

# Council candidate seeks fiscal-environmental balance

BY SANDRA BOLAN  
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Business interests are always well represented on council. But what about those of all the other parties affected by such things as growth and the environment?

Rene de Vries believes municipal councillors should be that other voice, which is why he is running for councillor of Ward 4.

This is Mr. de Vries first time running for municipal council, but that is not stopping him from strategizing.

Mr. de Vries, 49, along with his wife and two daughters, live in Ward 6, which is represented by Rob Hargrave, who is hoping to win a fourth term this October.

"I don't want to run against Rob Hargrave," Mr. de Vries said. "I

don't have anything negative to say against him and I don't want to go up against him. ... I don't see the purpose. I run to win."

Mr. de Vries chose Ward 4 because he is familiar with that part of town as his church is located there.

"I like the mix of people I can represent," he said.

Current Ward 4 Councillor Susanne Hilton has not made her intentions for the upcoming election public.

Mr. de Vries, an environmental geo-scientist, has no previous political experience, although he helped organize last year's inaugural Peace Festival.

The native of the Netherlands was an activist while attending university. In particular, he par-

ticipated in peace demonstrations against adding nuclear missiles to his homeland.

Mr. de Vries' platform is still being developed, but he told The Sun-Tribune he wants to focus on balancing fiscal and environmental responsibilities.

## 24,000 TWEETS

"For many it sounds mutually exclusive, but it doesn't have to be," he said.

He was quick to point out, however, "I am not an environmental activist".

Mr. de Vries said this will be a social media election, although he doesn't discount the importance of face-to-face discussions.

He is not sure Twitter and Facebook will increase voting, but it

will get people involved in different ways and might bring other issues to the forefront.

He has 24,000-plus tweets in his account about and from a wide variety of sources.

"I like to shine the light on things people should consider ... and come to their own conclusions on issues," he said. "I am somebody who likes to dig deeper and not just look at the surface issues. I do encourage people to not read just the mainstream media."

Mr. de Vries is not against electronic voting, in principal, but said security issues need to be addressed.

Town of Whitchurch-Stouffville council meeting times have long been an issue for residents. Meetings are split, almost equally

between Tuesdays at 3 and 7 p.m.

When it comes to putting certain items on the agenda "it should never be a way to have a meeting to push something through quickly because it's controversial".


The municipal election takes place Oct. 27.

Also officially running for office is Phil Bannon and Justin Altmann (mayor), Maurice Smith (ward 2), Hugo Kroon (ward 3), Michael Humphreys and Iain Lovatt (ward 5), Joanne Iannuzzi and Rob Hargrave (ward 6), Elizabeth Crowe (York Region Catholic District School Board Trustee).

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*The Sun-Tribune is profiling candidates in this year's election.*

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