Weldon, Dave

Administrator plans few big changes

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Clerk to be new chief administrator

By KEVIN SHEEHY
Liberal Staff Writer

RICHMOND HILL — When town council appointed clerk Dave Weldon to the newly-created position of chief administrative officer, it was the realization of a goal he set six years ago.

"I remember someone asking during my job interview for clerk what my ultimate goal would be," said Mr. Weldon. "I said I'd like to be chief administrative officer."

In his new role, Mr. Weldon will be in charge of all departments of the town, as of Jan. 1, 1982. However, he doesn't expect to make any drastic changes.

"Essentially I'll have to make sure the left hand knows what the right hand is doing," he said. "I don't think we've ever had that type of problem but the potential was there, but the conflicts were caught before there was any real conflict."

Growth of the town and subsequent demands on the municipal staff is one reason a CAO is needed, Mr. Weldon says.

COMPLEX SYSTEM

"I think another reason is the complexity of municipal government," he commented. "There are so many more new regulations than there used to be five or 10 years ago."

He admits that as CAO he potentially carries a lot of influence on policies of council.

"But I think the service staff has influence anyway, whether under this system or a revised system," Mr. Weldon said. "I guess you could get into all kinds of theories on who's responsible for what in government."

"Probably the hardest part of an administrator's role is you recommend 'X' but council recommends 'Y' and you have to implement that and have to implement it with some fervor."

"I suppose if you have some definite differences, you can either do what council wants done or get another job — but it certainly hasn't got to that point as far as I'm concerned."

SUPPLY INFORMATION

"My role is to make sure council has all the appropriate information it needs before making any decisions," he said. "You can't expect a councillor to have the same degree of knowledge or expertise that the various full-time staff have."

Mr. Weldon, 35, has been clerk for Richmond Hill for the past six years. A business graduate of Western University, he worked eight months for the North Bay Board of Education and then five years in Kenora, as that town's deputy clerk and tax collector.

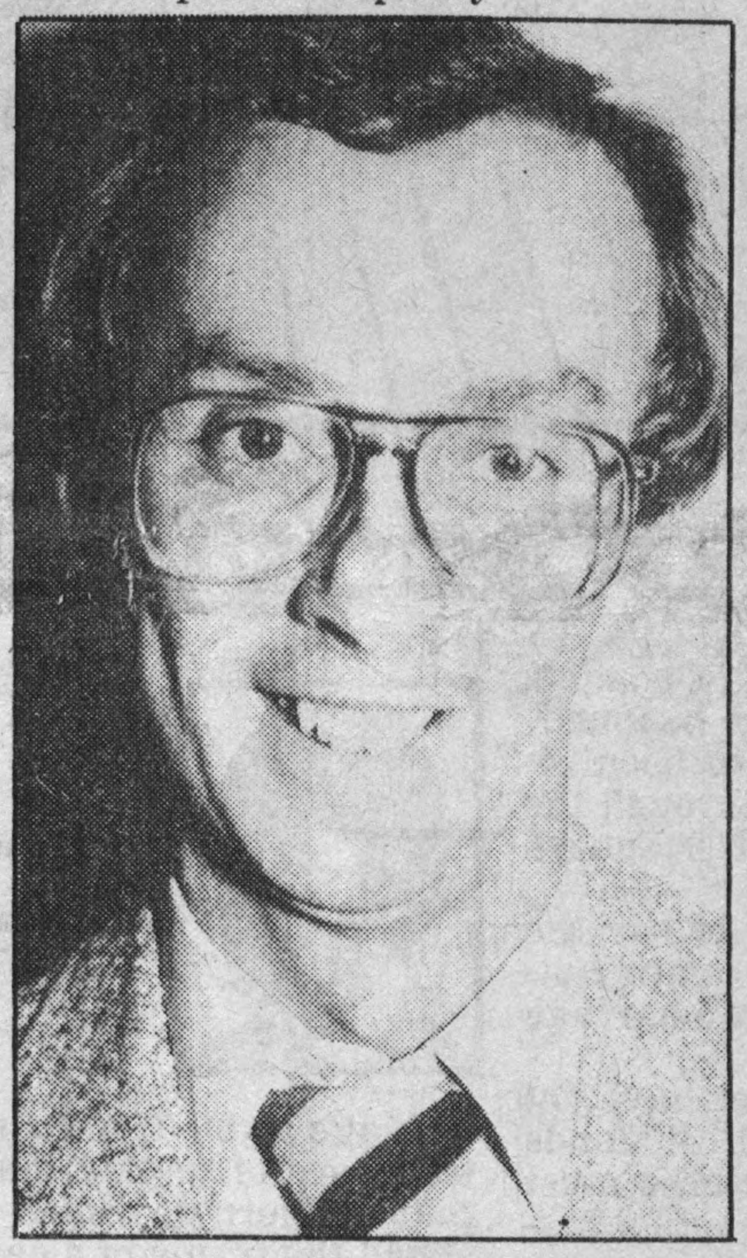
As CAO of Richmond Hill, "I don't think you could ask for a better place in Ontario for that role," he commented. "Because I think this is going to be where it's at in York Region for a number of years."

Much of his work as CAO has yet to be defined, but he has some ideas in mind.

"I think there's going to be a need for more people as the volume of work goes up," he said. "At the present time, there are a few areas where we need more staff input, more staff time."

"In this building, you won't find many spare hours."

But he's quick to note that staff must always be aware that "politicians discuss and make policy — staff implements policy."



DAVID WELDON
New chief administrator

ORGANIZATIONAL REVIEW

One major project he plans is "an organizational review."

"For example, we do a roads needs review every five years," he said. "But we never do a review on our own organization. Do we need six departments? Maybe we need 10, or maybe we only need four."

He feels that much of the work he'll do as CAO will be based "on my own initiative."

"We don't have senior people sitting around waiting for people to tell them what to do."

And he has nothing but praise for the current team of town staff.

"I think there's a pretty good group here," he said. "I think Richmond Hill is lucky to have the calibre of staff we've been able to attract and keep."

As CAO, he promises not to interfere with the current roles of other town administrators.

"If someone has a problem with a building permit, they should go to the building department," he said. "I'm not here to interfere with the operation of a department if the department can resolve the problem."

"But if someone wants to pursue something further, then sure, it will be one of my functions (to deal with the public)."