

## BROCK'S BANTER: No Heartbreakers

No Heartbreakers in the Home Stretch

By Brock Weir

I have become known in some quarters as somewhat of a sucker for a bit of pomp and circumstance. In my view, it is not something of which to be particularly shameful, so why not embrace it?

There's nothing wrong with a bit of dignity, is there?

Of course not. Unless, of course, you are the kind of person who thrives on just the opposite.

To be frank, in recent weeks, I have questioned just what side of the fence I was on. After Council made their decision to go forward with the process they chose to fill Chris Ballard's vacancy, I was a bit surprised at how eagerly I was anticipating a relative Gong Show, the likes of which hadn't been seen since the Great Cultural Centre Fiasco of the first half of this term.

Which member of Council would use the opportunity to grill perceived political foes? Which candidates would take the opportunity to vent their collective spleen of what could have been an endless stream of grievances against this Council, the previous Council (or even the Council before that) about perceived slights, inequities, or, the perennial favourite, harping against property taxes?

The mind reeled with the possibilities, but nothing that exciting transpired and, at the end of the day, I am thankful for it.

Although some people have expressed mixed reviews of how things transpired on July 29, whether they were dissatisfied with the process, flummoxed by the choice, or throwing out negative predictions on what they think will come of the choice, the truth is the proceedings had a surprising air of dignity.

Considering all the possibilities of what could have happened, I feel confident you might agree ? unless you are one of the 17 who ultimately went home that afternoon empty handed.

In many quarters around Town, and even within these pages, there was an unusual sense of doom and gloom about the process in the lead-up to the main event.

How difficult it would be for Mayor and Council to be in a position of having to make their votes public, argued some.

Imagine having to sit in the audience after you've made your pitch to Council as, one by one, the votes are revealed and not one of them was for you, argued another.

Still, others argued the votes should be made behind closed doors rather than at the table, also in the name of dignity.

Personally, I didn't buy into any of these arguments. Sure, it had the potential to be a disaster, but everyone involved seemed to be emotionally healthy adults, no strangers to public, corporate, or business life, sure in the knowledge that no matter how many people ultimately signed up for the race, there was only one seat to be had.

If they hadn't considered that possibility, maybe it wasn't the smartest move to sign up for potential heartbreak in the first place.

Everybody, however, held up well. Each candidate who was present when their name was called came up and succinctly made their pitch on why they would be the best man or woman for the job. Everybody seemed to be highly qualified with many qualities to offer that would have been a boon to the Council table. Nobody seemed to have signed up just on a lark. They had evidently given a lot of thought to putting their name forward, recognized how they could best contribute, and hoped to have the opportunity.

The majority of the candidates even withstood one or two very interesting questions from Councillor Evelyn Buck, which provided, I believe, some valuable insight into how most candidates would have tackled some of the more divisive decisions, projects and proposals that have been faced by this Council. It might have been a decision made in the interests of time but, curiously, other Council members, with the exception of Councillor Paul Pirri, rarely took advantage of the opportunity.

After the pitches and the questions, it was then up to Aurora's Deputy Clerk to hand out specially printed cards to each Council member for them to cast that all important vote. Those deliberations were made silently, while the Deputy Clerk stood watch until everyone was finished.

?CHRIS BALLARD'S SEAT WAS SO EMPTY ? ?

?HOW EMPTY WAS IT??

?WELL, I'LL TELL YOU. CHRIS BALLARD'S SEAT WAS SO EMPTY IT NEEDED

18 BLANKS TO FILL IT!?

Oddly enough, the tension in the room was palpable and a thought went through my mind that, dignity be damned, let's relax things just a little bit, play the theme music from Match Game, and have Mayor and Council flip the cards themselves making the big

reveal. Before I had a chance to earnestly consider which members of Council would be our own equivalents to Brett Somers and Charles Nelson Reilly, the first round of voting was done and it was off to round two.

The vote for Don Constable was clinched on the second.

By the end of the first round, candidates that didn't receive a vote began to leave, but many stuck it out to the bitter end to see just who would be crowned the victor. Some seemed to register surprise at the ultimate choice, as some had already assumed the appointment would have been a foregone conclusion for either of the two other former councillors in the race, but applause was hearty and Councillor Constable received an enthusiastic welcome around the table.

## **NOW WHAT?**

Now that the seat is filled, the question now turns to just what Council can accomplish in the handful of meetings left in the 2010 ? 2014 term. While many residents debated the merits of the appointment process, questioning the point of the whole affair considering there are so few meetings left on the calendar, there is quite a lot that could be done.

Next week, for instance, Council is set to go into what promises to be a thorough debate over the future of the proposed Joint Operations Centre, in a meeting that will focus on awarding contracts to make the facility a reality.

Whichever way the chips fall, it will be an issue we are likely to hear far more about after the August 12 meeting as candidates for Mayor and Council pick their sides and saddle up their hobby horses to ride into the October 27 Municipal Election.

Potential controversy aside, there are also opportunities. Last week's Council meeting provided plenty of food for thought on Aurora's Downtown Core, how to spruce it up, get people walking around once again, and any opportunities to be had working together with Aurora United Church to use their lot to everyone's best advantage.

No matter how much they spoke about this, however, conversations kept circling back to the all-important issue of Library Square. Now that Council is once again firing at full capacity, it is time to seriously revisit that issue again and actually make a final ? or even an interim ? decision on what to do with that land before the end of the term.

It is a decision that has had to be made for 12 years and, following the appointment of Councillor Constable, there is now one less voice at the table to claim making a decision 12-years-on is somehow a rush job.

Strike while the iron is lukewarm at the very least.