

Expect changes, but region's here to stay

Despite occasional hints during the past that the next two years will constitute his last term in municipal politics, Ward 4 regional Councillor Mike Armstrong says he won't leave until the issue which encouraged him to enter in the first place is satisfactorily resolved.

The subdivision plans of Focal Properties Ltd. were a big issue eight years ago when Councillor Armstrong - acclaimed



MIKE ARMSTRONG

last week for the second consecutive time - mounted his first council election campaign in the former town of Georgetown.

"I just want to finish the next two years and make sure (Focal's) out of the way," he commented this week, banking hopes on the urban boundary study launched this fall by council to assess the sewage treatment capacity of Georgetown facilities.

Coun. Armstrong said he thinks the large number of commuters living in Ward 4 may have had a lot to do with his acclamation, along with those of Ward 4 local councillors Marilyn Serjeantson and Harry Levy. People aren't necessarily unwilling to run, he explained; it's just a matter of not having enough time for the job on council.

"The Ward 4 resident is primarily a homeowner who

works in Brampton or Toronto and isn't in the community all day to get involved," he said. Asked about the region's recently-revealed \$600,000 budget deficit, Coun. Armstrong came to regional council's defence and pointed out that the deficit is not that great in relation to the overall regional budget. In addition, he noted, most of the deficit has since been recovered through reallocation of reserve funds.

"The region isn't going to be abolished," he commented. "If councillors don't want to make it work, they shouldn't even be there."

However, he said, regional government will continue to evolve and improve as the province gradually eliminates duplicate services offered at the municipal level.

While expressing pleasure over town council's progress thus far on the Focal issue, budget restraint and the newly library-theatre complex, Coun. Armstrong acknowledged that Halton Hills' serious shortage of rental accommodations and slow residential growth will pose problems for the incoming council.

Beyond the coming term, his own political plans are uncertain.

"I'll have put ten years in on council by the time I'm finished the next term," he noted. "Who knows? Something else may come up and arouse my interest to the point where I'll decide I'd like to stay on."

Coun. Armstrong nevertheless admitted he's considering retiring from the local political scene after this term, pointing out that his double duty as regional councillor and full-time salesman at Pete Masson Motors often keeps him away from home most weekdays. In two years, he said, he may well choose to retire from council and clear the way for some "younger, fresher person to move in and take the job".

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Terry Grubbe

"I'm not saying there's any problem with the nursing homes we have," Coun. Grubbe said. "But the bylaw would give them better credibility."

Coun. Grubbe said her main satisfaction during her first term of office was the inauguration of the weekly drop-in where citizens were able to talk over their concerns on a

one-to-one basis with local and regional councillors, and often the mayor.

"There were a lot of issues that never would have made it to the formal agenda. The opportunity Acton people had to talk with their local, regional representatives and the mayor, on a one-to-one basis, in my opinion, brought government back to the people for the first time since 1974."

WARD 4 STANDS BY ITS INCUMBENTS

Levy seeks industrial 'showcase'

"I've run in many campaigns before, but this is the first time I have ever received an acclamation," Ward 4 Councillor Harry Levy said, commenting on the uncontested return of Mayor Pete Pomeroy and six town councillors following the close of nominations last Monday.

A 14-year veteran of town politics in England and an active participant in local municipal affairs since 1969, Coun. Levy said he wasn't exactly sure if the acclamation of all three Ward 4 representatives is what the people really wanted.

The lack of any contentious campaign issues may have discouraged some people from running, Coun. Levy said during an interview with The Herald Sunday.

"But it may be that the people are well satisfied with their representatives," he said, noting that Ward 4 councillors have the best overall attendance record at council meetings.

As council's financial committee chairman, he said he is pleased with the teamwork of Mayor Pomeroy and the 12 councillors put into the last term of office.

"We haven't got the town into any new debts," Coun. Levy said. "We've pretty well lived out of our pockets and we're better off financially than any other municipality in Halton region."

Besides the library-theatre complex and the Gordon Alcott Arena, Coun. Levy said that a roads maintenance study indicates that Halton Hills "has

caught up quite a bit" in improving town traffic arteries, a program which could cost the town \$18 million over the next ten years.

While Coun. Levy said that "council has been going along at a very even profile in the past," he admits that the next two years could be tougher as the town comes to grips with a \$27 million Focal Properties Ltd. lawsuit and the need to increase industrial growth.

"The town must not lose," he said of the Focal suit charging the town with breach of contract on a number of alleged agreements negotiated by previous councils. The developer says that the town is trying to stop Focal plans to build a 1,740 home subdivision in Georgetown's southeast end. The suit is currently in limbo



HARRY LEVY

pending the outcome of an urban area and sewage capacity study which will determine whether the town's sewage treatment facility can handle the additional growth.

"Personally, I enjoy the green belt around Georgetown," Coun. Levy said, "and I don't like big cities where everybody is a stranger."

Scorning Brampton's Queen Street "jungle of signs," Coun. Levy said Georgetown's Guelph Street corridor could become the "showcase for Halton Hills" by increasing industrial, rather than commercial use, of the land around it.

"It would be nice to come down Guelph Street and feel you're in the country, but still in a developed area," he said. Dry- or low water-use industry should be enticed into the town, he added, because "it enhances the whole area."

The town will also be working on creating more open space parkland in the future, Coun. Levy said, and is already looking at a number of as-yet undisclosed sites for park development under the new master parks plan. He noted that the increased popularity in soccer in Georgetown has put additional pressure on planners for more soccer pitches.

Despite his success as a municipal politician, Coun. Levy says he is not planning any leaps into the provincial or federal political arena in the future.

"I don't want to get involved in strict party politics," he said.

Enjoys second role as town councillor

Incumbent Ward 4 Councillor Marilyn Serjeantson is counting twin blessings this month: the Oct. 11 birth of a fourth child, Garth, and her acclamation last week in advance of the Nov. 10 municipal election. But she has some serious concerns about the latter event.



MARILYN SERJEANTSON

light of the new arts and cultural complex.

Of major concern in the coming term, Coun. Serjeantson pointed out, will be the urban boundary study launched this year to determine whether Georgetown's \$5 million sewage treatment plant can be expanded to accommodate more residential and industrial growth. The study's outcome, she noted, will have tremendous impact on the \$27 million Focal Properties Ltd. "breach of contract" lawsuit still hanging over town council's head regarding the proposed construction of 1,740 homes on the community's southern boundary.

"It will certainly affect Ward 4," she said, "but it will also affect the image of the whole town."

The key factor forcing council to maintain a guarded stance on the Focal proposal is the town's desperate need for more industrial revenue, Coun. Serjeantson said. Pressure from would-be housing developers is challenging council's decision to give top priority to the provision of more serviced industrial land.

Coun. Serjeantson continues to serve as chairman of a council sub-committee investigating the feasibility of providing cross-town bus service to physically disabled residents.

"I think the pilot project will go ahead," she said of a trial run planned for the coming spring. "That should determine how many people can use the service and, thus, whether we need it or not."

While there is a chance that the town's efforts to garner public financial support for the bus service may be jeopardized by ongoing fund-raising projects for the new arts

complex, Coun. Serjeantson commented, residents are usually willing to support all worthy projects. The bus service would be 50 per cent subsidized by the provincial government, she added.

Despite the homework and the occasional long working night, Coun. Serjeantson said she enjoys being a town councillor.

"I like to have other things to do besides my home life," she said, finding the flexible hours as a councillor better suited to her growing family than returning to a part-time nursing position.

Looking back on her second term in office, Coun. Serjeantson said she felt more confident and had earned the respect of her fellow councillors.

The possibility of sitting on regional council sometime in the future is intriguing, she admitted.

"I wouldn't mind doing that," she said, "but it seems you'd be that much further away from the people at regional level."

Contact with constituents locally comes in spurts, she added, with most people calling when affected by particularly important issues or something as local as a broken sewer or watermain.



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