

# 18 candidates set to vie for Council vacancy next Tuesday

**By Brock Weir**

The nomination period is over and next Tuesday up to 18 Aurora residents will come before Council to say why they should be the Town's next Councillor.

18 residents signed up for the vacancy left by Chris Ballard, now MPP for Newmarket-Aurora, right up until the wire on Friday afternoon. The call for nominations brought together a variety of candidates including three former Aurora councillors: Don Constable, Grace Marsh and Bob McRoberts, three candidates who have already put their names forward for the October 27 municipal election, including James Hoyes, Harold Kim, and Svetla Topouzova, and 12 new faces to the list.

The additional candidates, in order of their registration, are Srinivas Rao, Marilee Harris, Mark Etwell, Michele Boyer, Fred Rankel, Linda Stephens, Martin McIntaggart, Shumaila Waqas, Gerald Miller, George Tremtsidis, Jane Howarth, and Eric Belisle.

At least two candidates have said they will not be on hand for a special Council meeting to be held on July 29. There, Mayor and Council will ultimately decide who joins them at the table. Candidates will be invited to approach the podium and make a pitch on why they are the right person for the job, in a speech lasting up to three minutes.

Council will, in turn, then have a chance to ask each candidate two questions to help make their decision easier. It will then be up to a member to put forward a name for Council's consideration and the candidate receiving a majority vote will be sworn in that evening. The newest member will then be invited to take their seat for the regular Council meeting, previously scheduled to begin at 7 p.m.

Jane Howarth comes by her interest in civic affairs honestly. Having immigrated to York Region from England as a child in

## JANE HOWARTH

It is this vision Ms. Howarth hopes to bring to the Council table if she is selected on July 29. As a Regulated Health Care Professional, her interests lie in the effective delivery of healthcare services across the entire continuum of health care. With rapid changes in her field, she says her voice would provide a new and unique perspective to municipal decisions when it comes to health and the environment.

"I thought, why not?" she says of why she put her name forward. "Why not start with something in the community? When I chose to live somewhere, I chose to live in Aurora and I feel now I have a vested interest in trying to help shape the future in some of these decisions. I hope to add my voice to the development of the Town and I will do my best to serve the community well, and try to help facilitate balanced decisions and incorporate other dynamics or perspectives based on my background. Council is going to be reflective of the sum of its parts. Council has different perspectives and different backgrounds and hopefully, together, it will represent the interest of the community."

If selected, she would like to focus on "family friendly" opportunities within the town for everyone, as well as creating additional green spaces "in areas that are accessible and usable to the whole community."

"I think I can contribute to environmental and toxicological assessments and bring a different angle to what the Council is considering sponsoring, funding, building and developing," she says.

## MARTIN McINTAGGART

Working for a public agency dealing with health and safety, Martin McIntaggart is no stranger to dealing with bureaucracy. A resident of Aurora since 1999, he says he and his family love living "and investing" in the Town. Although there was not one individual issue which piqued his interest in joining the race for July 29, he says after 15 years he would like to have more input to how the Town moves forward with parks and recreation issues.

Mr. McIntaggart has served on several committees in his day job related to Provincial legislation, workers, health and safety. With a background in construction, he says his work in bringing forward a "safer Ontario" would be a valuable voice to have around the table.

?I am big on parks, recreation, hiking on trails, and I want to see that kind of stuff preserved not just for my family, but for generations to come as well,? he says. ?We have some great trails already, we have [facilities and events] and I would like to see those things continue. If there are some things at the table that could possibly enhance what we already have, I would certainly love to participate in that kind of thing.?

#### SRINIVAS RAO

Mr. Rao has always had an interest in getting involved at the Civic level, but this was his first opportunity to put this desire into action. Having moved to Canada with his family from India in 2002, the mechanical engineer says he arrived with the sole purpose of providing a better education for his son. After several stops and starts in fulfilling that dream in other communities, they eventually found Aurora was the right place which allowed him to flourish.

It is with this in mind that Mr. Rao says that, if selected, he would like to focus not only on providing opportunities for Aurora's youth, but giving them a voice in the decision-making process.

?Aurora's 2031 Plan is great for the economy, community and the environment, but I don't see anything for teenage kids,? he says. ?There are many activities, many volunteer organizations, but how much involvement is there? Youth are an asset and people should pay attention to that. [I want to see] how we can involve youth in development work. If you don't give ownership to youth [in something like a Youth Centre] and they don't feel ownership, it is not going to work. It will not provide the results you intended.? Asking bigger questions taking a 360-degree approach needs to be the order of the day around the Council table and there should be a checklist on hand to evaluate how each decision is going to impact ? measurably ? kids, youth, parents, and seniors.

#### FRED RANKEL

If selected next week, Aurora businessman Fred Rankel says he will bring an extensive knowledge base in facilities planning, construction, real estate, and finance to the table. A quantities surveyor by trade, he has taken that skill to develop extensive construction companies. He has taken an interest in the Town, he says, since moving here in 1987, quickly becoming involved with many feasibility studies on projects that have been undertaken in Aurora.

?My background is in facilities planning and if you go back to the essence of what a Town is, it is a corporation,? he says. ?I graduated from Ryerson in 1973 and have been in the business, every aspect of it, for 41 years. Who better than a guy who can give [Council] free advice??

At this point in time, work commitments prevent him from looking at serving on Council for anything beyond this fixed window, but he does not discount the commitment it takes to do the job.

?Politics should always be a step down rather than a step up? he says. ?It shouldn't be a step up to help yourself. It shouldn't be a ?what's in it for me?' attitude. It should be, as I have learned a lot in my life, wanting to bring something to the table, not to go there as a training session to learn, but to bring your expertise.

?Aurora is right in the middle of the universe, as far as I am concerned. It has got everything you want ? close proximity to the GTA, great community, and great facilities.?

#### LINDA STEPHENS

Ms. Stephens, a realtor with Main Street Realty, might be in a different business these days, but is no stranger to Town Hall. Having worked at the Town of Aurora in various positions over the years, including in the Clerk's Department and the Department of Public Works, she is a life-long Aurora resident who has often spoken out at Council about the issues close to her heart.

If selected for the position next Tuesday, she sees herself as being a non-partisan voice at the table, and one which can bring ?calm and peace? to the decision-making process.

?I am not coming with any sort of personal agenda,? she says. ?Something that has troubled many past Councils is a lot of drama, a lot of discord with people around the table, and I have cordial relations [with Mayor Dawe and Councillors]. I think I could be a very calming, soothing neutral person to see the term through.

?There will be a certain amount of business to wrap up. When people are declaring themselves as candidates for the next election, their thoughts are maybe turned elsewhere. I can be a voice between the community and the government in that I am not intending to stand for election, and I could be an extra pair of hands on deck that is still able to carry on with Town business. I have a reasonableness to be able to hear any concerns. I have a strong 17 year career in Law, so I can be very neutral and that is one of the things.?

## GEORGE TREMTSIDIS

If you ask Mr. Tremtsidis his thoughts about this vacancy process, he describes it as a 'waste of time?', a 'waste of money?', and 'I think it is a joke we have to fill a vacancy.'

'What are you going to do in two months?' he asks. 'I am putting my hand up because it is available. Maybe it will give me some insight into how politics works in the Town of Aurora.'

It is a question he says he has been considering some time, even mulling a run for the October 27 election, in response to how Aurora has changed since he moved here five years ago. Council, he says, needs 'fresh ideas and fresh breath' around the table, and someone there to hold Council 'accountable.'

'We're putting all these houses up and I think we destroyed Leslie Street and St. John's Sideroad,' he says. 'I respect [development] but are we getting good bang for our buck? I have never been approached by a Councillor, they have never knocked at my door, I have asked [Town Hall] for assistance and no Town Councillor has ever called me back.'

'If we can't hold people accountable for what they say and what they do, then you have anarchy.'

Working in a multinational organization, he says he would be a person who could build relationships at the table, provide accountability with things like cost overruns, and building a consensus.

'We talk a lot, we bitch and complain a lot, but a lot of the people I talk to in Town don't take any action. You can't complain unless you complain to the right people and hold them accountable for the decisions they make.'