

Regional candidates Foley and Groves face each other at meeting in Bolton

By Bill Rea

The two candidates for Regional councillor in Bolton faced each other last week in their first and (so far) only scheduled all-candidates' meeting.

It was hosted by the Caledon Chamber of Commerce.

Former councillor Annette Groves said this is not the time to sit on the sidelines and hope for improvement.

She said traffic problems in the area are not getting better without hard work, adding plans alone are not going to make the necessary changes.

Groves also pointed to the need to consult the public more. "Ask the public their advice and the public will not disappoint you," she said.

Incumbent Patti Foley said she's living in Bolton 23 years, adding she has a vested interest in Bolton being the best it can be.

She said the challenge on council is to balance the needs of the community and revitalizing Bolton.

The issue of the trails in the area was raised at the meeting.

Groves pointed out diabetes is on the increase, and that trails and walking are important in dealing with that.

She also said the Humber Valley Heritage Trail Association has done a good job maintaining the trails, but more needs to be done, including more money budgeted for it.

Foley said council has endorsed the trail plan of the Toronto and Region Conservation Authority. She agreed diabetes is a big problem, and well as with the need to get people outside and active.

Foley said she and Councillor Rob Mezzapelli have been regularly hosting community walks along the trails.

The candidates were asked what was to be done about spending increases and keeping projects from going over-budget.

Groves pointed to the need to prioritize services, looking at what's needed as opposed to what's wanted. She said she didn't think Caledon needed to host the Pan Am Games, but she did say a new fire hall is needed in Bolton.

She also said the Town should cut down on the number of consultants it hires when there are already qualified people on staff.

Foley countered that the increases in the Town's share of property taxes have been declining over the last couple of years. She also observed that the cost of the Pan Am Game is being split with other levels of government, with the Town contributing about \$1.7 million and will be getting an \$11 million facility that will provide tax income in return.

"That facility means a lot in terms of a legacy," she said.

When it comes to attracting small business to Bolton, Foley said a lot of factors come into play. She pointed to the need for a strong business plan. She said it's helped by the Small Business Enterprise Centre at Caledon Community Services, as well as an active Business Improvement Area (BIA), and suggested expanding the BIA or setting up another one on the village's south hill.

Addressing affordable housing issues, Foley said the Town needs to work with developers. She added there are two applications in progress.

"We have been making progress in that regard," she said.

Addressing the issue of the massive Canadian Tire facility being built in Bolton, Foley said council had endorsed the plans to have the lands set aside for employment in November 2009, before she was even on council.

Groves said they were endorse, but not approved for industrial development, adding the lands are still prime agriculture and outside the village boundary.

On matters of curb appeal in Bolton, Groves said it's time for stakeholders, like the BIA, property owners, residents and the Chamber of Commerce to get together and listen to ideas.

Foley said a start has already been made in that regard, with work beginning on the north hill. Sidewalks have been put in, along with proper lighting and trees. The Heritage Park has been established in the valley and work as been done of some of the streets, as well as the municipal parking lot.

"Trust has been broken," Groves told the audience. "People have been shut out of the process."

She called for a more open process. "Council went through the back door" to get the Canadian Tire development approved, she charged, adding the public needs to be engaged in the decision making.

"As a councillor, I have to listen to all the residents in my ward," Foley remarked, agreeing most of the residents who came out to meetings on the Canadian Tire proposal were opposed to it. But she also raised the issue of what might have gone on that site, with 30 to 80 small businesses, and all of them would use trucks too. She also pointed out Canadian Tire has won environmental awards.

"You can trust I thought about this decision long and hard," she said.



Annette Groves and Patti Foley are vying to be the Regional representative for Ward 5. Photo by Bill Rea