

Candidates square off in Acton

Mayor hopeful Rob Barlow was on the hot seat Thursday night during a Meet the Candidates Night in Acton.

A war of words occurred several times between Barlow and audience members who targeted his activities as a member of the Acton quarry/community liaison committee and of POWER.

The event, sponsored by the Acton BIA and The Acton Tanner, showcased the eight mayoralty candidates and the five Ward 1 local and regional council candidates.

The most contentious moment occurred when Acton resident Steve Dawkins demanded to know, yes or no, whether Barlow had placed a call to the then Halton-Peel MP Garth Turner requesting the MP not meet with the three Acton councillors concerning the sudden involvement of the Department of Fisheries and Oceans in the Acton East development issue.

Barlow said no he did not make the call, but later recanted saying he did make a phone call, but did not suggest at any time that MP Turner not meet with the three councillors. "I never, ever, made that comment," said Barlow.

During other shouting matches with questioners, Barlow said, if elected mayor, he would make no move to axe any jobs (at the Acton quarry) or to shut it down.

For the candidates the future vision of Acton included the Acton East development, the Acton arena, and a new emphasis on tourism for the downtown core.

The next three years, development and growth in Acton is critical, said Bob Malcolmson, mayoralty candidate. He emphasized the importance of a concentrated team effort to get rid of the red tape and political interference that is stalling Acton development. He suggested the hiring of a business development officer, a person who will work with local businesses to keep them in the community.

His challenger, Mike Armstrong disagreed with hiring a business development officer, saying that is

the mayor's job. He said his approach to the position will be "hands on."

All the candidates agreed that a new Acton Arena/Community Centre was a top priority.

Mayor hopeful Pam Johnston said she is "on the record" in supporting the Acton arena and was "often the only non-Acton councillor to do so."

Marilyn Serjeantson said as mayor she would ensure the needs of Acton are met in a fair and equitable way. Her future projects for Acton included the arena, seniors centre, revitalizing the downtown, and consistent Acton band support.

Election '94



Mayoralty candidate Slavica Ozgeylani said her single purpose was to build a better Halton Hills.

All the candidates also "wholeheartedly" endorsed supporting Acton's growth to 10,000 residents. It's critical we reach 10,000, if want to receive equal partnership in Halton Hills, said incumbent Norm Elliott.

Both he and fellow incumbent Gerald Rennie emphasized the several major Acton projects ahead — Acton arena, Acton seniors centre, Acton development — and it's essential that experienced councillors see them through to completion, they told the audience.

Rennie said the viability of the downtown business core lies in the tourism industry, with emphasis on the Leathertown theme.

Mayoralty candidate Craig Harrison's solution to increasing revenues in Acton and to improving the Beardmore site was to turn the buildings into a brothel and a casino.

Regional councillor candidate Rick Bonnette told the audience that beautifying the Acton industrial park is "something we are work-

ing on. ... you just can't go on private property and tell them to clean up." That is also the problem the town is also facing at the Beardmore property, where three-quarters of the land is contaminated, he said. The incumbent suggested looking at revising development charges which cost companies more than the land they are buying.

Acton local candidate Rebecca Drotos suggested the encouragement of high tech industry to the industrial park. "It's something to look into which could significantly contribute to our economy," she said.

Regional council candidate Jean Hilborn was questioned on her special interest group affiliations and whether she has received any campaign contributions from any.

"I have received no campaign contributions from any groups whatsoever," Hilborn replied, adding that if elected and her membership on any group is seen as a conflict of interest, she will step down from that organization.

Acclaimed Ward 1 school board trustee Dave Whiting, concerned about town council's removal of crossing guards at three locations in town, questioned the mayor hopefuls whether they would reopen the case. All agreed to sit down and discuss the case.

Mayoralty candidate Colin Gibson, suggested assigning auxiliary policeman or parent volunteers to the crossings, installing traffic lights, or holding a meeting of all concerned parties, as Whiting suggested. "We can't measure one life, in terms of dollars," Gibson said.

All the Acton council candidates when asked if they would endorse any of the mayoralty candidates, said that decision was best left to the individual voter.

In a previous query as to whether Acton councillors could work with any of the mayoralty candidates, Bonnette said. "If re-elected, I could work with whoever ... well let me rephrase that ... I could work with with five of the eight (candidates)."



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