

POLITICS AS USUAL: Swinging back into action

By Alison Collins-Mrakas

This past week Council returned to action and got down again to the business of the Town after a two week absence.

I had a gander at their agenda and was blown over by the sheer volume of materials they had to review. Literally hundreds of pages of agenda items to review and discuss ? a number of which spoke to fairly discussion intensive issues such as the final budget numbers, a proposed increase in Council remuneration, and the transfer of the Town's Historical assets from AHS to the municipality just to name a few.

In short, some fairly significant discussions sandwiched in between multiple zoning applications, site plan agreements and committee reports that were also on the agenda. All in all, a rather ambitious agenda for a 3 ½ hour meeting.

If past experience holds true, then this week's Council meeting will prove pretty much the same given the contentious nature of some of the items noted above we are sure to witness a rehash of the matters again for the benefit of the cameras.

Maybe not.

Though, I hope in time that that particular practice of political pantomime will end given that General Committee meetings are now also broadcast ? via live streaming video. As both Council meetings and General Committee meetings are accessible and readily watchable by the general public ? there will be no need for special ?performance? days anymore.

I missed last week's meeting which was disappointing as I was very interested in the discussion about the transference to the Town of the collection of historical artifacts currently collecting dust ? and unfortunately quite a bit of wear and tear ? in storage.

The report from staff and the historical consultant was very thorough outlining a number of concerns with the current state of the collection and forwarding potential solutions such as options for display, storage, appropriate location(s) and comparators from other comparably sized municipalities with curated collections.

If you haven't read the various reports associated with this agenda item, I suggest you do. They are a fascinating read. There a lot of information about the collection. For example, it is noted that there are between 16,000 and 17,000 items in the collection and it represents a value of close to \$200,000 ? though some would argue the value of the collection to our community cannot be measured in mere dollars and cents. I was a bit alarmed to read that a sizeable number of the artifacts cannot be accounted for ? but perhaps that's just a wrinkle in the record keeping.

Council has decided to defer making a decision on transferring the collection despite the March 2013 deadline as they are waiting for the completion of the Cultural Master plan. It is expected to be completed in April 2013. So it is hoped then that following deliberations of the Master plan as well as the transfer agreement itself, by May or perhaps June of this year? the Sesquicentennial year ? that the Town's valuable historical artifacts will find a permanent home and the community at large will have greater access to their rich history as a result.

To end this week's column, I have an aside. While inaccurate comments generally require a response or at least a correction, personally, I am loathe to engage in a back and forth with anyone in the pages of a paper. I don't think it serves any useful purpose ? and worst of all - I think it bores you, the reader.

What I will say though is this ? it is also a futile exercise. If my message was not understood the first time, I doubt it will be when repeated a second time - regardless of how the message is worded. There's only so many ways a person can state the obvious. I have no doubt we will continue to see ad hominem attacks in various media. That is the prerogative of those that choose to express themselves in that manner. I however prefer to engage in arguments of substance. And that's all I'll say about that.

Until next week, stay involved, stay informed because this is, after all Our Town.