

Pellegrini launches re-election campaign

By Mark Pavilons

Mayor Steve Pellegrini has some unfinished business.

And he wants another term to further enhance the measures he's helped put in place.

Pellegrini was the first to declare his candidacy for mayor in this fall's municipal election.

He's proud of his accomplishments over the last three years "getting the house in order" and now it's time to steer the course that's been charted.

"Things are coming together, but there's more to finish," he said.

During the past two years in particular, King has created and implemented a ton of new strategic plans to act as road maps to King's future.

The Integrated Sustainability Plan, a first for any Ontario municipality, helped kick-start King's direction, and a combined team effort over the past year has resulted in some huge gains.

The mayor has fulfilled many of his goals "immediate priorities he laid out when he first took office in 2010.

"These four priorities have provided the focus for the past three years and, with my strong leadership, we have been able to accomplish even more than I could have hoped. We are listening to our residents and stakeholders while setting the benchmark for great governance. Never before have we had long-term strategic plans to address all essential aspects of our municipality and that are based on resident and stakeholder input, best practices in municipal governance and financial responsibility."

A strong proponent of leveraging partnerships, Pellegrini led the charge to boost King's economic development. The sustainability plan is now King's primary reference point for council decisions and set the stage for more to come.

Just recently, King completed its first-ever Economic Development Strategy. This was preceded by the inaugural Business Retention and Expansion Program; an update of the Parks, Recreation and Culture Master Plan; a Museum Strategic Business Plan; a King Township Public Library Strategic Plan; a Green Sustainability Checklist and community and street beautification efforts. There are also many initiatives currently under way that include a Transportation Master Plan Study; a Development Charges Background Study; a Housing and Residential Intensification Study and the ongoing Official Plan Review.

King capitalized on an opportunity to get involved in the 2015 PanAm Games by joining the Headwaters Horse Country initiative through a three-year partnership with the Hills of Headwater Tourism Association and municipal partners of Caledon, Erin and Dufferin County. The goal is for these partners to become a "centre of excellence for all things equine" within the province, and across the country.

Pellegrini has also focused on a full review of Township priorities and spending, in order to improve the local financial picture. "Our financial sustainability was also a very real concern in 2010. At that time, our reserves were just over \$12 million for the entire Township. As of the end of 2013, we have more than \$37 million in reserves. These reserves are the way that we will be able to adequately fund our infrastructure expenses now and in the future. We are steadily paying down debt and are in a much more secure financial position due to the fiscally responsible manner in which the Township staff and council operates."

And, for the past two years, King has earned the national award of Excellence for Government Budgeting Process.

King has also developed a reserve strategy, and formed partnerships with the "Northern 6" (Aurora, Newmarket, Stouffville, Georgina, East Gwillimbury and King), which has resulted in substantial cost savings "because we can achieve economies of scale when we procure such things as garbage collection, insurance, audit services and the like. And, with cost containment measures in the Township we had a surplus of approximately \$500,000 (2011) and \$1.6 million for (2012)."

Connecting with residents was another of Pellegrini's priorities.

To that end, King created what he believes is one of the best municipal websites around (www.king.ca). This site will only get better, he said, with new apps such as a waste collection app.

He also continues to take the lead in "meet the mayor" nights throughout the Township, as an informal way to connect and gather community input.

Every home and business has received the King Business Directory, collaborative initiative between the Chamber and the Township to provide pertinent information regarding businesses and services.

When he originally took office, he felt there was a need to rebuild trust with businesses, residents and all of King's partners.

"In the past three years we have had the opportunity to recruit and/or promote many experienced and top quality senior staff members as a result of retirements and attrition. We have a new CAO, a new Township clerk, a new fire chief, a new chief librarian and a new director of parks, recreation and culture. Each of these individuals brings knowledge, passion and a true sense of public

responsibility to their position. I am very proud of our entire Township team.?

Another key objective was developing strong relationships with the other levels of government and accessing the various funding options.

In 2013, King received \$3,517,625 in grants ranging from bridge replacement at \$1,849,631 to a Museum grant of \$13,500. Since 2010, King has received just over \$27 million in grants.

?I am proud to say that our council is the envy of York Region (and perhaps the GTA) because of the professional way in which it conducts itself. Council members and Township staff address all issues in a thoughtful, respectful manner and bring their wealth of knowledge and experience to every decision that is made. For this, I thank all council members and the Township staff!?

Pellegrini is ?excited??to continue to work on implementing all of those measures put in place to further raise the bar for King.

?I would be honoured and privileged to remain at the helm for another term as mayor,? he said.

Pellegrini was first elected as Ward 1 councillor in 2000 and re-elected in 2003. He made an unsuccessful bid for mayor in 2006 and then became mayor in 2010.