

UPDATED: Don Constable selected to fill Council vacancy



(Don Constable takes the oath of office as his wife Cathy, and fellow candidate Gerald Miller look on. Auroran photo by Brock Weir)

By Brock Weir

Aurora Council selected Don Constable to join them at the table Tuesday afternoon, taking over the seat left vacant by MPP Chris Ballard last month.

The newly re-minted Councillor Constable served as a member of Aurora Council from 1991 ? 1993.

He was selected after two rounds of voting.

In all, 18 Aurora residents applied to fill the spot. 14 of these candidates came forward to make their pitch at a Special Council meeting on July 29 on why they were the best person for the job.

In the first round of voting, Constable received three votes from Councillors Paul Pirri, John Abel, and Sandra Humfries. Former councillor Bob McRoberts came in second with two votes from Councillors Evelyn Buck and Michael Thompson, while candidates lawyer Gerald Miller and realtor Linda Stephens picked up a vote apiece from Mayor Geoffrey Dawe and Councillor Wendy Gaertner, respectfully.

Councillor John Gallo was not at the meeting.

Constable clinched it on the second round of voting, receiving a fourth vote from Mayor Dawe.

In his pitch to Council, Constable highlighted his roots in the community, which go back 34 years. He cited his business credentials in the environmental and green technology sector, as well as his work as a volunteer, fundraiser and member of numerous community organizations, such as the Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority, Heart and Stroke Foundation, as well as being a founding member of Magna's Wild Wild West Hoedown.

?I am aware of all the community issues, good and bad, and in the knowledge of how the Town works, how Council works, how committees, work, and [I certainly have] a good idea of the structure and operations of the community,? he said. ?I have committed to an opportunity to sit and fill a vacancy for the next three months. I am ready to roll up my sleeves and get started. Hopefully I have the opportunity to give back to Aurora again.?

When asked whether he was surprised with how the vote went, Constable said "very much so."

"I thought for sure it would have been Bob [McRoberts]," he said. "Bob is certainly seasoned. Bob is a great guy, and I was actually impressed by the amount of people I didn't know who spoke today. They all bring a lot to Council and I hope they go and try to get elected because I think they would do a great job."

Constable said he had been considering a run in the October 27 election, but after making the decision not to, this "opportunity to give back" came up. His experience, he said, will "help over the next few months."

It was the sense of "rolling up his sleeves to get things done" that impressed Councillor Humfries in casting her vote. Although she was not as familiar with Constable as some of the others who put their names forward, she said she was also impressed by his résumé of giving back.

"It really hits close to home, having someone who is really close to the community," she said.

Councillor Abel expressed a similar sentiment, adding Constable's contributions to Hoedown stood out for him.

"I had narrowed it down to about four, and I just thought I would like to see Don Constable in the mix," he said. "I was convinced he would get the majority, so I am very pleased to welcome him. He wasn't going to run, he had served before [and I considered] his community involvement and volunteering."

Although he ultimately turned his support to Constable, Mayor Dawe said there were statements made by candidates which helped make his decision.

"What I was really looking for were people who were making statements like: 'I want to listen, I want to make an informed opinion, I want to listen to others, see what they say, form my opinions, and then I want to make my decision,'" he said. "I was looking for that independent aspect."

Following the second round of votes, however, Councillors Buck and Thompson were firm in their support for McRoberts.

For them, his continued engagement at Town Hall after he left office was a factor to consider.

"I always stated I wanted someone who was experienced and we saw Bob many times in these Council Chambers throughout the term," said Councillor Thompson. "He has been engaged, he has participated, and I know he follows closely so we can hit the ground running on any of the issues we have left in the end of the term. When we started this process, I prefaced it by saying I was looking for someone who had the experience because we all know it is a steep learning curve on Council, and so it be Don, be it Bob, be it Grace [Marsh], they all had those qualities I was looking for."

Added Councillor Buck: "The last time [McRoberts] was a candidate, which, in my mind, is still current, he got such great support from the community."

Stephens had the support from Councillor Gaertner in both rounds. Ms. Stephens is a former member of Town Staff who worked in various departments, as well serving as a volunteer coach with the Aurora Youth Soccer Club and with other organizations. She saw herself as being able to provide a "seamless transition" at the table and Councillor Gaertner said she agreed.

"I voted for the person I thought was the best [and] would really contribute something to Council," she said. "She has been very involved [in the Town] and her father has been very involved. I think she has her feet on the ground. I liked her experience having worked at the Town and thought she would really understand the workings of Council."