more services and lower taxes.?

This philosophy of evaluating needs versus wants also extends to her views on municipal services, and whether Aurora needs a new hotel to revitalize the community.

?Everyone wants to see more services and lower taxes,? she says. ?It is not going to happen. Eventually we are going to have to come to a point where we're either going to have to increase taxes or reduce services because things are just becoming more and more costly. What we do need to do is offer good value for the dollar. How we do that, I am not 100 per cent sure at this point, but I would hate to see us go in the way of user fees.

?If we couldn't sustain the hotel we had in Town, I am not sure we have what it takes to sustain a Convention Centre.?

A Council run is something Ms. Briggs says she has considered for a long time. A self-professed fan of Tim Jones as mayor, Ms. Briggs says she ?wasn't overly impressed with his replacement? and the ?dysfunctional? workings of the previous Council. She welcomed a change with Mr. Dawe who, she says, has ?done a lot for the Town of Aurora to bring us back to a more even keel and have effective leadership.? But rather than let the ?dysfunction? dissuade her from public life, it actually provided a degree of motivation.

?I kind of like to fix things,? she says. ?If I am going to get involved, I want to get involved. Whenever I joined a board of some sort, I am not just a member at large. I like to get into the meat and grit. In the scouting world, I understand the value of a dollar because we're not allowed to spend more than we have and I think that is an important way to operate things. You need to pick and choose what you spend your money on, but I think you also need to not spend more than you have.?