

Civic engagement plans not enough for Gallo bid



By Brock Weir

Councillor John Gallo came into the race with a vision of greater engagement among Aurora residents as a whole, but it wasn't enough to secure him the Mayor's seat on Monday.

While voters leaving several polling stations throughout election day told The Auroran they were impressed by the energy, ideas, and engagement ? particularly on the east side of Aurora ? Councillor Gallo brought to the race, it did not ultimately translate to a win, garnering just 4,106 votes to Geoffrey Dawe's 8,903.

Celebrating his campaign at the Aurora Soccer Club on Industrial Parkway South, of which he has been a long-time and active member, Councillor Gallo paid tribute to the support he received throughout the campaign in a musical interlude dedicated to his wife, Anita.

?'[Volunteers] told me on the first day of the campaign you are one lucky guy to have Anita and you better do something special for her,' he said, in a musical patter. 'There is no question this was a magical mystery run. Anita, there were some key people I have already mentioned that have helped in an extraordinary way [but] this whole thing would have fallen completely if it wasn't for you. I love you more than you will ever know.'

The cornerstone of Councillor Gallo's campaign was dubbed 'Imagine Aurora 2031' and at its heart was a 10 Point Plan. The first point was to establish a Citizen's Advisory Task Force dedicated to land use and transportation, housing and neighbourhoods, economic and business, town facilities and services, and creativity and innovation.

The second was to bring a new hotel and convention centre to Aurora with the third dedicated to developing a Downtown Revitalization Strategy focused on implementing the Aurora Promenade Study.

'Creative' housing to meet the needs of young and old residents was the fourth campaign plank, with transit being the fifth. Protecting the local environment, particularly in light of Ontario's upcoming review of Oak Ridges Moraine legislation was point six, followed by increased collaboration at the Regional table.

Rounding out the Top 10 were improvements to local 'business climate and job growth', the 'development of community services to support local quality of life aspirations,' and increased transparency at Town Hall through the creation of a 'Citizens Bill of Rights.'