

BROCK'S BANTER: The 15-and-4-Year Itch

By Brock Weir

You don't need to tell me twice that some things simply get better with age.

As an avowed fan of classic television, this philosophy is practically a way of life, but other people live it in different ways. For some, there is nothing better than a practically ancient bottle of wine, being uncorked after the better part of a century. For others, few things pleasantly tickle the palate more than a piece of cheese which has been left to its own devices to achieve tangy perfection. And, for carnivores? Well, a perfectly aged steak can just hit the spot.

What is one thing that book lovers, car lovers, self-described fashionistas and movie buffs have in common? They will all agree a real classic never truly goes out of style.

The old adage goes that with experience comes wisdom and, as far as old adages go, that is one which holds particularly true, with the exception of the most willfully ignorant amongst us.

Other things, however, simply do not get better with age.

Unless you are truly desperate, chances are aged vegetables are not necessarily your bag. Nor likely are undergarments that rely on interwoven elastics to keep everything that needs to be contained, well, contained. After all, a rapidly disintegrating elastic band can only hold so much?oomph.

For the more important things in life, you never want to leave things up to chance.

Say, for example, you're a newlywed living in your first home. While the days of building homes from the ground up yourself have largely passed, chances are you take great pride in painting, decorating and making it truly your home from the inside out. When the one year mark comes around and it is time to change the batteries in your smoke detector, what is the likelihood of foregoing your safety in the name of sentiment, knowing that you and your spouse installed it in that all important nesting period.

I would also venture a guess you wouldn't necessarily sleep better sure in the knowledge you salvaged a cool looking Cold War era fire extinguisher from a soon-to-be-demolished landmark for its kitsch value when brand-new, recently charged devices can be picked up at any number of hardware stores and gladly inspected regularly by Central York Fire Services.

It is with this in mind I watched Monday's events unfold at Town Hall.

As someone who frequently bemoans the lack of public participation in this Town, it warmed the heart to see so many concerned residents turn out for a standing-room-only meeting to discuss the best way forward to tackle any issues arising out of any changes to the now-closed Highland Gate Golf Club.

Going into the meeting, I would have placed my money on most residents being on the same page, united in the idea that, whatever happens, they wanted a fair and equal say in the future of their neighbourhoods.

I should have known better. After all, this is Aurora, and even the most straightforward of ventures rarely turn out that way.

Although residents ultimately voted to move forward with one voice and collaborate, it was certainly an arduous road to get to that point.

Although the meeting had been organized by one particular resident who took it upon himself to get into action and mobilize the rest of the community for the cause, these efforts were almost sidelined by a former ratepayers group formed under similar circumstances around the same land in question.

The problem, of course, is this extant ratepayers group was formed a quarter-of-a-century ago and hadn't been convened in over 15 years, well beyond the parameters of ratepayers groups registered in Aurora, which are required to meet annually.

?It is too soon to appoint any kind of executive,? said one proponent of the defunct Highlands Community Ratepayers Association, noting it is also too soon to weigh in on its merits. ?It is a non-profit, registered corporation. Yes, it has been dormant, but that doesn't mean it can't be reactivated. It offers lots of protections, it offers liability, it offers a great deal of experience, so whether we go forward with the old ratepayers' association, or this brand new one I think we just need time to think about it. We need to know who else is in the community, who wants to step forward.?

Noble sentiments, to be sure, but if the dormant ratepayers group was keen to continue its initial success from 25 years ago, one would think if they were the best people to run it they would have been on the ball with this one and reactivated themselves to preserve the best interests of the community when it became clear some months ago they would likely have to repeat their initial battle.

Sometimes, in the face of fresh concerns, it is best to wipe the slate clean and start anew.

THE FOUR YEAR ITCH

As the 2010 ? 2014 Council Term comes to a close this week, it is hard to believe four years have passed since the overwhelming shakeup on the campaign trail the last time around. It seems like only yesterday there was the uncertainty of what to expect from a group populated by a majority of newcomers and what they would bring to the table.

In the early days, many of them spent a great deal of time ?righting? what they felt were some of the ?wrongs? of the previous Council. With this out of the way, they set about leaving their own individual marks on the Town.

Grand ideas were presented to Council. Some took liftoff, while others ? for better or worse ? fizzled at the table for any variety of reasons.

Some Councillors point to the renovations at the Aurora Family Leisure Complex and the continuing construction of the Joint Operations Centre as among the most important achievements of the outgoing term. Others, however, feel very differently.

Councillors came and went ? goodbye Chris, and hello Don! ? but even if proceedings could get a bit monotonous at times, it was rarely truly dull.

A FOND FAREWELL

In the lead-up to last month's election, there was only one certainty: at minimum there would be two new faces joining Council. Politics clearly didn't fully get back into Councillor Constable's system over the summer, and he did not seek re-election, and Councillor Gallo throwing his hat into the Mayoral ring ensured that either he or Mayor Dawe would not be returning to the table come December 2.

As it turns out, there will be three new faces around the table, while Councillors Evelyn Buck and John Gallo, will be departing Town Hall, despite their hard-fought campaigns and respective electoral records, which are nothing to sneeze at, particularly in the lengthy record of Councillor Buck.

On a personal level, it was a pleasure reporting on each of these councillors. Both certainly kept things interesting, particularly in this outgoing term, and gave us no shortage of things to report about. They were both hard-working Councillors who, although they have had drastically different ways to approach the Town's business, both worked hard to represent their particular constituencies. Both still have a wealth to offer the community, and I certainly hope they will continue their involvement in the civic life of Aurora, regardless of which path they ultimately choose ? and hopefully we will see them both back on the campaign trail in 2018!