

Deep thinker uses his expertise to guide Township

By Mark Pavilons



There isn't much that gets past Cleve Mortelliti.

Often the last to weigh in during council debates or public discussions, the soft-spoken Mortelliti thinks before he speaks. And boy does he think.

The long-time resident may have just found his calling in life, a role that combines an understanding of the political process, a sense of community, with a dash of existentialist thinking. He likes to tinker until he gets it right.

He's part da Vinci and part Hemingway. He's a combination philosopher/comedian/writer, but not in that order.

Talk about thinking outside the box, with a smirk!

He doesn't mind giving his fellow councillors and citizens some ample food for thought because his heart is in the right place.

His passion for King stems from several factors. Growing up in King City, Mortelliti was a typical rink rat, playing hockey in the old Nobleton 'barn' and then King City arena when it was built in 1972. Back then, the rivalry between King City and Schomberg was well known, but it all came down to hometown pride.

'Having grown up with that gives me a really good understanding of the mind set that still exists in King today,' he said. 'I'm deeply rooted in this community. And my kids are experiencing something similar.'

For him, it's an honour to serve in his home municipality. 'I don't know that I could ever stand by the sidelines and not feel passionately about King,' he said.

Mortelliti admitted it took him a while to get into the councillor's seat.

The Mortellitis purchased an old home (former church manse) in King City 10 years ago and Cleve's keen interest in local history took off. He also served with King Township's engineering department for two years and watched the council in action as a staff member, giving him some great insights into the process. It appealed to him and he decided to run for office.

His initial election in 2006 is still a vivid memory, a 'huge thrill.'

Another standout event for him was being asked to MC the retirement celebration for well known King resident Jane Underhill.

'Jane is revered in King City for her passionate and unyielding efforts to protect the spirit and character of the old village that I grew up in,' he said.

Mortelliti worked in the engineering industry for almost 20 years, but it was a far cry from his education and passion. He studied philosophy and English literature, with hopes of being a teacher or journalist. He worked with an engineering firm to put himself through university and still took courses through the winter in phenomenology (the study of the development of human consciousness and self-awareness as a part of philosophy) and Shakespeare.

Currently the development manager for a residential developer, Mortelliti not only has two really interesting jobs, but he uses his development knowledge to evaluate relevant issues in King.

As the Bard wrote: 'All the world's a stage ... And one man in his time plays many parts.'

Mortelliti was acclaimed to his post in 2010 and received some very positive feedback. Hopefully, that means he has the stamp of approval from his constituents.

Having served in the previous council, Cleve can say there are some noticeable differences with the current council 'all positive. The current crew, he says, is stable and respectful, not only of one another, but of staff. This is due, in no small part, to current Mayor Steve Pellegrini, who has helped foster a friendly and cordial atmosphere.

Mortelliti noted as guardians of the public purse, they have to learn from every application and know when to fight and when to back off. King, he said, has a reputation for fairness and seeking out partnerships.

Given his background, Cleve knows how King will evolve in the years to come. Expectations are high, as are King's design standards. King will be 'different,' but still 'nice.'

The public is becoming more engaged and King is somewhat constrained by moraine and conservation lands, so development is currently restricted.

'Intensification may be what the province wants, it may be what we need to do, but I don't think I will ever get used to it,' he says, pointing out he grew up surrounded by farm fields.

Mortelliti is quick to point out some realities of council.

'There is so much beyond your control as a councillor,' he said. 'People think you have more power than you really do. I'd like to be seen as a councillor who is conscientious and thoughtful, who helps people navigate the complexity of government and one who works toward fairness and equilibrium.'

His love for King is evident. He said every time he drives into our borders, particularly from the south and east, he feels a burden being lifted from his shoulders. He breathes a big sigh of relief as King's wide open spaces welcome him 'home.'

His family is his priority in life - trying to be a strong role model for his children and teaching them to think for themselves. Council obligations do keep him busy, but there's no place he'd rather be than home with his family.

He's articulate and has no trouble expressing himself. That, coupled with a sense of humour and the ability to pick himself up when he's down, have served him well. In fact, these skills are essential to him.

Not only is he a knowledgeable asset to the local political scene, Cleve has some interesting pastimes, which include photography, writing, cooking, tinkering with his 1984 Pininfarina Spider and fishing. He's also a Star Trek fan, which espouses the universal constant that there are always possibilities.

Mortelliti is a dog-lover and in fact, showed dogs when he was a teen and thoroughly enjoyed taking his Great Pyrenees puppies around southern Ontario.

The absurdities in life make him smile. Cleve also loves those belly laughs that only the likes of Mel Blanc (the voice of many Looney Tunes characters), Jonathan Winters, George Carlin and Robin Williams can evoke.

The joy from art and music 'things money can't buy' also lifts his spirit. But Cleve is also practical and wouldn't mind a few material surprises for an upcoming milestone birthday!

Cleve can tell you about the intricate smells of a puppy's breath or the effects of caffeine on your mental state. He could tour with the Humber River Shakespeare Company or relax by watching cartoons.

The bottom line is he's a King resident, right to the core.