

?Recommended? candidates denounced flyer in the lead-up to election

By Brock Weir

Candidates vying for a place at the Council table in the lead-up to Monday's municipal election said they were ?disgusted? and ?livid? over a flyer circulating in select Aurora neighbourhoods last Wednesday purporting to endorse their campaigns.

Homes in certain areas of Aurora received ?door hangers? slamming the majority of the incumbent candidates seeking re-election for a litany of issues ranging from Aurora's recently approved Joint Operations Centre and the former Aurora Jazz+ Festival, which has since relocated to Newmarket.

Instead of stopping at advising voters on who not to vote for, the distributors, who are billed as ?Concerned Citizens of Aurora? went a step further by advising recipients which mayoral candidate to vote for, and provided a list of eight council candidates for their consideration.

The ?Citizens? endorsed John Gallo for mayor, as well as council candidates Roy Cohen, Wendy Gaertner, James Hoyes, Harold Kim, Alice Lalas, Tom Plamondon, Anthony Pullano, and Linda Stephens.

Rather than taking these endorsements as a shot in the arm, however, they say they are ?disgusted? and ?livid? by the campaign literature.

Mr. Gallo described his reaction as one of ?complete disgust? at the creators, particularly if they are among his supporters.

?It is not something I condone and in everything I have done I have stayed as positive as I could be, and I feel it is a nasty thing to do,? he said. ?I couldn't believe it until I saw it and tried to go through my head on who has possibly done this. It is either someone who is playing a nasty trick, or someone who thinks they are being helpful.?

Ms. Stephens said the content of the ad was ?slanderous?, particularly if it gives the impression that she endorses the claims.

?I have done everything I can to run a clean campaign,? she said. ?I have always believed if you have nothing nice to say then to not say anything. I know there is some behind-the-scenes vote pulling between different candidates and there is some animosity between candidates, but I have stayed away from that. To suddenly find myself blackballing specific candidates on a ballot, I am livid.

?Is it democratic in that people have a right to say what they feel? Yes, I suppose so, but to me it sounds like there is a real behind-the-scenes vendetta. I am horrified, livid and so devastated.?

Ms. Lalas said she was out on the campaign trail Wednesday afternoon in one of the neighbourhoods targeted. As she was handing out flyers at households she noticed her name on the door-hanger. Upon closer inspection, she rethought her campaign route that day in case they thought she was associated with it.

?I appreciate the endorsement, but I am not affiliated with them and do not actually want my name on there because I am not in favour of bashing other candidates or any of that pettiness,? she said.

Mr. Pullano says he first saw the flyer on social media and took immediately to Twitter to give his ?word of honour? he had nothing to do with it.

?I like the cartoons, but I had nothing to do with it,? he said. ?Whoever did this obviously wants it to look like it is from John Gallo and John would never have done that, at least without consulting us, or the people involved in the name game. Whoever did it is obviously trying to politically harm the current Council, and for their own reasons ? and they gave you the reasons. I think this was done independently by someone, not of the names on the list. A concerned group did it on their own initiative, that is what I think.?

He added he did not believe the flyer would negatively impact their campaigns as voters at this point had already made up their

minds.

In an email, Ms. Gaertner said she too knew nothing about the flyer in question until seeing a copy online and after receiving an email from Mr. Gallo.

?It is upsetting that anybody would do this,? she said.