

VOTE 2014: Seeing projects through remains top priority for Pirri

By Brock Weir

When Councillor Paul Pirri threw his hat into the political ring almost four years ago, he was the youngest candidate by far.

It was not, he said, a little detail that intimidated him. He knew what he was getting into and was prepared to fight for it, even undertaking a recount when his eighth place position in the polls was questioned by the defeated councillor in position nine.

"I love serving my community," he says. "I love trying to help people solve issues and concerns and the problems they are having and being able to make a positive difference in somebody's life is greatly rewarding."

The last three and a half years, however, have not been without frustrations, he says, as is the case in any position. There are issues that people bring to Councillors that ultimately fall outside their jurisdiction and though they can't give constituents the answers they need, they can point them in the right direction. Sometimes circumstances beyond one's control and not being able to help is "extremely difficult", but in all, he has enjoyed the ride.

"I think we have been, on the whole, a back-to-basics Council," he says. "We haven't spent exorbitant amounts of money. We have stayed away from a lot of political strife and we are just focusing on doing what is in the best interests of the residents."

That being said, he is currently weighing his options on whether to run again. Seeking re-election is something he says he is giving some serious consideration, but he is a few steps away from making his a definite decision.

"I think there are likely different considerations to be made for an individual who is starting their career as opposed to a lot of individuals around the table who are sort of in the middle or towards the end of their careers," says Councillor Pirri. "I am definitely considering running and I just want to make sure I have the time to make the necessary commitments."

As Council is in full swing after the holiday break and the clock is ticking on the last 10 months of the current Council term, Councillor Pirri counts the new agreement between the Town and the Aurora Cultural Centre as one of the biggest achievements of this Council. In his view, the new agreement provides more oversight of the Centre's funds and that is something he says both he and Councillor John Abel worked hard to achieve.

Indeed, the two Councillors were behind the motion which ultimately resulted in a renegotiated Cultural Services Agreement. He also made the motions to bring discussions over Aurora's Community Space for Youth into the schools to hear directly from students on what they want in a youth centre, and to have a referendum question put on the ballot this year polling residents on whether they want Aurora to be divided into wards. They are three accomplishments he says he is proud to attach his name.

"As a whole, I think this Council works fairly well together," he says. "Everybody disagrees from time to time, but I think there is a lot less animosity now than there has been in the past and I think that is something we all campaigned on and I am proud of that achievement. I think a little disagreement here and there is something extremely important, but I feel, as a whole, we have become a more cohesive unit."

Looking ahead to the next few months of this Council term, following through with the ward question, the youth space, as well as the enduring and developing relationship between the Cultural Centre and the Town nears the top of his to-do list. Also rising to the top is a notice of motion encouraging the Province of Ontario to allow for recall elections for politicians who might have lost the public faith.

The motion is due to be discussed before Council this week.

"This is something I think has to happen now," he says. "I will be advocating for that wherever possible. There are some very big

decisions to make in the near future with regards to the Joint Operations Centre and what that facility will look like. Those are two matters in the short term.?