

VOTE 2014: Incoming Council needs to eye legacy project, says candidate Carl Barrett



By Brock Weir

After living in Aurora for 17 years, and being active with his daughter in the local sporting community, Carl Barrett was looking to expand his horizons ? and has already found that ?eye-opener? at Town Hall.

The Council candidate has served on Aurora's Committee of Adjustment and his time sitting around the Council table in that capacity has spurred him to do more.

?I mulled [a Council run] through the summer and had a lot of discussions with my family and decided that even though there are 28 candidates it was probably still a good time to do it,? said Mr. Barrett, who signed up close to the wire, the second candidate to sign up on the final day of registration.

Looking over the past four years, Mr. Barrett says there has been ?some good cooperation and people generally working well together? despite a bit of divisiveness and, compared to the previous Council term, this is something he would like to see continue. And, if he can be a part of it, so much the better, he says.

A property manager and real estate investor by trade, Mr. Barrett says his background could contribute to the future development of properties, such as efforts already underway for Aurora's Joint Operations Centre. Alternative options to what has become a \$26 million project weren't adequately explored before it got the Council green light.

?It seems to be going pretty smoothly now [but] I have talked to a lot of people and they are a little concerned with how that went through and how it proceeded,? he says. ?I don't see that as an overarching issue, but it is one of the things I am hearing from people.?

Among the issues he sees as overarching, growth, transportation, and infrastructure make the cut, with transportation topping the list. As Aurora grows with the 2C development, it is only going to compound issues Aurorans already have in getting around the Town. It is high time to look to other municipalities ?straddling Yonge Street? and see what they have done to improve their overall situation.

?Driving around you come to know the places to avoid,? says Mr. Barrett. ?There will also be increased pressure on our infrastructure that is going to come from growth as well. How we prioritize our budget really needs to be our priority as well. We need to focus on areas that have the biggest need and obviously growth in 2C is going to impact us a lot.?

Over the next four years, Council should identify what he describes as a 'legacy project' to make their ultimate goal. If elected, he says he believes this particular legacy project could be found in moving forward with the Aurora Promenade Plan. From that point, Council can then move to take some of the tax burden currently shouldered by residents and onto a bevy of new businesses that could be attracted to Aurora.

'Part of our job as Councillors is to be a promoter of the Town and that, to me, is a full-time job,' he says. 'I know being a Councillor is a so-called part-time job, but full time we should be promoting the Town and trying to encourage people to get up here. We have to sell the benefits of where we are. There are commercial lands that are available on Leslie and the 404 and that has to be a huge draw for businesses to come up here.'

'That closeness to the highway and the fact it has now been extended is a real benefit if companies are doing business north of Aurora. Residential growth is coming, that is a foregone conclusion, and now we have an opportunity to get some more businesses up here like Bulk Barn and that is something I would really like to champion on Council.'

With less than two weeks before Aurorans go to the polls on October 27, Mr. Barrett is looking forward to getting out and meeting more people in the home stretch. Having new faces around the Council table is always a good thing in bringing new energy and enthusiasm to the Town's business, he says, but conversely there is also a significant learning curve.

'I have been a property manager for close to 25 years now and as a small business owner I think I understand how to implement projects,' he said. 'When we do projects like the Joint Operations Centre and the Leisure Complex renewal that is going on right now, that is a skillset that I have. I know it is staff's job to bring recommendations to Council and we have to be confident in their skills and their ability to make the right recommendations to us, but it is also an opportunity for us to look at these things and I think my skillset will lend itself well to the Council.'

'I am a good listener, I am a conciliator and I am a collaborator. I believe these are the traits we need as a Council. Everyone has their differing views and opinions but, at the end of the day, we need to have some sort of collaboration there.'