

FRONT PORCH PERSPECTIVE: Now there are four

By Stephen Somerville

One intriguing rumor that had been floating out there in the ether was that Chris Ballard, the former Liberal MPP for Newmarket-Aurora and Minister of Environment and Climate Change might decide to seek the Mayor's chain of office.

It would not be the last time that something like this happened.

Scores of defeated or retired MPs and MPPs have left party politics and run for municipal office.

In the end, this rumour turned out to be true.

With the former MPP declaring his intention to seek the mayors' office we now have four candidates. He joins a race that includes incumbent Mayor Geoff Dawe, Deputy Mayor/Councillor John Abel and Councillor Tom Mrakas.

Three things should motivate people to vote this fall.

First, a good, hard fought and respectful campaign being run by the four mayoralty candidates will energize their respective political bases to action. Each of the candidates is of high profile, and has sufficient depth, experience and knowledge of the issues to mount an effective campaign.

Second, important issues are required that galvanize the electorate. And we do have those.

Managing growth while maintaining Aurora's unique 'small town feel' is an important issue. Transportation infrastructure and transportation congestion is another. Public safety and security concerns as population increases is still another.

Other items to debate during the fall campaign include the appropriate level of taxation to assist in managing growth challenges.

High incomes and land costs make it difficult for a wide range of incomes to settle in Aurora. Sources of funding for capital projects, service and program delivery when the Town is built out (i.e. loss of development charges). The list goes on.

Stable neighbourhoods has also become a big issue. Residents want to hear from the prospective mayoralty candidates about what improvements or changes they would like to see to the Town's Zoning By-law in order to protect the character of our existing neighbourhoods.

For each of the mayoralty candidates I had a quick look at their respective websites, in the 'About' section which usually highlights/speaks to their background or areas that they want to stress during the campaign.

I did not yet see a website for Mr. Ballard, but as he has just entered the race, I expect to see one up shortly. This is from a recent Auroran story about Mr. Ballard's announcement to enter the mayoralty race:

'Mr. Ballard was first elected to Aurora Council in 2010.

'He served in this position until nearly the end of his term when he was elected to Queen's Park in the 2014 Provincial election.

'As a member of Kathleen Wynne's cabinet, he held a number of portfolios including Minister of Housing, Minister Responsible for the Poverty Reduction Strategy and, lastly, Minister of the Environment and Climate Change.'

From Mayor Geoff Dawe's website:

'Geoff and his wife Henny moved to Aurora in 1977. Their three daughters were born and raised here. As a father, a businessman and civic minded resident, he quickly became involved in our community: cubs, scouts and guides; the Rotary club; Trinity Anglican Church; the Aurora Chamber of Commerce, where he was named president (2009); the 'Grow your Mind' fundraising campaign for the Aurora Public Library; board member and then Chair, Aurora Public Library Board and then, in 2010 in a landslide victory, Geoff was elected as Mayor, for the Town of Aurora.'

About John Abel:

'In 2010, at the age of 55, I decided to be a candidate for the Aurora Town Council because I had come to realize that politics should be about improving people's lives 'no more and no less. My wife, Tracy, and I raised our children in Aurora and I felt it was time to give back to the community we love. I also knew that I could make a difference. Over the past seven and a half years, I have served as Deputy Mayor of Aurora. I am proud of the volunteer work I have done, the boards I am on, and the initiatives that I introduced on behalf of my fellow residents.

About Tom Mrakas:

'Thank you Aurora for putting your trust in me. I am honoured to serve as your voice on Aurora Town Council. In 2014, I ran for

Aurora Town Council because I believed in giving back to my community. And since being elected as your representative, I have put that belief to work.

?My priority since day one has been, and will continue to be, to focus on smarter growth. Given that Aurora's population is expected to grow by over 10,000 by the year 2020, how we grow will be vitally important to the health and well-being of our present and future community.?

I don't know who will win on October 22nd, but this should be an exciting race.

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