

Council starts new term of office

By Angela Gismondi

The members of the 2014-2018 King Township council were sworn-in at a special ceremony at The Country Day School in King City Monday.

While it is a new term, most of the faces around the council table are returning members, with the exception of newly elected Ward 2 Councillor David Boyd. Mayor Steve Pellegrini and Ward 1 Councillor Cleve Mortelliti were acclaimed and Ward 3 Councillor Linda Pabst, Ward 4 Councillor Bill Cober, Ward 5 Councillor Debbie Schaefer and Ward 6 Councillor Avia Eek were re-elected by their constituents.

The mayor, six councillors, Township CAO Susan Plamondon and Township clerk Kathryn Smyth were piped into the inaugural meeting by Piper Master Peter Fleming and accompanied by King Fire and Emergency Services Honour Guard and fire officials. The ceremony was attended by family, friends and supporters.

Smyth called the meeting to order and welcomed new and returning members of council.

"You all demonstrated a conviction and professionalism in addressing local concerns and responding to issues and concerns during your campaigning," said Smyth. "I thank and commend each of you for your courteous, genuine interest in adhering to the permissions of the Elections Act, continuously displaying your respect, professionalism and compliance with all activities." She acknowledged the accomplishments of the previous council.

"The 2010-2014 term of council were a cohesive, cooperative team, cognizant of their constituents' needs," said Smyth. "All respected each other, the staff and the issues that the public brought forward at each meeting. The public were invited to speak freely, and more importantly, the Council listened. They focused on creative solutions and compromises, many times arriving at alternative resolution based on fulsome and engaging consultations. You can all consider yourselves fortunate to have such a dedicated team of individuals representing your best interest, and I, amongst many others, look forward to working with all of them over the next four years."

Justice Peter Tetley of the Ontario Court of Justice presided over the inauguration, conducting the official swearing in and Declarations of Office. Pellegrini was presented with the Chain of Office by his twin boys David and Joey. The mayor will wear the Chain of Office to all Council meetings and ceremonial occasions when appearing in his official capacity. It represents the responsibilities, authority and dignity which are attached to the office of the mayor.

Following entertainment from the Carrying Place Band, the mayor and councillors were given an opportunity to address the large crowd gathered at The Country Day School's Performing Arts Centre.

"Today marks one of the most important days in my life and career," said Pellegrini. "The responsibility is large and I am more grateful than words can express at the opportunity you have given me to lead King for another term. The past term was about laying the groundwork and dealing with development pressures. The coming term will be about innovation, partnerships and building on the momentum we have created. There are great times ahead in King Township."

A recurring theme throughout the evening was the success of the former council and their ability to work together.

"I am humbled by my own acclamation as mayor and believe it's a direct result of the good work and cohesion around our council table," said Pellegrini. "This solid working relationship, along with renewed community engagement, will set the tone for the coming term. As we enter this next stage of council, I am heartened and excited by the fact that this group of committed, community minded individuals shows the kind of promise rarely seen in a municipal government. We will bring together each individual's strengths and knowledge base to focus on being King's biggest cheerleaders."

The mayor welcomed Boyd to the "A Team" and thanked staff and his family for all their support.

Mortelliti took the opportunity to share his memories of growing up in King City and how he has seen the community change over the years. He also touched on some of the major developments happening in King City and throughout the Township including the revitalization of the King City core, the new residential and commercial developments, the expansion of Seneca College's King Campus and the new events in town - the King City Craft Beer and Food Truck Festival and Christmas in King City.

"King City is a place where quality living, quality education and quality employment opportunities are at our finger tips," said Mortelliti. "It is a place that is within close proximity to quality universities within a world class city - made accessible by a major commuter rail line and it is a place that is only a few minutes' walk from the Oak Ridges Moraine trails and only minutes away from an international airport. This is King, this is our home, and protecting and enhancing its legacy is what continues to motivate me to be your councillor. Just as I felt when I was first elected in 2006, it remains my honour and privilege to serve King."

Boyd was humbled to be chosen the newest member of King council.

‘I’m honoured the voters from Ward 2 gave me the opportunity to represent Nobleton and Laskay,’ said the first-time councillor, thanking his family and campaign team for all their help. ‘You have provided me with an opportunity for which I am most proud. I’m eager to get started and enthusiastic about what we can accomplish together. I trust this term of council will result in a number of advancements for our community.’

His focus will be on ‘clear and effective communication,’ using person-to-person as well as online forums. He launched his new website earlier in the day and said it will be a community resource where residents can find out what is happening and voice their concerns.

Pabst said it is a privilege to represent the constituents of Ward 3 and all of King Township for a seventh term. Her family was instrumental in encouraging her to run for re-election, including her late husband Burt who ‘was her rock.’ She also thanked her campaign team.

‘I have been saying that experience matters and it does,’ said Pabst. ‘I plan to use my experience and knowledge to be the best representative for Ward 3 and will be a voice of reason at the council table. More importantly I will listen to the voices of our residents and represent them to the best of my ability.’

She is looking forward to working with other members of council.

‘I look forward to serving with you and shaping the future of King Township,’ said Pabst.

Cober said he is thrilled to continue to work as the Councillor for Ward 4.

‘Thank you for putting your trust and confidence in me,’ said Cober. ‘I promise to continue to be a dedicated voice on your behalf and be proud to call King Township home now and forever.’

His key goals include continuing to enhance economic development and attract desired investors to the Township, infrastructure and asset management, growth management, attracting development which respects King’s rural roots and recreational enhancements.

‘We will work together as a council to accomplish these goals,’ said Cober.

Schaefer said she never thought she would be a municipal politician, but entering her second term on council, she realizes how important the role is.

‘The potential of this role to influence how King will evolve, that’s why I decided to seek re-election,’ said Schaefer. ‘I will do my research, I will listen to what you, my constituents, think about the issues, I will listen to my colleagues and staff and make my decision. By re-electing me, you have granted me a wonderful opportunity to participate at the council table and make decisions to support our vision.’

At first she was not pleased to learn that there were two other candidates vying for the position of Ward 5 councillor.

‘I think I really benefitted from the campaign and made me think ‘why do I want to be a councillor,’ said Schaefer. ‘It got me to get out and talk to my constituents and listen to what their concerns and issues are.’

The election was at a challenging time of year for Councillor Eek, who is also a farmer in the Holland Marsh.

‘It was right in the middle of our onion harvest,’ explained Eek adding it was difficult balancing campaigning and harvesting. She thanked her family for their patience.

This is her second term of council and she admits the first time around, she had no idea what she was getting herself into.

‘We’ve come a long way since 2010,’ said Eek. ‘In the past four years our council has come together to create a plan to move this municipality forward. I look forward to working with my council colleagues. This is a special and unique community and I am privileged and honoured to serve you.’