

Geoff Dawe wraps eight years as Aurora's mayor

By Brock Weir

Geoff Dawe was praised for bringing 'decorum, order and respect' back to Town Hall as his eight-year term as Aurora's mayor came to an end last week.

These words were offered by former mayor Tim Jones as he made a delegation to the final meeting of the 2014 - 2018 Council. 'I am here to simply say thank you,' said Mr. Jones, addressing Mr. Dawe and members of Council who will not be returning to the table this week, before turning his attention back to the outgoing mayor. 'You brought decorum, order and respect to this Council and this Council has demonstrated that for the past eight years. I want to say thank you very much.'

Bringing decorum, order and respect back to Town Hall is what Mr. Dawe said he felt was his mandate when first elected Mayor of Aurora in the fall of 2010.

Reflecting on his eight years in Aurora's top job, Mr. Dawe used his final speech at the Council table to highlight the success of the last two Council terms.

'Certainly one that comes to mind right away is what I believe is pivotal to how we're developing our Town and that is Library Square and the Aurora Armoury. I think it is a great indicator of the faith that we have in building up the core of our Town,' he said. 'There are two instances I was thinking about earlier I believe are the essence of how Council should operate. The first one was the Cultural Services Agreement. The reason I bring that up is there were two Councillors who were very passionate about an issue they wanted to see corrected, and we can certainly appreciate their point of view on that. As a Council, we worked to get past the Doomsday scenarios that were presented to us in that instance and, by focusing on the principle of the greater good, we came up with an agreement that enhanced and strengthened what has now become an incredibly successful attraction, venue and event [space] in our town: the Aurora Cultural Centre. I believe that was by focusing on the greater good and saying, what is for the benefit of our town?'

The second item, one that he admitted was 'not very sexy' was Council's formation of the Finance Advisory Committee, a small group of Council members and staff who focused on refining the budgeting process and, in Mr. Dawe's words, 'taking much of the drama' out of deliberations. Spearheaded by Councillor Michael Thompson, Mr. Dawe said the Committee set criteria up front and tasked staff with meeting those expectations.

'It gave us some time to focus on the critical issues and the strategic direction of our Town, which is what we're really here to do,' said Mr. Dawe. 'The whole is greater than the sum of the parts when you work together that way.'

Mr. Dawe also looked back on his experiences as an elected official, a role which he came to after more than 40 years in the private sector.

'It is pretty safe to say I came to public service, to municipal government, with some preconceptions about what municipal government was and I very quickly learned there were misconceptions,' he said. 'I jumped into the deep end of an incredibly substantial body which resulted in the most intense learning experience I have ever had and I am sure my colleagues feel the same way. And, at times, the most frustrating experience I ever had, but definitely the most rewarding experience I have had. It is experience that was both educational and humbling. You just can't be a part of this body without the incredible educational experience you get. I have learned so many things I will probably never use again in my life, but it is absolutely amazing the number of elements that go into making a municipal government. The humbling part comes from that education because you learn. You learn about your colleagues, staff and how committed and competent they truly are and wish to do a good job, and how we need to recognize that and encourage them to do that job.'

In the end, Mr. Dawe thanked the work of executive staff around the table, including Planning Director Marco Ramunno, who will be leaving Aurora at the end of the year to take up a similar position in East Gwillimbury, his executive assistant Betty De Bartolo, CAO Doug Nadorozny, his executive assistant Kelly Gobbels, and last, but not least, his wife Henny and their family.

'You cannot do this job without your family's support,' he said. 'You'd be crazy to try. It is so important to have the support of your family and I truly appreciate that indeed. It has been an honour, a privilege to serve and I wish to thank everyone who has supported me over the last eight years. Even when I lost those votes 8 - 1, I knew somewhere there was support. Thank you so much, and best wishes to everyone.'