

Risk is essential in advancing Aurora, says Deputy Mayor Kim



By Brock Weir

Councillor Harold Kim has an issue, and it lies with people who say Council members should shy away from taking risks.

"The magnitude of the reward is commensurate with the risk you take," said Councillor Kim last Tuesday night at the inaugural meeting of the 2018-2022 Council.

The top vote-getter in the October 22 Council stakes, Councillor Kim succeeds the late John Abel as Aurora's Deputy Mayor.

In his first address from this new position, the Councillor began his second term at the table by bringing big issues down to a local level.

Addressing his fellow Council members, he said it is his hope they all work well together "for the betterment of the community" regardless of whose ideas are being put forward.

"It is my hope that whichever and whomever's ideas move forward that we work as a team to get the project through to completion," he said. "In the end, each of us are proxies to the people. It is recognized that that part of politics is the existence of the official opposition where parties who aren't in power are expected to criticize those that are. However, the municipal arena is not partisan and for good reason; it is a community of people who live together in tight quarters. We see each other on the street, walking our dogs, grocery shopping and at the local community centres. My hope is that going forward we, as a community of neighbours, can work together for the success of this neighbourhood we call home, without personal agendas."

Citing work on the last Council that went towards laying the groundwork for the development of Library Square and the ongoing renovations at the historic Aurora Armoury to make way for a new campus of Niagara College's Canadian Food & Wine Institute, Councillor Kim said both were "worthwhile risks" for Aurora to take.

"There are those in Town who say we should not take any risk with Town resources, but I tell you what: the magnitude of the reward is commensurate with the risk you take," he said. "You know the saying: you can't take a hit unless you take the bat off your shoulders. Taking no risk means we do not advance the wellbeing of the Town. Essentially, it was status quo because we were hamstrung by fear."

"Municipalities are the best first responders to real social issues that affect our neighbourhoods and communities. I would like Aurora to be a conduit for dialogue on issues of social conscience at other levels of government. We have our ears to the ground. Dialogue begins with us. We may not have the budget at the municipal level [on some big ticket items] but we can certainly initiate a dialogue with the Province to get the ball rolling. We need the spirit of volunteerism to be alive and well in Aurora. Let's make it all our goals to make this happen."



WENDY GAERTNER

Wendy Gaertner began her fifth consecutive term on Council by outlining how she sees her role.

"I see my job as helping residents and local businesses solve problems, taking care of our community," said Councillor Gaertner, offering her gratitude for her campaign team and her two children, for their support and energy. "Going forward, now is the time to put protections in place for our stable neighbourhoods. They are long overdue.

"Planning Library Square is now underway. Some cautions though: adequate, accessible parking is required, for this community hub will not be inclusive for those with mobility challenges, including our seniors. To know if the approved cost and design of the Square is viable, engineering studies on underground water and the foundation of the Church Street School must be done now. It is crucial to have business operations and use plans in place before Council makes any final decision on the square. Taxpayers deserve to know how much this complex will cost them to run.

"I believe that this Council has the responsibility to do everything possible to mitigate causes and effects of climate change and severe weather. All our decisions, including designs for new buildings, should have higher regard for this reality.

"In closing, I hope that this Council will welcome community input and govern with caring and common sense."



SANDRA HUMFRIES

Councillor Sandra Humfries began her third term with a shout-out to, among others, her mother-in-law Beth Humfries, a third-generation Aurora resident.

"I hope you're proud of us because it is your legacy we're carrying on," said Councillor Humfries, her voice breaking at Tuesday's inaugural, highlighting legacy projects of the last Council, including the Armoury and Library Square.

"I am beyond honoured and beyond privileged to have gained your trust and confidence to represent you here on Council for another four years," she told the audience. "I had eight amazing years previous, another four will be exciting. The groundwork is laid ? Library Square, the Armoury ? we're going to have an incredible, amazing downtown that you're going to love. We are going to work really hard to do what you expect from us. We owe it to you and I know the great leadership we have this evening is going to get a lot of work done and we're going to have a lot of fun while doing it. I can't wait for the next four years!?"



MICHAEL THOMPSON

Councillor Thompson is also at the start of his third term and, at the first meeting of the new term, reiterated Mayor Mrakas' commitment to "get things done."

"It is an honour and a privilege to have been re-elected to once again serve and represent the residents of Aurora," said Councillor Thompson. "Although this will be my third term, I still find it just as exciting an experience as the first time I was elected, and I am very grateful for the trust and respect the community has given me. As I have done for the past eight years as a member of Council, I will continue to use my business expertise and experience to help provide leadership, strong financial management of our tax dollars, and a practical and common-sense approach to the issues."

"As we begin our new term of Council, I believe our residents have spoken very clearly about their expectations. They wanted an experience Council that will continue to work together to get things done ? and there is much to be done this term. In particular, I am looking forward to working with my colleagues on the completion of Library Square, the Armoury and our continuing efforts to revitalize our downtown core."



RACHEL GILLILAND

Rachel Gilliland is the lone newcomer to the Council table this term, having secured victory on her very first election campaign.

'Somebody asked me what was the one thing you feel helped you win the election and I thought, 'That's a good question,' because it was an answer

I just could not pinpoint,' she said. 'The more thought I gave to that question the more I realised there was no one thing: it was a multitude of things. There is no doubt in my mind that pounding the pavement and knocking on doors and connecting with the community was extremely important and rewarding. However, it was also the help I received from so many other people.

'Whether you helped me with my table displays, photographs, helped make flyers, were part of my sign team and editor, hosted a meet and greet, or simply just connecting between more people? It was all a huge role in my success. Now it's official; I am humbled, honoured and am proudly ready to serve the community.'



JOHN GALLO

Councillor John Gallo returns to the Council table with six years of experience under his belt, serving his first two years in the last two of the 2006 - 2008 Council, and the following four years after Aurora residents voted him to serve again. After running for mayor at the end of his term in 2014, he's back - and back with a promise.

'While the election is over and the expression of promises is thought to be over, I wanted to give you, the public, a promise: a promise to work hard, to represent you to the best interests and my ability and to make decisions that reflect your best interests,' he said, after thanking his wife Anita, son Dante and daughter Tosca for their support.

'Four years is a long time, a lot can be accomplished. I look forward to working with this new team. I can feel there is a sincere desire to move this Town forward in a positive direction and I am very glad to be a part of that. I also wanted to acknowledge the hard work and efforts of all the other candidates that ran in the election. It is not an easy thing to do to put your name out there for public scrutiny and sometimes praise. Their commitment to the Town has not gone unnoticed and I look forward to seeing their contributions in varying capacities.'