

Council should focus on unfinished priorities: Kim

By Brock Weir

Whether it's the development of Library Square, laying the groundwork for a new multiuse recreation centre, or hammering out new deals with Aurora's Cultural Partners, Aurora has a lot of priorities on the go right now, and there should be a few more checkmarks on the list before tackling much more, according to Councillor Harold Kim.

Council resumes next Tuesday, having been on summer recess since July 11 and, when elected officials are back at the table, there will be plenty of initiatives to keep them busy, he says.

“As there are 14 months or so left in our term, the focus on Council is really to ensure much of the priorities we have committed to for this term is completed,” he says. “I really want staff to just focus on open priorities that are out there right now.”

From Councillor Kim's perspective, it has been an eventful term so far.

One of the most important checkmarks on the to-do list, he says, is securing Mavrinac Park, a six acre parcel of open space residents fought to keep parkland, for the community. Set to be complete later this fall, he said it is a key accomplishment Council can be proud of.

In a similar vein, another cornerstone has been making a decision for demolishing the former Aurora Public Library and Seniors' Centre buildings on Victoria Street.

“The demolition is very symbolic in that there is no turning back,” he says. “Unlike previous Councils, they made their best efforts to moving it forward over the last two or three decades even, but I am happy to be a part of Council where we're really going to put in a marker and there is no turning back. I think that will also be a key objective for Council in the fall, which is to keep that momentum going and get that RFP, architect and designer for a more detailed design of Library Square.”

Indeed, the RFP is slated to be discussed at the very next outing of Council, with the winning bid to be awarded to The Planning Partnership to take the Cultural Precinct plan over the finish line.

In the meantime, there will be plenty to discuss with Aurora's so-called “Cultural Partners” ranging from the Aurora Cultural Centre to the Aurora Historical Society.

Earlier this year, Councillor Kim offered a notice of motion to look at how these Cultural Partners operate and how the Town funds them to look for more efficiencies and a better funding model.

Although the motion raised a number of questions around the table, it was ultimately approved by Council.

“In the past, we had all our cultural partners come to Council hat in hand with their budget needs for the next year and I don't think any successful organization can function on a year to year basis,” says Councillor Kim. “That is essentially living in subsistence and survival mode and what I would like is to provide the Cultural Partners with the long-term funding model so they can plan long term and be successful at it.”

“Some people thought when I introduced the motion it was about cost cutting, but quite the opposite. If they give Council a long-term vision that looks successful, that provides a service to residents, then I am all for giving them what they need to provide great cultural service to our residents. I am happy with that and I know our CAO is working diligently [to come back with the next steps this fall] which is putting a concrete vision on paper as to what that funding model will look like, what the alignment of cultural services will look like.”

The fall could also lay the groundwork for significant change down the road for Aurora's sports and recreation community. A further notice of motion from the Councillor called on staff to incorporate budget funding for a new multiuse recreation centre in the 2018 budget.

Budget talks will begin this fall, and Councillor Kim says this will be a first step in addressing a growing issue.

“Our population is increasing,” he says. “It is expected to continue to increase over the next three to five years and we need to ensure that our sports facilities are not playing catch up, but we build in advance of the need.”

Addressing these needs would work hand in hand with the shortage of local baseball diamonds voiced by the Aurora King Baseball Association for local kids. With this shortage, teams are having to seek out additional diamond time in Newmarket and as far away as Nobleton.

“Even two [diamonds] won't be sufficient but it goes a long way in helping Aurora provide the baseball facilities to meet the growing demands of the sport for youth and children,” he says.

An additional initiative of Councillor Kim's is set to take place once again next Saturday, September 9.

The Aurora Multicultural Festival will take place for the second year running, this time in Town Park and it is expected to be bigger

and better than ever.

?In its second year, I hope the residents continue to participate and give feedback on how that has to grow and look,? says Councillor Kim of the Festival. ?As it is the second year, I hope this year and every year it grows and better reflects the dynamic and cultural cross section of our Town.?