

ALTMANN BACKS EMMERSON

New Whitchurch-Stouffville Mayor Justin Altmann supported, then congratulated, his predecessor, Wayne Emmerson, on becoming York Region chairman and CEO last Thursday.

Altmann said he was undecided who he would support one day before the vote.

"It is gratifying to see a former long-time town mayor as the new head of York Regional council," he said in a media release from the town. "I wish Chairman Emmerson every success and look forward to working with him throughout the 2014-2018 regional council term."

Altmann was also sworn in as one of 21 York Regional council members.

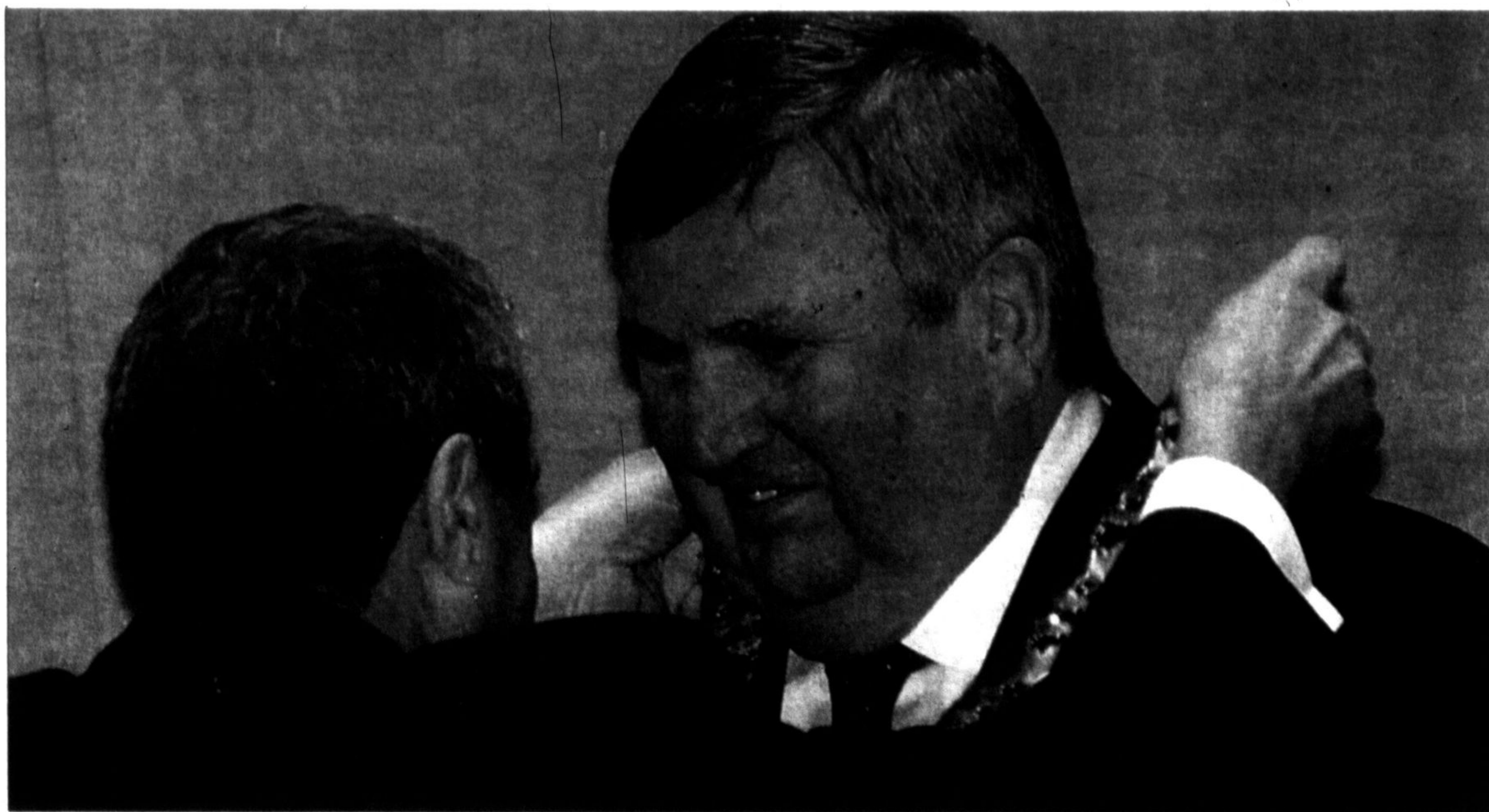
He is one of four new members.

"I will continue to foster a positive relationship between our town and the region with the common goal of creating sustainable and inclusive communities while balancing the need for financial accountability," he said.

His priorities include:

- Housing and homelessness prevention
- Ongoing construction of bus rapidways and subways into York
- Increased waste diversion
- Sustainable development and protection of greenbelt areas
- Economic development and broadband strategies.

- Jim Mason



STAFF PHOTO/SUSIE KOCKERSCHIEDT

Newly appointed York Region chairperson Wayne Emmerson has the chain of office placed on him in the York council chambers in Newmarket last Thursday. The former mayor of Whitchurch-Stouffville received 16 votes to four for John Taylor of Newmarket.

New chair Emmerson looks to second term

York Regional council appoints former Whitchurch-Stouffville mayor as its chairperson for 2014-2018

BY LISA QUEEN
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Minutes before former Whitchurch-Stouffville mayor Wayne Emmerson was crowned as York Region's new chairperson last Thursday night, soon-to-be runner up Newmarket Regional Councillor John Taylor delivered a speech that captured the room's attention.

"In a few short minutes, we're going to vote for the next chair of York Region and I'm not going to win that vote. Often, in the last few yards of the game, the score changes dramatically" he said in what many called a classy concession speech at regional council's inaugural meeting in the council chambers of the headquarters in Newmarket.

While Taylor said he respected the view of some of his supporters who advocated acclamation for the inevitable winner, he said he felt it was important he remain in the race.

Markham Regional Councillor Jim Jones

did bow out, leading to Emmerson's lopsided victory in which Taylor secured his own vote and those of Newmarket Mayor Tony Van Bynen, Richmond Hill Regional Councillor Brenda Hogg and Markham Regional Councillor Jack Heath, while the other 16 councillors — including new Whitchurch-Stouffville Mayor Justin Altmann — voted for Emmerson.

"I think the public needs to see a democratic process take place," Taylor said.

"Many people feel regional government is irrelevant or, at best, they think it is invisible or distant. In my opinion, an acclamation would only increase that perception. So, I decided I would stand for chair today because I think we need to talk about issues, we need to recognize there are significant opportunities and challenges ahead and that there are competing visions of how to proceed."

Taylor, who later told Emmerson he has his full support, urged regional council to

put more emphasis this term on addressing human services, such as affordable housing, homelessness and seniors issues.

"Every person in York Region is a part of our family," he said.

"So, if you're a low-income resident or if you're homeless or if you're a senior that is struggling, you need to know that you matter and that your government is thinking about you."

Amid the ceremony of the inaugural meeting, which included councillors being piped into the council chambers by York Regional Police Det.-Sgt. Peter Fleming, Emmerson laid out his priorities as regional chairperson.

Residents and businesses are looking to council to maintain services and deliver in key areas such as growth management sustainability, transportation and congestion and affordable housing, he said.

"We need to meet these expectations while keeping taxes low," he said, later tell-

ing Taylor he treasures his friendship and looks forward to working with him on council.

Being chairperson is similar to running the business of representing regional taxpayers, he said, adding the job is about taking calculated risks, listening to constituents and colleagues, being collaborative, building on collective wisdom and knowing when to ask for help.

This is likely the last time the regional chairperson will be selected by councillors, as a private member's bill introduced by Newmarket-Aurora Chris Ballard to make the job an elected position is expected to be adopted by Queen's Park before the 2018 municipal elections.

After the meeting, Emmerson said he plans to seek election next term, while Taylor and Jones would not rule it out.

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all a Very
Merry Christmas
and Happy
New Year!



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