

Aurora's Deputy Mayor position will be taken in turns, Council agrees

In the new term of Council, the position of Aurora's Deputy Mayor will be taken in turn by the six Council members elected by the community this October.

As The Auroran reported last week, the position of Deputy Mayor in Aurora has traditionally been held by the top vote-getter amongst the field of Town-wide Council candidates. But, as Aurora adopts a ward system this fall where one Councillor is elected by ? and represents ? one of six neighbourhoods or ?wards?, the old method of choosing the deputy is not possible.

Various methods were considered by Council at last week's General Committee meeting, including Council appointing one member from amongst themselves to hold the position, either by Council motion or ?some other electoral process?, and leaving the appointment process in the hands of the 2022-2026 Mayor.

The suggestion from staff that the six new Council members take it in turns ultimately won the day on a vote of 6 ? 0, with Councillor John Gallo not present at last week's Committee meeting.

?The appointment of the Deputy Mayor, or whether that position exists at all, varies depending on the municipality and often the circumstances of the municipality,? said Town Clerk Mike de Rond in a report to Council, noting that communities that have a Regional Councillor in addition to their Mayor representing the community in the upper tier, often make the Regional Councillor the Deputy Mayor.

?The most common approach for municipalities using a ward system, where a Deputy Mayor is not elected, and the only member of the upper-tier Council is the Mayor, is to rotate the position amongst the elected Councillors. This method is employed by fellow York Region municipalities King, East Gwillimbury, and Whitchurch-Stouffville ? as well as Halton Hills.

?The adoption of a rotation for the Deputy Mayor position represents the most equitable way for the Town's ward Councillors to share the appointment. Staff also recommend that should a rotation of the Deputy Mayor position be adopted, that the monthly appointment also include the responsibility of chairing General Committee meetings (currently rotated amongst Councillors after chairing twice).?

Now that Council is moving in this direction (their decision is expected to be ratified at Council this week), the next crop of Councillors would hold the position of Deputy Mayor for seven non-consecutive months throughout the entire Council term ? but some additional provisions would be in place depending on the time of year.

?It is generally accepted that the months of July and August are slower for municipal business than the others, and these months would be split evenly so a member is only Deputy Mayor in July/August once over the course of the term,? Mr. De Rond suggested. ?To ensure Councillors are given the same amount of opportunities to hold the Deputy Mayor position, there would not be a designated Deputy Mayor in December 2022 or from July to October 2026 (which is considered to be the window of the 2026 municipal election).?

Councillors, the report noted, would be allowed to trade months if they know of an absence beforehand and can find a colleague to trade with. When there's an unexpected absence, the Mayor would be tasked with chairing any General Committee meetings that come up at that time.

While Council gave the green light to the new process, the devil was very much in the details.

?This model does make sense,? said Councillor Rachel Gilliland, who said her only suggestion was to have a bit more equity when it came to slower months like August and December which have fewer Council meetings, or, in the case of August, rarely. ?We normally don't have meetings in August and I feel that if that were to happen on occasion you would end up just pushing that

rotation another month.

?I think for logistics it could be a lot more clear.?

Mr. de Rond said it's a matter of trying to create a schedule that is fair as possible.

?The schedule is set out as it is,? he said. ?If we happened to miss a meeting for whatever reason [such as] lack of items, I think that would be how it shakes out in the end. It's possible to amend [the schedule] to include the August dates as the Mayor chairs.?

Councillor Wendy Gaertner also had a question about the schedule, but hers was clear cut, as was the answer.

?This is a rather strange question, but what happens if a Councillor doesn't want to be Deputy Mayor? They will just have to be?? she asked.

Replied Mr. de Rond: ?It would be a Council decision at that point in time in terms of maybe providing a different one for that month or changing the schedule.?

AURORA VOTES UPDATE

The position of Deputy Mayor is currently held by Councillor Harold Kim, who received the most votes from all Aurorans in the Councillor field during the 2018 Municipal election.

Councillor Kim has registered to seek re-election in the 2024-2028 term, this time as a candidate in Ward 6.

Councillors Rachel Gilliland and Wendy Gaertner have also put themselves forward for re-election, with Councillor Gilliland seeking the support of Ward 2 voters and Councillor Gaertner in Ward 3.

Iwona Czarnecka, who stood as Newmarket-Aurora's New Blue candidate in this spring's Provincial Election, a newcomer to municipal politics, has thrown her hat in the ring in Ward 5.

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