

BROCK'S BANTER: Eight is Enough...

By Brock Weir

At least, that seems to be the view of the Municipal Act, in terms of filling the Council seat left vacant by Newmarket-Aurora's newly-minted MPP-elect.

It seems, however, that some members around the Council table are content with The Magnificent Seven for the remainder of the term.

Regardless of what their preferences are, the law doesn't seem to care and they are left with no other choice than to appoint someone to keep Mr. Ballard's seat warm for the remainder of the 2010-2014 term of Council.

The only thing left to decide, aside from the 'who?', is the all-important 'how?' and convincing some around the table that this is not just a colossal waste of time.

Truth be told, I think actually going out to the public and convincing them of that is going to be something of a Herculean task. Nevertheless, logic and practicality are not and are rarely the orders of the day. This is something recognized by the Mayor and the Magnificent Seven left standing around the Council table, but they have to go through the motions.

Councillors at the Committee level last week voted to go ahead with opening up nominations and applications to interested members of the public seeking to fill the Ballard Void. If that is ratified this week, Councillors will have just over a month to accept applications and nominations before the nominees making the grade will have to come to Council to make their respective pitches to Council and, by extension, the public. Then, the final decision would ultimately be up to Council.

This option trumped some of the other ones at the table, including a simple appointment from amongst candidates put forward by Councillors themselves, or heading down the list of also-rans from the 2010 Municipal Election, which is the method the previous Council employed to fill the seat left vacant by Grace Marsh.

It will be interesting watching how things unfold. As I noted last week, Council is unlikely to appoint someone who is considering, or has already put their name forward, for a run at Council in the upcoming election. Sitting Council members might see this as giving these individuals an unfair advantage, while those making the bid could see this as a way to get valuable name recognition before the public.

They might also see this as a huge positive in their campaigns because it will give potential voters a sneak preview of just what kind of Councillor they might be.

Conversely, they might want to think about the negatives including giving said potential voters a sneak peek at just what kind of Councillor they might be.

Tread carefully, one and all!

Unless there is a dramatic sea change this week, this appears to be the ultimate way forward. It is relatively concise, transparent, and will get the job done but I think we can all agree that the options left on the table are nothing if not uninspired.

We deserve better.

As I listened to Councillors banter back and forth about this last week, it occurred to me that Canada Day is coming up on Tuesday and this presents a rare opportunity for going completely out-of-the-box on how to fill this seat. Therefore, I present to you a list of options and selection methods which would make the race significantly more interesting.

AURORA TEEN-IN-SPIRIT IDOL

Judges will be on hand at Lambert Willson Park a little bit later in the Canada Day afternoon this year to cast a juror's eye over the Top 8 contestants left standing. Typically, this gets started much earlier in the day, so why not use the extra time a little more wisely. Round up the potential candidates vying for the vacant seat, put them up on stage, and make them sing a medley of 'If I Had A Hammer' and 'Abraham, Martin & John.' Using a full evaluation criteria, sitting Councillors would be able to evaluate each contestant on stage presence, pitch, and sincerity, before whittling it down to a final three, who would then face off by giving Canada's Birthday Town a sultry Marilyn Monroe-style serenade which would be judged by the public through an applause-o-meter.

FLOAT-ATION

This method has nothing to do with the tried-and-true methods deployed by the good people of Salem in the seventeenth century, but simply makes good use of the resources we're already going to have on hand. At the start of the Canada Day Parade, it has been a

long-standing tradition that Aurora's Citizens of the Year make their way down the long line of parade floats getting ready to wow the crowds before ultimately picking the best entry.

Depending on how many people are ultimately looking to sit in Mr. Ballard's spot, what's a few more floats to have Beverley Wood continue her procession down the line and ultimately crowning Best In Show (Candidate Division). Personally, I trust Ms. Wood's judgement, but that's just me.

FEATS OF STRENGTH

The Canada Day Festivities also provide several opportunities to determine this whole thing through various displays of strength. Most members of Council, for instance, typically ride in the parade from Orchard Heights to Murray Drive in a horse-drawn cart. Since Council is so wary of putting the any cart before a horse, why not do away entirely with the equine equation and strap in the candidates to pull the cart. Quite simply, the last one left standing is the victor.

SWORD-IN-THE STONE

In the previous term of Council, being told numerous times she was going to be kicked out of the Council chamber, Councillor Evelyn Buck decided to cover all her bases. As she once told me, the light bulb went on in her head to buy a pair of handcuffs to attach herself to the Council table if the threat to be thrown out of the chamber veered pretty close to becoming a reality.

The catch? Where to buy a pair of handcuffs. Well, the only place the Councillor could think of where such an item would be available was the adult novelty store Passion Place in Newmarket. After sending in a friend to get the required item, while keeping her face covered waiting in the car, Councillor Buck spent the remainder of the Council term with a pair of fur-lined cuffs in her purse, at the ready.

To determine who is going to sit at the Council table, the Sword-in-the-Stone Method is quite straightforward. Councillor Buck can simply hook herself onto the Council table. The first candidate to successfully extract her from her prime position is, of course, the winner.

THE PRICE IS RIGHT METHOD

Ever since his retirement, Bob Barker has been horning in on Canada's affairs like our nosy neighbour down the street. Why not put his time ? and his apparent insatiable curiosity ? to good use. Forego the yet-to-be-announced headliner band for September's Ribfest and use the \$20,000 grant received for such a purpose to fly in the United States' Spay-and-Neuterer-in-Chief.

Potential candidates can get up on stage and receive a helpful review of the last eight years or so, presented by an unending parade of Barker Beauties. After a five minute break to consider everything they have learned, whichever candidate who can guess closest to the actual retail price of every lawsuit incurred by the Town, related to integrity Commissioners or otherwise ? without going over, of course ? will ultimately win Ballard's seat. And a lovely dinette set.