

Status of part-time Councillors continues to be political football

By Brock Weir

The issue of whether or not Aurora's Councillors should be considered part-time or full-time positions continues to be a topic of debate around the Council table.

The latest move to get this topic out in the open for a full discussion occurred last week through a Notice of Motion presented to Council by Councillor Evelyn Buck.

In her motion, Councillor Buck called for a Special Council Meeting to be added to the Municipal Calendar before September 12, which happens to be the cut-off date for nominations for the October 27 Municipal Election, to address the issue of Council compensation.

In her motion, she cites a report before Council last month which called on members to decide whether or not compensation for Mayor and Council should be a graded salary kept in line with how salaries for municipal employees are pegged. After a healthy debate, however, Council opted to keep the status quo for the time being and leave it for the 2014 - 2018 term to decide.

This, however, did not sit well with Councillor Buck.

"Members of Council salaries have not been revisited since the 2003 to 2006 term of Council," she said in her motion, calling for a meeting before September 12 to review the report. "[The meeting will review] the staff report and any other questions pertaining to Members of Council salaries, benefits, and status as part-time Councillors for the 2014 to 2018 Term of Council."

This meeting, however, is unlikely to happen before September 12 as Councillors rejected a bid to waive procedural bylaw and discuss the meeting request at last Tuesday's Council meeting.

"The reason I am asking for the procedure to be waived - and I am not in the habit of doing that - is to allow this motion to be dealt with tonight in order for the matter to be considered at a separate meeting," said Councillor Buck. "I am not asking for discussion to take place tonight, I am asking for staff to schedule a [Special Council Meeting] so that Council can consider the matter before then. If we don't consider the matter before then, we are going into an election without any candidates knowing what is involved [in salaries] and I believe there are a number of changes that need to be made, not just with the Council compensation."

For those voting against the motion, timing was everything - whether it was timing for public participation or getting to more pressing matters at hand.

"I think there are too many people away from the Town of Aurora in the month of August and I think it should come to a GC (General Committee Meeting) to be fully discussed with the public and, if the public want to come to us, for them to be able to [at] a GC."