

Both Regional candidates in Ward 2 say it will be a full-time job

By Bill Rea

One way or another, Ward 2 residents in Caledon are going to have a new Regional councillor after next month's elections, and the two hopefuls got to face each other in public last week; twice.

Johanna Downey and Mark Radford were on hand for sessions hosted last Tuesday by the SouthFields Village Residents' Group and the following evening by the Cheltenham Area Residents' Association (CARA).

There were few fireworks at either session, and the two candidates concentrated on getting out their own positions, as opposed to responding to their opponents. There were a couple of humorous moments, such as when Downey allowed Radford to go first in responding to a question from the floor in Cheltenham with the quip, "Age before beauty."

Radford, who lives in SouthFields, told the first audience that local government needs to be respectful, accountable and accessible. He also pointed out it's a growing community, and things like gridlock need to be addressed.

He agreed it's a great place to raise a family, but things could be better. He also said the community should be engaged before decisions are made. Radford also said local services need to reflect the wants and needs of the residents.

"I believe in a common sense approach," he told the Cheltenham meeting. "If it makes sense, let's move forward."

Downey commented that municipal government is a level that reaches people every day, and the councillors are the liaison to that. She also pointed out the landscape in Caledon is changing, with no two neighbourhoods alike.

Downey stressed her experience, having run two successful businesses over the last 10 years, as well as a solid work ethic.

She said her mandate would be to be the residents' voice.

Addressing issues specific to Ward 2, Radford observed that he sees an giant open field in SouthFields where he had been told there would be a community centre.

He also said traffic issues like speeds, as well as taxation, need to be addressed.

Downey commented the GTA West corridor and the possibility of a highway running through it (informally known as Highway 413) is a big issue, although "I think it's a long way off."

A more pressing issue, she said, is dealing with the challenges of growth. She said development will continue, so ways have to be found to mitigate it.

Both candidates said they would treat their council duties as full-time jobs, although Radford said he would continue to be a part-time baseball coach.

There were questions raised about holding taxes in line while having services that match the growth in the area.

Downey, a mother of four, agreed recreation facilities are lacking, adding they come with a cost. She also said people who move to a rural area have to expect they will be required to drive to certain amenities.

Radford said he's a big proponent of user fees, adding there needs to be creative ways found to pay for amenities.

One of the questions raised at the Cheltenham meeting was what the candidates would do to improve the quality of life in the hamlet.

"I think it's pretty good here already," Downey remarked.

She added there are some services needed to meet growing demand. She also said some roads should have gravel surfaces to slow traffic down.

Downey also warned that cyclists and tourists are going to want to keep coming to the area, but steps will need to be taken to mitigate the impact.

"If you want to improve the quality-of-life amenities, engagement is key," Radford said. "I'm going to talk to you and find out what you want."

One of the people at the Cheltenham meeting asked what the candidates would do if Santa Claus gave the Town \$500,000 to spend on Cheltenham at budget time.

Downey observed there is a lot of growth, especially in the number of young families, so there have to be amenities for them.

"Anything that can bring your community together is a good thing," she said.

Radford quipped the first thing he would do is wonder what the catch is.

"I'm not going to tell you what you want," he said. "I want you to tell me what you want."

In terms of economic development, Radford stressed the need to be aggressive, adding the Town also has to make it easy for businesses that are here to remain.

Downey agreed with the need to focus on firms that are already here, adding restrictions on them need to be lifted so they can grow

and diversify.



Johanna Downey and Mark Radford are running for the Regional seat in Ward 2 on Caledon council