

Dufferin Board of Trade hosts candidate night at Grace Tipling Hall

Written By **PETER RICHARDSON**

On the evening of September 19th, The Dufferin Board of Trade presented all 12 municipal election candidates to the people of Shelburne, or at least to the few who chose to attend the function.

In case there are still residents who do not know who is running, the field is varied. Your candidates are, acclaimed as Mayor, Wade Mills, running for Deputy Mayor, Councillors Dan Sample and Steve Anderson, running for re-election to Council, Walter Benotto and running for the remaining Council Seats, Althea Casamento, James Hodder, Lynda Buffet, Mikal Archer, Kyle Fegan, Len Guchardi, Lindsay Wegener and Shane Hall.

One thing which struck anyone who was listening, was the fact that they had all read from the same play book, generally. Now whether that was because they all saw the same issues facing Shelburne, or because they wanted to appear unified in their direction remains unknown, but only a few strayed from the generally accepted dialogue. Having said that, however, this was not an evening to expound upon their platforms, but rather a chance to meet their public and get to know each other. The candidates forum, will be October 9th at the Legion.

Pete Renshaw the Chair person of the Board of Trade was the evening's host and MC and handled the chore admirably, assisted by Nick Lumia on communications duties and General Manager Diana Morris.

The first speaker, was Deputy Mayor candidate Steve Anderson, Shelburne's newest Councillor and a litigation lawyer for the Toronto Transit Commission. Steve has been very publicly active since replacing the late Tom Egan on Council and is articulate and forward thinking. He feels his skills as a litigation lawyer have served him well on Council and will continue to do so as Deputy Mayor.

He believes that Police, Fire, Healthcare and Recreation are paramount to the Town and intends to strive to keep and improve these and other Town services and he feels he will be a strong voice on the County Council for Shelburne.

Dan Sample the second Candidate for Deputy Mayor, is also publicly active, being involved in, if not chairing, several major events in the community. After 30 years at Honda, he has recently retired and is therefore available to the townspeople and the Town more than most.

He sees himself as being a quick learner, a hard worker and a man of the people. When first elected, Tom Egan told him the way to be an effective Councillor was to listen to the people and as Deputy Mayor, he will continue to heed that sage advice. Dan too expressed the need to be a solid exponent for Shelburne at the County level.

Mikal Archer was the first Councillor candidate to speak and introduced himself as a believer in service to others and fiscal responsibility, in all matters. He wants to run as a means of supporting his community and giving back.

With over 15 years of corporate experience on many levels, he sees himself as a successful and objective voice on Council. His beliefs included, fiscal wellness for the recreational facilities and services in town, social wellness, promoting awareness in the community. Occupational wellness to bring awareness to both employers and job seekers of the opportunities in Shelburne.

Financial wellness through utilization of upper tier government initiatives and programmes to fund programmes and Accessibility for all Shelburne residents.

Next up was Councillor Walter Benotto, who, being the only sitting Councillor seeking re-election, emphasized his experience and the fact that he was the only experienced Councillor seeking election, in his opening remarks.

He went on to state that Shelburne needed to do more for the arts and culture aspect of the Town, doing more to promote it's artists and the performance venues such as Grace Tipling Hall and Jack Downing and Fiddle Parks. He referenced Collingwood as a good example of how this could be accomplished.

Walter spoke in support of the long overdue truck by-pass and for an advanced green signal at Main and Owen Sound Streets. He wants to see better accessible recreation equipment as well as homes for seniors and people wishing to downsize. He went on to call for balanced residential and industrial growth and the need to look to police, fire and infrastructure obligations and concerns.

Candidate Lynda Buffet followed Walter and presented the view that Shelburne required a new strategic plan in order to move forward effectively.

She outlined several strategic questions which needed to be considered in this plan. How will Shelburne pay for the many upcoming infrastructure cost increases. Can the Town afford new recreation facilities, to improve the quality of life here. How can the Town better balance the industrial commercial tax base, while attracting new jobs, so as to offset residential tax increases. Can the Town fund a bypass, or will it simply wait for the Province to supply one, in twenty years? Where will the town find money for police accommodations in light of all the other pressing expenditures. How will Shelburne renew the downtown core and what about more

affordable housing for seniors and young couples.

Althea Casamento, a local business owner and mother of two, has been a steady volunteer for events and programmes in Town and is Vice Chair of the Fiddle Parade. Her concentration is on the Town and the people and pledged to work to support local business, to look to job creation and to manage the rapid growth of Shelburne. Like Walter, she is interested in the culture aspects of the Town and the programmes that support that, both in the Town structure and in the schools. She wants to see Council try to balance the growth against the needs of the residents.

Kyle Fegan, a ten year resident owns two businesses in Town and wants to see a larger concentration placed on the commercial and industrial sectors of Shelburne. These area have not been keeping pace with the residential growth and Kyle would see that reversed. The Town needs jobs, if it is to survive.

He strongly wants to see more being done for the youth of Shelburne and a better utilization of the existing parks and facilities , especially Fiddle Park, which he sees as having a huge untapped potential. Like most of the others, he pointed to police, fire and infrastructure as being of high importance going forward.

High school teacher Len Guchardi was born and raised in Shelburne and has lived here for 57 years. His focus is heavily on infrastructure and feels that planning should be looking 15 to 20 years down the road, not 5 or less.

He favours a by-pass and a new recreation centre, although how to afford them was not discussed and he is against outsourcing the police service. Interestingly, he wants to further impact developers in Town, by having them contribute more than parkland and swing sets to the Town, when they build here. His opinion is that they are presently getting off too lightly for building in Shelburne. Above all, he feels that government must be more transparent in their dealing with the community.

The next candidate was Shane Hall, the current Senior Vice President and Plant Manager at KTH, Dufferin County and Shelburne's largest employer. Shane has basically lived here since the age of 16 and is a volunteer with the EDC, in sports and is a member of the Automotive Council of Canada.

He spoke to a balanced growth in Town, between industry and residential and to a greater degree of youth engagement. He emphasized strong fiscal responsibility and to facing the larger challenges head on and with an eye to fiscal means. Balancing the demands of infrastructure must be done in a responsible manner and in the most financially prudent manner. The community must be involved in the process and their voiced heard.

James Hodder who grew up in Arnprior, a similar sized community stated that he felt that he had reached a life point where it was time to give back to his community, which is now Shelburne. His first point was that the growth needed to be paused, to allow the town and it's many new inhabitants to acclimate and settle in.

He addressed the matter of traffic congestion and diesel truck traffic stating that in parts of Europe, these types of vehicles are not allowed into towns due to heath concerns. He too would favour a by-pass for Shelburne. In the matter of the police, he had no opinion at present beyond that the issue would need to be heavily and thoroughly analyzed in order to come to a rational decision. Regardless of the decision, he felt that it should be made with compassion for all concerned.

Lindsay Wegener has seen Shelburne grow from 4,200 15 years ago, to almost 9,000 today. Lindsay has been an active volunteer for most Town activities and is a nBrownie leader for the Towns Brownie pack. She believes in a strong community involvement in all aspects of the Town governance. During the campaign, she is making no promises about what she may or may not do, but rather is asking the constituents what they believe is needed. She nevertheless, feels that the areas of housing, job creation, Infrastructure, traffic, youth and the first responders are on the leading edge of what should be addressed.