

## Residents continue to line up to fill Council vacancy on July 29

**By Brock Weir**

Just over a week since registration was thrown open to fill the Council vacancy left by MPP Chris Ballard, a steady stream of Aurora residents have lined up to keep the seat warm.

Councillors will meet on July 29 to hear three-minute pitches from each registered candidate on why they should be appointed to the Council table to serve at the handful of Council meetings from August through until the newly elected Council is sworn in in December. What they will get, if trends continue, is a healthy mix of familiar faces, people seeking election in October, and those with an interest in civic affairs willing to land a hand, but only for a limited period of time.

At press time, those taking the plunge into the vacancy race included Michele Boyer, Mark Etwell, Marilee Harris, Bob McRoberts, Fred Rankel, Srinvas Rao, Linda Stephens and Svetla Topouzova.

For Ms. Harris, involvement at Town Hall is nothing new. As a retired executive specializing in business development and strategy, who has worked for such organizations as Direct Energy, the CBC, Tommy Hilfiger, she has used her business experience as an active member of Aurora's Economic Development Advisory Committee (EDAC).

While she says she has no aspirations to put her name forward as a candidate for the October election, she sees the appointment as a twofold opportunity ? an opportunity to learn and to underscore the importance of Aurora's Strategic Plan, which she helped develop.

?I think it is an interesting situation, somebody has to step up and I would be happy to do it,? she says. ?I have got the time, it is not a very long commitment, and I am interested.?

She attributes her work on EDAC as being partially responsible in sparking her interest. Through the committee, she says she has actively worked with Mayor Geoffrey Dawe and some Councillors, but being a part of the Council table, even briefly, will allow her to meet the rest.

?I am interested in [ensuring] the decisions the Town makes are in line with that plan,? she says. ?A lot of effort went into it and I believe these plans take you down a path that is appropriate.

?A lot of input and logic was applied and consolidated to give some direction to those decisions. Often organizations and governments don't actually use the background work to make the tough decisions and so I am interested in helping to ensure the Strategic Plan is a guideline for making the best decision for Aurora going forward.?

Another Aurora resident sensing an opportunity is truck driver James Hoyes, who signed up earlier this spring as a Council candidate. While he hasn't officially signed up for the appointment, he says this is an opportunity that should not be passed up.

?When opportunity knocks, you open up the door and you take that opportunity,? says Mr. Hoyes. ?If this is an opportunity to get a job I am desiring to have, why wouldn't I take that opportunity to get it now, and at least get some time under my belt? Opportunity is the biggest thing in any position. If you close the door on an opportunity, you close the door on the future.?

When Council approved the selection process last month, many members sitting around the table spoke of what they perceived to be a potential issue of giving candidates for the October election an unfair advantage in the race if they are appointed to fill the vacancy.

Mr. Hoyes, on the other hand, sees it as a chance to learn.

?What I have to offer is the desire and the willingness to learn,? he says. ?If I am privileged enough to be elected in October I will be given two months of an opportunity to learn. If you are looking for people who have had [Council] experience before, that is great, but the idea of an election is there for people who want to join for the long-term and I am willing to join for the long-term.?

Ms. Boyer, however, says she has yet to decide what the October election holds for her, but she wants to be part of the decision-making process for the next four months. A resident of Aurora since 1994, she works from home on behalf of a software company, reporting directly to Germany.

?I want to see more of the workings within Council and how they make decisions, and I want to be part of that decision-making process,? she says. ?There are decisions being made on parklands, development, and businesses. Aurora is growing and it would be nice to be part of that process into how Aurora grows because I plan on living here a long time.?

As a former resident on Willow Farm Lane, she now lives in the Mavrinac Boulevard area which she describes as a much ?tighter, more international community? but one also facing challenges from traffic, park space, and no resolution yet on the ?Mavrinac Park? dispute.

If she is selected for the vacancy, sitting in on the meetings might help her ?evaluate? her strengths ?versus the strengths [of Councillors] already there and if I think I can be a better value add for the Town I will run.

?Otherwise, I would like to get involved, sit on committees, get my experience there and then, perhaps, run in the next election. I am just a person who loves and lives in Aurora and I am really excited.?

Harold Kim, who has put his name forward as a candidate for the October 27 election has also confirmed his intentions to seek the vacancy.