

VOTE 2014: Museum, youth space tops Councillor Humfryes' to do list

By Brock Weir

When Councillor Sandra Humfryes was first elected to Council in October 2010, she promised residents she would work hard to make a re-established Aurora museum a reality.

Now, with the Aurora Collection now under the auspices of the municipality and the Aurora Room at the Cultural Centre now secured as heritage space, a museum tops her to-do list as she looks ahead to the last few months of the current term.

‘Knowing these artefacts were being stored the way they were was a real burden for me,’ she says. ‘To have a museum come together [with the acquisition] was just a wonderful start to getting that museum reinstated. I can't wait to see who is going to be our official curator [that] will take our museum and our artefacts and ensure they are preserved and in good shape and we don't have a stagnant space.’

She says she envisions a ‘rotational space’ for students to come and embrace Aurora's heritage and how things have evolved.

‘I can't wait to have, hopefully by the end of this term, an official grand opening of our museum.’

If that doesn't come to pass, however, by the end of the term, she hopes to stick around and run again in this year's municipal election. A decision to run again has been something this first-time Councillor has given careful consideration over the last few months, and an issue she says she has tackled from many different angles.

The first one, she says, is whether residents feel she has done a good job of representing them.

‘I try my best to do what is right for the residents and how I feel about issues,’ she says. ‘I want to make sure we are making the right decisions

‘The last three years have been a big learning curve. The next four years will allow newer Councillors to have that experience and be able to go through the initiatives and that program without having that initial learning curve. It will allow us to accomplish things a little quicker and more efficiently and effectively. It is good to see some of the initiatives that are taking place that maybe we can help complete over the next term.’

This learning curve, she says, has been ‘incredibly rewarding’, but it is not something she necessarily anticipated when she first put her name forward nearly four years ago. Processes and procedures did not come easy, she says, but being effective has come with experience.

‘Following municipal government in the papers or viewing it on TV is very different from actually being there and actually performing the work!’ she says. ‘From the outside looking in you think you can hit the ground running, but absolutely not. I learn more every day and love every minute of it. It is a wonderful opportunity and I am very proud to be a part of it.’

Looking back, in addition to the museum, heritage issues feature among Councillor Humfryes' list of personal highlights of this term of Council, including new heritage property standards to ensure heritage homes are kept up and not left to languish and deteriorate beyond the point of repair, which has happened in several cases over the last five years, as well as moving forward with the Community Improvement Area, which will be considered in upcoming discussions over Aurora's operational budget.

‘I believe we have done a good job in honing in on how we perform the budget process,’ she says. ‘There is a lot of discussion around the table of how we can do better and be more efficient and effective in our planning. It has taken us a few years, but we have worked diligently in this last one and really went through it.

‘Working together as a team, we have really come through in trying to keep the tax burden as low as possible while continuing to

provide the service levels we need to.?

Looking ahead, also rising to the top of her to-do list is seeing Aurora's Youth Centre/Community Space for Youth come to fruition.

?It takes a village to raise a child and I feel our community needs that village centre where the youth can go,? she says.

?Our programming right now is scattered throughout the Town. We negotiate with schools and buildings to rent rooms and try to get our programming out there for the youth of Aurora. It would just be great to have that Centre open where they can all go and feel like they belong.

?I believe the experiences of kids gathering together to be able to see how strong they will become as youth in our community and adults that want to stay in our community. I believe that is a Centre that will really provide a great support structure for our youth to allow them to evolve and develop here.?