

Few fireworks at first all-candidates meeting

Few sparks flew at the first municipal candidates meeting in Halton Hills Wednesday night.

After opening remarks candidates for mayor, regional chair, Ward 2 local council and Wards 1/2 regional council fielded submitted questions at the meeting, hosted by the Hornby Association of Rate Payers at Hornby Glen Golf Course. About 90 people attended.

Questions, most Hornby related, ranged from amalgamation to sewage sludge. Most were directed at mayoral candidates Marilyn Serjeantson (incumbent), Kathy Gastle and Robert Heaton.

They were asked what the town is doing to bring prestige industries to town.

Serjeantson said the town has hired an economic development officer and is a member of the Greater Toronto Marketing Association.

"We are going to be part of promoting our land but we have to get all the water and services in place," said Serjeantson. "The location (401 corridor) will sell itself."

"I'm aware that during the past six years the present mayor has not brought any new industry to Halton Hills," said Gastle, who in her opening remarks criticized Serjeantson for not informing Ward 2 councillors about a meeting with the region on the Sixth Line well issue, and taking credit for things actually done by community groups, herself and other councillors.

Gastle said in being proactive, she brought a recommendation to council to hire an economic development officer.

"I look forward to working with the new economic development officer, council and local business leaders to move forward with a plan to bring prestige industry to Halton Hills. But in my opinion, it was not happening."

Heaton said he helped to get a library budget request passed to put up a town Web site, and companies can find the town now on the Web.

Mayoral candidates were also asked about their plans to deal with traffic from Milton's growth.

"For us to solve the transportation problems we need to have a partnership from all levels of gov-

ernment," said Serjeantson.

"Halton Region has been extremely proactive in dealing with transportation issues in north Halton over the past six years," said Gastle.

"We know where the problem areas are, and finding the dollars is always an issue, but we are committed to improving the road network in Halton Hills," she said.

"I think the region made a big mistake when it took over Hwy. 25 with no protest," said Heaton. "When you look at finding the dollars, now you have to find lots more dollars."

He added Halton Region missed the boat by not getting a 407 interchange in Halton Hills and suggested widening Steeles Ave., or rerouting it south of Hornby.

Wards 1/2 Regional Councillor candidates incumbent Rick Bonnette and Rita Landry were asked what they will do about E. coli in Hornby wells.

Bonnette said a test of about 25 wells in the area is being done and the results should be back in about month. He said a questionnaire has also been prepared in conjunction with the area ratepayers group.

"We are looking after the Hornby area in concert with the regional health department," said Bonnette.

Landry said the source of the E. coli has to be determined, and she thinks sludging may be the cause. She said sludge has been imported to the area from Toronto in the past, and while that may not be the case today, "once you do it you can't take it back."

They were also asked directly about sewage sludge being spread on area fields.

"We're looking at it very seriously," said Bonnette. He said it's part of the aquifer plan and the region will be working with the agricultural community on the issue. He added none of the sludge in Halton is coming from Toronto.

Ward 2 local candidates were asked when Hornby area residents could expect garbage collection.

"We will pick up your garbage but it's going to be added to your tax base," said Kuiack.

He said when rural residents heard that in the past they decided against garbage pickup, but if they have changed their minds he'll pur-

sue it with the region.

Robson said a 1996 region survey showed 68 per cent of rural residents didn't want garbage pickup. She said she pays a monthly fee for her garbage pickup and prefers it to a tax increase.

"It's cheaper and I can control it. If I want to quit I can, but I can't stop paying my taxes."

Lewis suggested a chit system.

"I think there has to be a better way," said Lewis. "I think perhaps that somehow if we got something in the mail that says we're rural, we can take our bags and not pay 10 cents more to get rid of it."

Regional chair candidates were asked about amalgamation.

"I'm a firm believer the provincial government is not quick to do anymore restructuring and especially not in the 905 regions in the Greater Toronto Area," said Savoline, adding she received that indication from the Minister of Municipal Affairs.

She said she doesn't believe Halton will see any amalgamations in the next three years.

Marsden said a Burlington-Wentworth MPP resigned over the fact "he, like Joyce Savoline, announced to his community there would be no restructuring" and three days later it occurred.

"It is up to the people of each community to decide," said Cooper. "I don't want a government telling me I've got to join another community because they say so."

Candidates were asked about the 401 corridor financial plan and protecting the financial interests of medium and small business landowners.

"This is going to be a real burden," said Bonnette. "I don't want to see anyone who has invested in this community have to pack up and leave and sell their property."

He said town and regional staff are trying to find a solution.

"This is a work in progress. Nothing has been settled. Each and every person affected will be spoken with," said Savoline.

She said the region is investigating how the huge costs associated with the infrastructure in the corridor can be mitigated, such as a phasing plan.

—By Lisa Tallyn, staff writer



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