

Dave Mendicino – Oct 12, 2010

Let me begin by thanking the North Bay Civic League for your efforts in running this survey. Let's hope the goal of greater voter turnout is achieved.

The issues you brought up concern Vision, Communication, and Environment and how I would address these.

Vision

After seven years, I have learned, and firmly believe, that a sustainable community has to have the right mix of business, environment, and social support – everything needs to be balanced. I know that as a Councillor, I have delivered on that balance – no one area received more favour than another. That's how we were able to bring our Moody's rating back up, build social housing, and build a methane facility at the landfill. 3rd Avenue is a great example of our balanced approach. It was good for business, cleaned up the environment, and put entry-level homes in the market, addressing our social needs.

The business aspect needed some very big changes, right from the start. One example is with the North Bay Mattawa Conservation Authority, where I've sat for 7 years. My original purpose was to help restore financial solvency, which we have done. During that time, the NBMCA has taught me a great deal about the environment and its place in our society. As Vice-Chair and now Chair, I have been closely monitoring the development of the source water protection plan, which the Authority will be rolling out in the next two years.

With respect to the environmental side, I supported the creation of our Green Plan, which is our environmental sustainability plan to help reduce overall energy consumption by the City. Our record on the environment is rather lengthy, and includes opening the Hazardous Waste Depot year-round, rebuilding the Recycling Centre, expanding the recyclables every year, installing energy-efficient lighting at every municipal building, installing LED traffic signals, going off-grid with our street lights, purchasing Hybrid vehicles for our fleet, providing DriveSmart training for every driver, and many other energy-saving programs. For the future I continue to support our targets of cutting our electricity and fuel by 5% for 5 years and our natural gas by 3% for 5 years. The escarpment is another area that I will continue to fight for – no new lots have been granted on the escarpment since my first election – all the building going on there was from previous approvals. And as Chair of the NBMCA I participated in direct dealings with the Orsi family to turn over the remainder of the escarpment to the Authority where it will be protected forever.

The social needs of our community need to be met on an ongoing basis. The District Social Services Board does a great job in delivering these services. I fully support them including the City's funding of 117 social housing units. As Chair of Cassellholme, I helped bring 67 new affordable rental units to seniors under that program. I also supported the creation of 17 entry level housing units on 3rd Avenue. This was a great

opportunity to bring starter-homes within the reach of many people. I have also spent four years as a Board Member of the Health Unit, and have a full appreciation of their many challenges. Looking to the future I submit we are not ready for this crisis that's coming when the baby boomers start getting into that age range. As Chair of Cassellholme, I spend a good portion of my time dealing with the current long-term care system. I see a system that is understaffed and underfunded, and I clearly see the crisis that is coming. We are going to need more long-term care beds, affordable rentals for seniors, alternate level of care beds, and a hospice.

As a Councillor, I will continue to invest my time and effort to improving long term health care services, as well the overall health care services within our Community.

A long-range Health Care Plan for the City is needed. It is vital that the development of this Plan needs to actively involve the various local providers of health care as well the various levels of government. My work as Chair of Cassellholme and Board member of the Health Unit has allowed me to start this work and I'm committed to continue pressing on this very important issue.

This balance is the mainstay of my long-term vision for North Bay.

Communication

While the public may not have liked the results of some of our votes, we communicated extensively on every issue.

While only one public meeting is required under the planning act, we hold several. We have a Planning Advisory Committee, which isn't required – yet we keep it running – as a first opportunity to deal directly with the neighbourhood affected by a zoning change, for instance. The staff then fully consults with the neighbourhood, as they bring up various issues. It then hits the Council Committee level, where it is again discussed in an open forum. Finally it comes to the Council agenda where the public has another opportunity to weigh in, and where it is again discussed by Council and voted on. In many instances it is sent back to Committee for further public discussion before it comes to Council for yet another discussion and final vote.

Going forward, I like what we did at the Bourke Playground meeting – we held a neighbourhood meeting before all the technical meetings started. This is something I will recommend we implement for controversial rezonings.

Environment

I have provided most of my environment-related comments in the Vision section. I will add that as Chair and now Vice-Chair of the Community Services, I have played a lead role in developing and implementing the direction the City has taken with our Quality of Life, from an environmental aspect.

I was appalled at the condition of Sunset Beach which had been left in disrepair for years. This was the spark that set off a chain of events. Today, we see revitalized beaches all throughout the City. Playgrounds are now being refurbished on a regular basis, and youth centres have been put into service, working with youth to inspire a healthy active life style. Ongoing trail maintenance and expansion is underway, investments are being made in fields, and the new Steve Omischl Sports Complex is poised to open. I will continue to fight for these improvements to remain in our annual operating budget so we don't have to play catch-up and replace dilapidated parks and playgrounds again.

To answer your second question regarding communication, please refer to my comments re Bourke Playground. I really like how that was rolled out to the neighbourhood and will recommend that be our first approach, going forward.

Thank you for the opportunity to share my vision and I look for your continued support in the October 25 election.

Councillor Dave Mendicino