



Gellert Community Centre takes shape

John Archibald, facility supervisor for the Mold-Masters SportsPlex, explains some of the inner workings of the new Gellert Community Centre to a number of dignitaries and donors who were given a tour of the new Georgetown South recreational facility Monday evening. The centre, which boasts a pool, sauna, hot tub and meeting room, is to officially open June 13, 2004.

Photo by Ted Brown



Mayoral, Acton council candidates square off one last time

More than 200 people were at the Acton Arena Sunday night to hear their local, regional and mayoral candidates speak on issues ranging from sidewalk clearing to pesticides in a final all-candidates meeting.

The meeting, hosted by Acton Seniors and Acton Rotary Club, featured all eight candidates seeking the two Ward 1 local council seats in the Nov. 10 municipal election— Sean Haefner, Jon Hurst, Deb Fendley, Dobbie Frizzell, John Lamberink, Mike O'Leary, Betty Renner and Michael Roy. All four mayoral candidates— Rick Bonnette, John Day, Kathy Gastle and Marilyn Serjeantson— and both Wards 1 and 2 regional council hopefuls, Drew Riedstra and Clark Somerville, also took part.

Each candidate was allowed opening remarks then responded to questions from the crowd.

Current mayor Gastle was asked what happened to the original chain of office, why it was replaced, how much the new chain cost and who paid for it?

Gastle said she attempted to have the original pewter chain of office fixed but was told it couldn't be repaired. She said all the etchings on the chain were gone.

"It was a decision to have a new chain of office," said Gastle. "Members of council suggested we need a new chain of office." She said the new chain cost \$10,000, recognizes all former mayors, and the old pewter chain will be displayed at the Civic Centre.

"On the chain of office, that must have been a meeting I wasn't at, or I stepped

out of the room, because I don't recall any discussion on it," said Day, a current regional councillor also vying for the mayor's job.

Bonnette responded to a question about the old Legion hall. An audience member wanted to know how much it cost to purchase and tear down the building.

"Those figures will be released later on but at this moment we can't (comment) because it's still under a contract," said Bonnette. He added the matter was dealt with in-camera "to keep the price down."

A question directed to Bonnette later asking how he planned to be an effective mayor when he declares so many conflicts of interest drew some boos from the audience.

The crowd laughed when Bonnette quipped, "I never had a conflict until I got married." He said his wife works for the Acton Business Improvement Association and that's the only conflict he's had, and he has been consistent in declaring a conflict on the BIA budget when it comes to council.

Day also responded.

"During this past term I've had to declare two conflicts of interest," he said. Day said he has declared a conflict of interest on the pesticide issue because of his part-time work at Sheridan Nurseries. The second conflict is regarding the smoking bylaw because his daughter has a part-time job at Boston Pizza. He added that he also had to declare a conflict of interest on the Glen Williams secondary plan due to his work at Sheridan.

"I have no conflict of interest in this campaign, I'm not receiving any contri-

buton from the development industry or any vested corporate interest," said Day to a loud round of applause.

One questioner asked council hopefuls how they would ensure all sidewalks will be cleared next winter.

"Every year there are names of streets brought forward" to council said Ward 1 council incumbent Frizzell. "We decide what we can budget for; we budget for so many streets a year."

All council candidates were asked if they intend to use pesticides for cosmetic use on public property.

"Education is the biggest issue here," said Roy. "I think, bottom line, is there products on the market that are biodegradable that you can use?"

"I don't support pesticide use especially when we back onto residential areas," said Fendley.

"I think we have to try to properly fund a better commitment to maintaining our sports fields without the use of pesticides and make sure that money's in the budget," said Hurst.

Renner said she would support continuing with the program currently in place with "a mandate to vigorously research" natural alternatives.

"I don't believe in spraying the whole thing (whole sports fields), because that's not cost-efficient," said Lamberink. He added if spraying is required, pesticides should be applied only to affected areas.

O'Leary said he wouldn't support "massive or ongoing pesticide use" but said there is also a safety issue on the sports fields. "There has to be a trade-off somewhere between good management

and good judgment," he added.

Haefner said he would support any environmentally friendly initiatives for controlling weeds.

"I trust that all products that are used have passed some safety standard," he said. He added he believes sidewalk clearing is a more pressing concern.

Also choosing to comment on the pesticide issue was mayoral candidate Serjeantson, who in her opening remarks stressed that "to set the record straight, I am serious about this election," and that she has a "strong record of being a friend to Acton."

On pesticides, she said, "I think we need to look for a different product (than the sod used now) altogether." She suggested trying something new so money won't have to be spent on pesticides or for watering.

Regional council candidate Riedstra was asked about his position on in-camera sessions.

"I'm against these types of decisions (in-camera)," said Riedstra. "I think that anybody (who) works for the public, should tell you exactly what's going on."

Regional candidates were asked when a soccer field with lights would become a reality in Acton.

"There is going to be a new sports park going into Acton," said Somerville. "It's been a long process to get it." He added he wouldn't be surprised if within the next couple of weeks that the town has the property.

Other questions focused on public transportation, funding for youth programs, and Mill St. parking.

—By Lisa Tallyn, staff writer

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