

BROCK'S BANTER: In on the ground floor

By Brock Weir

The old phrase, 'you win some, you lose some' is just about threadbare as clichés go, but there's a reason why it's a saying that has such staying power: it's absolutely true.

Whatever your circumstance, you learn this lesson hard and fast. Sometimes you learn from it, sometimes you don't, but it's unavoidable.

If you're a writer, particularly a writer whose work is sent out into the world with any degree of regularity, you learn this lesson time and time again, from many quarters.

But, at the risk of trotting out another cliché, each hard lesson learned makes you stronger – well, that is, for putting forward a stronger debate, whether in the public sphere or in the close quarters at home.

But, close to home, there is one argument I've never been able to win – or, at the very least, make any headway in bringing people around to my way of thinking.

Not too long ago, I bowed out of a social engagement early because I had to get to bed at a reasonable hour.

'Why?' they asked. So, with some trepidation, I began explained.

Without going into too much detail, the gist was simple: I had to get to bed in good time in order to get up at the crack of dawn to watch a live news event unfold halfway around the world through the wonders of cable.

Even as I write this, I can feel you cocking your eyebrow as you read.

Indeed, I saw many eyebrows raised in real time as I unfolded my explanation.

'Why don't you just set your PVR?' asked one thoughtful individual.

Point taken.

'You know, it will probably be on YouTube a couple of hours later, right?' asked another, doubtlessly rhetorically, as

his eyebrow assumed the position.

My eyebrows stayed put.

I'd been down this road before. But, knowing what was to come, I launched into my time-honoured explanation.

'This is history,' I said. 'You guys all studied history in school. Would you rather read about it after the fact, or watch it unfold as it happened?'

I was met with familiar blank stares.

Their sleep took top priority. And, I assume, it would have taken priority for you as well.

Well, I'm still dug deep in this belief and that is why Thursday night's Special Council meeting hit so many of my buttons just right.

'Aha!' I hear you exclaim! 'There's a point to this.'

Indeed, there is!

If you attended Thursday night's meeting dedicated to Library Square, you either shifted to get comfortable in your seat as words like 'historic?', 'exciting?' or phrases like 'pivotal moment?' were thrown around with what some might argue was close to wild abandon.

If you're adamantly apposed to the development of Library Square, you probably thought they were each exercises of hyperbole, but if you have a vested interest in the outcome of Library Square, you were probably ready to raise your hands and shout out to the God of your choice, if you happen to be so inclined.

I stayed firm in my seat, quiet, as is my job, but if anyone actually did stand up and shout, 'Hallelujah!' I would have set aside my agnostic beliefs for a moment and jumped up in spirit as well? after all, when you have been writing about a topic several times a year for nearly a decade with little or nothing tangible to show for it, you develop a vested interest in seeing something like Library Square brought to fruition.

'It was almost nine years ago that I stood in front of Council in Halifax and asked Council to approve the Halifax Central Library project,' said Bruce Gorman, CEO of the Aurora Public Library, in his remarks to Council. 'And fortunately?' they did. That was the day that changed the trajectory of the City of Halifax forever. Looking back now, my hopes and dreams were realised like I couldn't have imagined?' [and] right now, here tonight, the same opportunity is here in Aurora. I never thought I would have

this opportunity to be a part of something [like this] again but I do.

?It is important that you realise how important tonight is here in Aurora. I come from experience; this is a golden opportunity for everybody here in Aurora to step up and make today, this day, the day we say, 'Aurora changed forever.'

Well, that certainly made me sit up in my seat.

Will Thursday, March 21, turn out to be the day Aurora changed forever? It's too early to tell, but it seems well on the way.

If anything, it is certainly the beginning of a new chapter, and I can't wait to see how it all turns out.

People might assume that people in this profession are, by nature, jaded pessimists, but I remain ? as someone who has always been a proponent of Aurora stepping outside of its relatively staid comfort zone and taking a bold move towards the future ? optimistic about Library Square's prospects.

Thursday's meeting also prompted me to dig a bit deeper and re-read some of the earliest stories I wrote about Library Square.

Some of the briefest mentions date back to 2010, but the more substantive stuff turned up in the spring of 2012, with the story 'Redevelopment ideas are in the air for Downtown Aurora.' The article, dated April 2, touched upon the bold vision of then-Councillor Evelyn Buck for the Victoria and Church lands.

At the time, Councillor Buck suggested the old homes of the Aurora Public Library and Seniors' Centre meet the wrecking ball for something much larger, all supported by Aurora's Hydro Reserves.

'[The sale of Aurora Hydro] was a very difficult decision to make and even now I am not sure it was the right decision,' she said. 'But what will make it a right decision is if we replace the Hydro with another asset of equal or better value.'

I can't argue with that.

An adequate replacement, she argued, was a multi-storey building (check!) with space for community groups (check), a youth space (done elsewhere, the Aurora Family Leisure Complex, in the intervening years) and multiple levels of underground parking (well, we can't have everything).

What we're getting in the Library Square plans
now is a bit less grandiose but, in my opinion, no less exciting ? and I'm
excited to be in on the ground floor as an observer to see how this will all
unfold.