

Council of 2018-2022 signs off with farewell to colleague and look to the future

It doesn't have the pomp and circumstance of an inauguration, but in closing out the final Council meeting of the 2018-2022 term, words shared by lawmakers with their colleagues, and with the community, were no less heartfelt.

The outgoing Council met in Council Chambers for the last time on November 8.

It has been an eventful four years, one marked by the unforeseen challenges that came with COVID-19, along with big decisions made along the way like the multi-million-dollar redevelopment on Town Square.

But as much as those items were in their minds, so too was the departure of Sandra Humfryes, who had served on Council since 2010 and was the only incumbent not returned to the table by voters when she sought re-election in the newly created Ward 1.

The final meeting of the term was led by Mayor Tom Mrakas with remarks were kicked off by Councillor John Gallo, who will be sworn in as Councillor for Ward 5 this week.

"I would like to congratulate all of you for being re-elected, to thank all of the candidates that ran in the last election, particularly in the well-contested Ward 5. It was a great group of individuals and, like I said many times during my campaign, any one of us would have done a fantastic job representing Ward 5," he said. "A special thank you to Councillor Humfryes. 12 years ago was the first time we were on Council together. We have been on Council for eight years; notwithstanding we didn't always see eye-to-eye, I always had an immense amount of respect for you and your contribution to the Town. Your passion and your love for it, I never, ever questioned that. You will definitely be missed in my eyes at this table."

Councillor Rachel Gilliland, who will take on the role of Ward 2 Councillor this week, was next, leading with a personal tribute to Humfryes.

"You have been a shining star, especially to me as a Councillor," she said. "You took me under your wing and had given me advice, let me know if I didn't get my point across in the item I could do it in new business. I think you even gave me a Roberts Rules (of Order) at the very beginning. You're definitely very special to me and I have high regard to you and a lot of respect for you. You have done a lot for this Town and we hope to see your smiling face around Town and continue on with that."

This tone, reflecting on the achievements of the term and of Humfryes, continued with Councillor Wendy Gaertner, the Town's longest-serving incumbent lawmaker, who will resume her place at the table as the representative for Ward 3.

"To me, the one thing that sets you apart is the caring and compassion that you have for the residents and their issues and their needs. It is very, very special," said Gaertner of Humfryes. "And, just to top it all off, you managed to do something that I thought was impossible: you got a traffic light at Butternut Ridge Trail and Gilbert and Yonge. Thank you. You made that happen. It was a great parting gift for the Town."

Councillor Harold Kim, who was re-elected to serve Ward 6, said it had been an honour to serve the last four years and was looking forward to the next four.

"When one is going through things, one doesn't fully appreciate all the things that were accomplished. When I look back, we accomplished much. We moved ahead with the Administrative Monetary Penalties system, opening up the Armoury, of course Town Square, Hallmark lands and the baseball diamond, retail sales of cannabis, right turn lane at Yonge and Wellington, various mural discussions, heritage designations, sport plan, comprehensive development charge review, commencement of the asset management plan ? we couldn't exercise the tree bylaw, however. It came back again and again and again," he said with a smile. "Who could forget the award of tender for supply and delivery of one combination dump, sander and plow truck? That was a fierce discussion."

?This evening I would like to honour our colleague, Councillor Sandra Humfryes. You were and are all heart through and through. If I received a dollar for each time you cried or teary-eyed in Council chamber? I would be able to go on an all-inclusive Caribbean cruise. Those tears (that Humfryes battled through during the meeting) are not just for show, it's an outpouring of your heart. Even in the most human discussions, you had a passion and the human component. Even when you swore, you did it with a smile!

?Some of us rationalize items with a calculator, economic theory, public policy, public planning and knowledge, but you are unique. You rationalize with your heart and, in the end, as human beings, is that not what distinguishes us from all other life forms on this earth? I will miss you. We will always be friends and we will continue to meet regularly.?

Last to speak before Humfryes formally ended the meeting with a motion to adjourn was Mayor Tom Mrakas.

?This is the last Council meeting of the 2018 to 2022 term and what a term it was,? he said. ?From taking bold steps forward towards the revitalization of our downtown with the development of Town Square, to navigating a once in a lifetime pandemic. We have much to be proud of in terms of what we accomplished together over the past four years. I think the most important accomplishment was our ability to work together towards the common goal of getting things done for our community. Over the course [of the term] Council voted 890 times on a broad range of issues and of those 890 votes, Council was able to come to a unanimous decision 82 per cent of the time. A clear indication that this Council, a group of seven individuals with differing opinions, different perspectives, was able to work effectively for the best interests of Aurora. While this term might be over, I anticipate the same focus on collaboration at the Council table over the next four years because that is how you get things done.

?Sandra, you are one of the most passionate, caring individuals I have ever met. Your love for our Town is unmatched and the 12 years you have spent on Council has been 12 years of building our community and always looking for ways to help those in need. You never hesitate when anyone asks for help. I have worked with you on Council for eight years and our time together is one that I will always remember. I knew you before joining you on Council and I know that our relationship will continue long after both of our terms on Council are over. You will be missed at the Council table for your dedication to our community and for your friendship. You're not only a colleague, you are a friend, family, and everyone is a better person for knowing you.?

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