

Close finish in deputy mayor, councillor races as community hits polls on Monday

Written By **PETER RICHARDSON**

Shelburne has a new Council and with it, a majority of new councillors, a new deputy mayor and a new mayor.

Although not exactly a total upset, there were a couple of surprises and two very close races. In the battle for the deputy mayor's role, long time resident and well known community organizer Dan Sample, lost to Steve Anderson by only 27 votes.

However, the closer race was settled by a mere 3 votes, when Lynda Buffet defeated Len Guchardi for a seat on Council. Now in the era of paper ballots, both these results would likely lead to recounts, however, in this new format of electronic voting, those results are likely to stand regardless. The chance of error for computer voting, is virtually non-existent.

As it stands, Council will consist of Walter Benotto, Shane Hall, Kyle Fegan, Lindsay Wegener, Lynda Buffet, with Steve Anderson as deputy mayor and Wade Mills as the mayor. In chatting with Mayor elect Mills, he expressed an optimistic outlook for the new Council, saying that he expected it to be an excellent working group. He felt the Councillors represented a decent mix, of the current Town dynamic and would benefit the residents with their enthusiasm and fresh ideas.

Wade went on to say that his first priority as the Mayor will be to develop a four year strategic plan for Shelburne, with the help of Council. He expects this plan to be completed and implementation begun within the first 100 days of office.

He noted that to help bring all the new faces up to speed, that the first few Council meetings will begin at 6 p.m. as opposed to the regular start time of 7 p.m. and that, that extra hour will be devoted to instruction and information from senior staff as to the intricacies and processes of subjects such as the budget, finance, planning and water and sewer services. This, it is hoped, will assist the new councillors to fit, into the inner workings of the Town more quickly and efficiently than by simply learning as they go.

On the issue of the low 39 percent voter turnout, the Mayor, although disappointed, said that it was up from the previous 36 percent and that, traditionally, municipal elections are less well attended than those of upper tier government.

He did however, note that this should actually be the reverse, since municipal governance is what most affects the residents. This is where they live and work, it is the roads they drive, the police and fire services they rely on and the stores they shop at. The water they consume, the taxes they pay and the sewage they don't have to deal with, is all municipally run and to a large degree funded. It therefore, somewhat confuses the Mayor when it is the least attended to by the voters.

The Mayor wishes to see a more balanced approach to growth over the next four years.

He wants to see more emphasis on Commercial and Retail growth and less on residential, so as to balance the Town's growth and reduce the over abundance of Residential Development currently seen in Shelburne. Due to the water restrictions flowing into the sewage plant, Industrial growth has to be restricted to low water use industries, such as those currently existing or the new Medical Cannabis facility, which despite being agricultural, will produce far less than the allowed effluent, into the system. At the moment, the water flowing back into the watershed is cleaner, than that of the recipient watercourse and must remain so by Provincial legislation.

In Wade's opinion, the outlook for the next four years is very positive, but will not be easy. Road maps will have to be developed and priorities organized, but hope appears to be at a high level. The town will need to get ahead of the current growth spurt and it has many high priority capital projects to face, not least of all, being the policing issue, but he sees a deeper sense of community emerging and together he believes that the Town will prosper and achieve all it needs.

New Deputy Mayor Steve Anderson always thought that his race with Dan Sample would be a down to the wire marathon, but in the end, the people spoke and they elected Steve. He feels that the office itself keeps one humble and will become a template for his new role on Council. He sees the immediate issues to be the police, the growth management, recreation needs and health care. Following these will be transit, and the truck by-pass.

Although tax increases are a given, it is Steve's belief that they have to be tempered by the needs of the residents, striking a balance between resident's needs and fiscal responsibility. Despite the opinion of residents and property owners, 0% tax increases are not a positive factor, nor warranted. At the least, taxes need to raise as the cost of living does, since just like the tax payers, the Town has bills to pay and salaries and commitments to its residents to fulfil. Nevertheless, the residents cannot be expected to be a cash cow for the demands of infrastructure and governance. Consideration must be given to the fixed income and low income in the community. Having a wonderful town to live in is of no use if you cannot afford to live there.

Steve feels, like Wade that the new Council is a great crew. He welcomes their fresh ideas and in speaking with them all, believes that the Town's residents will be well served by the new faces.

On the subject of growth, it is Steve's thought that after the existing developments are completed, that Shelburne should take a break from further growth and reassess where it is going to proceed in the future. Controlled growth is good for a community, it brings

taxes and development charges, bring amenities to a Town. However, uncontrolled, growth can spiral out of control and overwhelm years of hard work and planning. A pause and re-organization now, can only strengthen Shelburne's future.

On the topic of working with upper level government, Steve feels that a strong voice must be heard at the County level to accommodate initiatives such as affordable housing and health care. Currently, with the nearest hospital in Orangeville, the town's seniors are lacking access to things like scans and x-rays, if they cannot reach Orangeville. With no transit available, the problem is exacerbated for both the seniors and those without transportation. The only alternative, is to simply not have the procedures, which is no alternative at all!

In regards growth, the matter is not entirely in Council's hands. The province mandates certain growth targets, but Steve feels that the character and feel of ?small town ? Shelburne can still co-exist with the growth, provided it is carefully guided. Working with the EDC and business, he also feels that commercial and industrial businesses can be accommodated in the Town. Steve feels that trusting our experts to maintain our water and sewage commitments and note our limitations, will lead to a cohesive plan to encourage these businesses to locate in Shelburne.

For Steve, his election was the result of all the facets of Shelburne's populace, with no one group giving him an edge and although disappointed by the low voter turnout, he respects their choices and thanks all who voted for him. He pledges to try and justify their faith and judgement over the next four years.

In every close fought battle, there is always a winner and a loser. The character of both is determined by how they win or lose. For Dan Sample, losing the Deputy Mayor's seat, was a bitter pill, but he accepted it gracefully and with decorum. Despite being on the phone all election day, encouraging the vote, he lost to Deputy Mayor Anderson by a mere 27 votes. He may never know why, but he accepts the will of the people but has no intentions of going quietly into this good night. He remains committed to the town and to his many obligations in it. Already, he has begun working on ShelburrFest, with the Kinsmen Club and he will be a large part of thier other events as well. Dan may also apply for the various Public at Large positions on many of the committees in Shelburne. There could also be appearances at Council, in the form of delegations on matters that are important to him.

On the question of running agin, in four years time, Dan does not rule it out. For now, the silver lining will be the ability to spend more time with his wife and family, but down the road, no avenues are blocked off. Dan is the quintessential ? man on the street? and he believes that such a presence is needed on Town Council. Someone that every one can approach and know, that their issue will be brought to Council. He does not see such a person currently on Council and so, will not rule out a future return to politics. In the interim, he felt that he can still make a difference in Shelburne and he is game to try.

As to what he might have done differently to come out the winner, rather than second, Dan felt truly, not much. He was in the street, on Facebook, at all the events and canvassed door to door, so he felt that all the bases had been covered. Perhaps, he might have spent more time on the voters list, trying to drive out the vote on election day, but even there, he was not certain. He said that his wife was disappointed, with the outcome and his eldest son was sympathetic, while his youngest really did not grasp the outcome as yet, but that they were all supportive and encouraging this options. Perhaps even a bit pleased to be able to see more of the family patriarch.

When asked to try and explain his close loss, Dan had a few ideas, but no definitive answers. On election night, at the Town Hall, of the five spectators in attendance, with the candidates and their families, four were supporters of Dan. Throughout the campaign, he was told by people that he was a certainty for the position and in some instances, was told that there was no need for them to vote, because he was as good as elected. Perhaps, he mused they actually did not vote? Regardless, he wishes Steve and all the Councillors every success and expects to see great things for the Town over the next four years. Despite their lack of experience in Municipal government, Dan says that there is a strong and dedicated Town staff to guide and educate them as the settle in and he remains optimistic for the Town's future.