

VOTE 2014: Abel focuses on "revitalization" ahead of re-election bid

By Brock Weir

As the 2010 ? 2014 term of Council begins its final phase, Councillor John Abel is looking back on a ?tremendous? learning experience and an experience which has been tremendously rewarding.

For the first time Councillor, being a part of a decision-making body as a whole, let alone a Council, has been far more than he expected but, at the same time, has been something he has truly enjoyed.

With that in mind, he confirms he will once again throw his hat into the political ring next year, in an election season which opens to candidates on January 2.

?I feel it is advantageous for any business, including the Town to have a veteran presence, or someone who understands their job rather than keep turning it over,? he said on his re-election bid. ?It is good for continuity to have people from the last term on and I feel I am in a great position to do that.?

With that being said, although he plans on running again, there are still a number of things on his personal to-do list before turning his mind to serving again on the 2014 ? 2018 term, as well as securing the accomplishments of this term coming to a close.

?Development and planning has been a great accomplishment with the 2C lands, trails committees, strategic plans, and there are a lot of excellent building blocks in planning, promenade studies and integrating all of that,? he says, with a nod to new businesses coming into Aurora like the headquarters for Bulk Barn.

?We have been able to move forward in a good way as a Council. We're also building facilities that we haven't built for some eight years. We're building a community space for youth, which is often called a Youth Centre. Then there are the little things, but they all add up. We were able to do little things easily that I felt were challenges for the last Council. We finished off a few items that had to be addressed and now, going forward, we are dealing with Library Square, the Master Culture Plan, and we also have the heritage park. There are a lot of things going on, as well as what has been accomplished.?

Immediately, however, he says his focus is wrapping up the 2014 budget. That is one of, if not the biggest job of any Council, he said, noting he hoped the last few months of Council would be ?proactive? rather than a ?lame duck.?

Among his top priorities are moving forward with the Joint Operations Centre, determining the future use of Library Square, taking the Hillary-McIntyre Park to the next level, the creation of the second heritage conservation district in Aurora south of Wellington Street, further downtown revitalization, and securing the old Aurora Armoury building bordering Town Park for municipal use.

?It was the Town of Aurora's property and it was given to the Queen's York Rangers,? he said. ?I think the [Department of National Defence] should give it back now that they don't need it. There is definitely a collaboration and partnership. I'm sure the price really isn't going to be the biggest issue. It was given to them for free and, in my mind, they should just give it back! It is sitting there and it is not fair for the Queen's York Rangers or Aurora.?

Looking back over the years of this Council, Councillor Abel says one of the biggest lessons he has taken away from the experience so far is listening and that actions speak.

?It has been a tremendous honour serving the Town of Aurora and it is an overwhelming task of budget and community,? he says. ?I am trying to stimulate innovation, music and culture into sustaining an economic and healthy community.?