

BROCK'S BANTER: Make it Count

Make It Count in the Home Stretch

By Brock Weir

It is hard to believe that at this time next week, the adrenaline and exhilaration members of Aurora's 2014 - 2018 Council will feel as well as the disappointment and even anxiety that might be felt by those falling short of the Top 8 for Council will begin the inevitable fade into memory as everyone gets back to their normal, everyday lives and, ultimately, down to business.

I can only imagine what the candidates themselves are feeling but, from my perspective, it has been quite a whirlwind.

Candidates have risen and fallen in public estimation, issues have ballooned or receded, while some attempts to contrive issues have fizzled almost immediately upon ignition.

However Aurorans decide to vote on Monday, it will be very interesting to see which visions ultimately resonated with them. For some voters, the decision on who to vote for, particularly for the Mayor's Office, was a foregone conclusion months ago, but the same likely can't be said for Council. After all, who could have possibly anticipated 28 candidates vying for just eight seats?

It is also interesting to compare and contrast this election campaign to the one just four years ago. Then, although there were five individuals running for the Mayor's seat, things seemed relatively clear cut. While some Aurorans were very passionate about the incumbent and her record, there were many (enough to be considered a majority at the polls) who were very much against it, and looked to the four alternatives for change.

Issues cropped up, healthy debates were had in all corners, and the results were clear.

I am not getting that sense this time around.

In the absence of candidates focusing on one or two key issues during this campaign, energies appear to be spent more often than not on the trivial, absurd and personal.

Witness the spectacle at last week's All Candidates' meeting hosted by Sport Aurora.

At the outset, all candidates who participated should be commended for doing so - particularly those incumbents whose support for Sport Aurora itself has been less than stellar, from the organizing body's perspective.

Those asking questions on Sport Aurora's behalf made their positions very clear, as did the candidates in question. Some may have felt they had stepped into the Lion's Den to defend their positions on Sport Aurora and the Aurora Sports Hall of Fame, but I guess all is fair in love and politics.

For some, the highlight of the evening was the debate over the Mayor's Charity Golf Tournament and, the word of the evening, 'bullshit.' In my opinion, the word itself is irrelevant. After all, can any of us feign innocence of never uttering the phrase? I hardly think so. But to see the gasps and flailing from half the audience in attendance, one would think the crowd was just waiting to bust out their interpretation of Aunt Pittypat after a failed audition for *Gone With The Wind*. There wouldn't have been enough smelling salts to go around.

If candidates decide to make this word an election issue in these last few days, so be it. But is that the kind of election any of us want? Aurora would be best served if one focused on the people hoping to represent them next week, the issues they stand for, the issues they don't, and what they hope to do.

Unfortunately, those hoping to clarify any lingering doubts in their mind by going onto social media and judging how well their perspective candidate plays with others have, undoubtedly, been in for a rude awakening with Council candidates sparring with each other on a variety of very personal matters.

Verbal sparring is nothing new, particularly on social media, but when one candidate in particular tweets about the children of one candidate, or uses the hashtag #whitetrash to describe the spouse of another, it adds nothing to public discourse. It might, however, give voters a sneak peek of what they might be buying on Monday - not unlike someone handing out cheese cubes at the local supermarket.

So, in the last few days of an election, in the absence of any true issues, one can only hope that all candidates play nice in the remaining hours they have left in the sandbox and, while the soothing grains wiggle between your toes, consider what you want to bring to the table, consider what voters expect you to bring to the table, and think hard on how you can deliver.

Best of luck to all candidates, and please remember to exercise your democratic right to vote on Monday!