

INSIDE AURORA: PA Meeting

By Scott Johnston

"Good evening, and welcome to Procrastinators Anonymous."

The people seated in a semi-circle looked up as the facilitator continued.

"Now, we have a few new folks with us tonight. Would any of you like to start? And remember," he said, with a smile, "We all get a turn, so there's no point putting it off. How about you, ma'am?" he said, indicating a lady across from him.

"Oh, well, I..." she stammered, before gushing, "I'm never on time for appointments, and personal commitments. I don't know why, but I just put off leaving the office or my house, and before I know it, I'm late."

A few heads nodded in understanding.

"And you, sir?"

"I can never get things done around the house," said a man a few chairs over. "My leaves are never raked up before the first snowfall, the Christmas lights are up year-round, and even my 'to do' list has 'to do' lists on it."

"See, it's not so hard to open up. That's the first step in tackling your procrastinatory demons. And what seems to be your issue?" he asked a man sitting quietly to the side.

"Well, I'm part of a small group of elected officials," he said, looking around and shifting nervously in his seat. "The rest of them don't know I'm here."

"Don't worry, sir. No one's judging. Why have you joined us tonight?"

"We're always putting off making decisions."

"What sort of decisions?"

"There's planning, to start. In our town there's a downtown cultural area. Citizens are anxious to have the space redeveloped to meet the needs of the municipality. We've looked at it for years. There have been studies, surveys, consultations, expert advice..."

"Sounds like you have more than enough information to make a decision."

"You'd think so, but we never do. It seems all we can say is 'Can staff bring us a report back on that?'"

"Well, if that's the only example..."

"It's not," said the man. "There's finances. We have this huge fund of money we obtained years ago through the sale of a public asset. People have been looking to us for years to provide direction on how it's to be spent to best benefit the town, and we can't decide. It's just sitting in the bank earning 0.002%, or whatever interest rates are these days."

Hitting his stride, he continued. "Then there's the clear bag program for curbside trash pickup, the redevelopment of our main street through town? I don't know," he sighed, "I guess we get distracted easily by other issues."

The facilitator nodded. He has seen this distraction excuse before.

"Surely you must have made a little progress on something."

"Well, we did recently finalize updates to the tree bylaw; who can cut down how many trees? that sort of thing. It had been brought forward at meetings many times, before we finally just made a decision."

"You made a decision? That's excellent!"

"But after all that time and discussion, it amounted to only a minor tweak. And it didn't address the main issue it was brought forward for in the first place."

"Yes, but it shows you've made progress."

"You really think so?"

"Of course. You can build on that, and before you know it, you'll make another decision!"

"Maybe we will," the man said, a slight glimmer of hope in his eye. With growing excitement he exclaimed "maybe even on that cultural area!"

"That's the spirit!"

The facilitator radiated enthusiasm, but based on what he'd heard, he feared there'd be many more requests for staff reports before that ever happened.

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