

Meeting the election candidates in Wollaston



By Kristena Schutt-Moore

Community members Peter Lennox, Mary Byrne and Gary Pattison teamed up and organized the all candidates meeting on Saturday, Sept. 24 at the Coe Hill Legion. The crowd in attendance to meet the candidates left the hall at standing room only. Those running for municipal election in the Township of Wollaston were invited to stand before the community and say why they are running for elected office. All candidates were in attendance except for Deputy Mayor candidate Jenifer Rush who had been under the weather at the time of the meeting. Each candidate was given two minutes to give their opening introduction, then two minutes to answer each question that was posed to them. The volunteers had made a shout out to the community to submit their questions before the meeting and the team consolidated the questions they received into three questions. Once all three questions were answered each candidate was given the opportunity to give a closing speech. The three questions were: "What substantial financial investments do you propose or support for the township, and how do you prioritize them? Are there any tax implications to these potential investments?", "What initiatives and priorities will you support or initiate with respect to Wollaston Township's natural environment?", and "What will your priorities be with respect to the operation of our council to make the most of its relationship with the community?" Many of the candidates posted their answers to these questions to their Facebook pages so that the community could see their responses. During the meeting the candidates were ordered in the list that appears of the candidate list of the township website, www.wollaston.ca. Mayor candidate Michael Feurth was the first to give an introduction saying, "I have served five years and three months on council, during two different times. I was appointed in June of 2021, and why is Michael running for mayor? There was an obvious distancing in democracy between 2021 and 2018. Does anyone remember the full disclosure of monthly expenditures, detailed budgets with the public able to question, how about a question period at the end of council meetings? Does anybody remember when seldom there was a closed session? How about public input into projects as costly as the fire hall? An end to bias opinionated decisions, beginning of the council making data driven decisions. I will govern with community involvement, bringing forward the will of the majority while not hurting the minority. Communities need leaders that bring the best in their community, helping them to be successful. Leaders that will bring folks from all corners of the community in the municipality together supporting our vision and mission. Supporting education and work life experience has prepared me to lead without a municipal consultant, a cost to the taxpayers. The municipal consultant that the appointed mayor has needed after serving on council for nearly eight years. When voting starts on Oct. 11 do you want four more years of the same or do you want change thank you." The next speaker was Lynn Kruger, the current mayor running for re-election. After introducing herself she said, "First off I would like to thank everyone for attending the candidate meeting. I am running for the mayor position. I am running because my work here is not done. I am very active in the municipality and have been for many years. Although I may not have a college or university education, as some people like to say online, I can offer you this. I can offer you someone with integrity, someone who cares about all stakeholders of the municipality. Somebody who takes the time to do her own research, somebody who attends many free webinars such as long term care initiatives, safe site and harm reduction, human trafficking, safe water programs and water

shed. The list goes on, too many to list. Upon some drug overdoses [in the community] I reached out to the health unit and was successful in having a health nurse come in and drop off narcan kits and show myself and some local volunteers how to administer them. Recognizing that we have to take action on these things is important to choose, to ignore won't make it go away. I want to assist in making the municipality to move forward to be inclusive to everyone, regardless of your education, status, sexual preference, colour or nationality. To make businesses move here and flourish here, to continue to move forward to develop a plan to get a community hub and library. I am going to be honest with you and I want to tell my story. When I was 13 my mother was diagnosed with aggressive breast cancer. During her surgery and chemo and radiation I attended school, looked after my brother, cleaned the house and all the good stuff and provided baby sitting for many local people in the area. So as my mom's cancer progressed she passed when I was 15. She was then cut off for reaching the two minute timeline. The deputy mayor candidate running for re-election Darlene Colton was next to introduce herself saying, "Good afternoon Township of Wollaston stakeholders. It is a pleasure that I am here and to let you know that I wish to continue my position on council for the next four years in my position as deputy mayor. Along with my council duties I also work full time, owning my own bookkeeping service. Which entails working with multiple businesses located throughout the province of Ontario. I have volunteered with the North Hastings Community Fish Hatchery now for seven years. I am a North Hastings Public Library Board trustee. I am a member of the Ridge United Church, and volunteer with fundraising incentives and baking for events just to name a few. Over the years I have volunteered with Big Brothers Big Sisters as a Big Sister, together with my husband we were a Big Couple within the organization. We have also been foster parents with children's aid, I have sponsored soccer teams. Community involvement is very special, I feel joy working with individuals and groups as we come together for the betterment of our community so we can all prosper. This four year term has been a great experience, meeting stakeholders, representing the township at public events, the enjoyment of learning, meeting and working with councillors from Hastings County and beyond. I have participated with multiple organizations to learn about their challenges such as helping individuals in need, may it be drug addiction, homelessness, human trafficking. I have also educated myself on lakes and the shorelines, thank you." Paul Ordanis, who is running for the position of deputy mayor, was next to address the crowd. "A little about me I live down on the South Road with my wife Christine and two kids Addy and Archie. I contract work, both inside and outside the township. I have volunteered to lead delegations to council, mitigate disputes between neighbours, I have written and executed hundreds of contracts, I'm ready to do this job. Over the last four years I have grown very concerned that our community and our council are not heading in the same direction and this is very important. If we wanted to make a community like Wollaston today they wouldn't let us. They'd say there aren't enough people in that community there to support the services that you're going to need. But our pioneer history is how we got here and we get more as a community because of all the wonderful volunteers that come out to make it possible. People like our fire fighters, the legion, Wollaston Heritage, the library board, on and on. As a community we have to make sure that we meet the needs that we are as a community, and we do that by staying in touch with the council. When we need to know how this community feels on an issue we shouldn't be calling a consultant, we should be calling a town hall meeting like this and finding out how we all feel. And when we come together with the same vision as a community the volunteers come out to make it happen. And that is how it has worked here for over a century and if elected that is what I will work to restore." With the mayor and deputy mayor candidates done, the opening speeches moved on to the councillor candidates. The first was Sheila Currie who said, "I was going to talk about my family roots in Wollaston, but when it comes to being on council it's more about what you can offer in terms of commitment, experience and vision. Here goes. As for commitment I don't think I would have done this when my husband and I were raising our four kids and we were both working full time. But now the kids are grown and I'm semi-retired so I'm at a point where I feel I have the time and energy to commit to this. As for experience, I studied geography at Queens, went to Ottawa for a masters, then worked for 35 years on social and economic programs that were designed to help Canadians that were struggling either with low income or health conditions or lack of training to get good jobs. I liked the research in project management but the best part for me was always getting to meet people from all walks of life listening about problems and looking at all angles to find solutions. I'll bring this to council. As for vision, during the last election I saw our community being divided in a way I felt was just plain wrong. To understand more about local politics I started going to every council meeting, and the more I learned about the impact municipal government had on our day to day lives the more I thought about this vision. To start collectively we need to reject the negative talk and any notion of a divided community. It simply has no merit. We can do better by focusing on what's meaningful for our common future. And to do this we need leadership from a council that will lead by example, have open discussions, make decisions based on evidence, and with a long term view on what's best for our whole community." Glenn Fagerros was the next one to speak on why he was running for council saying, "How are you doing? I'm Glenn Facerros. Construction worker, just an average guy, same as most of you people. Common sense, I want to get back to basics in politics and local politics and listen to the community and do what we need to get done. There is division here and

we need to stop it. We need to talk to you guys, have local meetings, town hall meetings and listen to what the residents want. Just get back to basics and common sense. That's pretty much it. The next speaker was JD Fentie who introduced himself saying, "I have had a place in Wollaston for over 20 years and moved to the area full time when I retired a few years ago. My parents and extended family are deeply rooted in the county, like my grandfather's first job out of teacher's college was actually at the Coe Hill Public School in the early thirties. My work background includes time as a consultant helping to turn around businesses that were in trouble and helping other businesses improve their performance. I also spent many years managing a team of over 150 specialists supporting the global computer environment for an engineering company of over 10,000 employees. I got involved with Wollaston politics when this council proposed the sale of Nellie Lunn Park. I co-wrote the report that made it clear to the council that they didn't need to sell the park. They could keep it with minimal cost to the taxpayer and still fulfill their other requirements. Council's lack of response to the solutions we developed made it clear to me that my experience in business and financial management was lacking in council and that I needed to get more deeply involved not just as a concerned citizen but as a councillor." The final speaker for the introduction speeches was Wendy Mortimer. "I live 11 kilometers south of Coe Hill, on a farm that was owned for 20 years by the last doctor and nurse of Coe Hill, before them Anne and Perry Falls lived there for 70 years. Sadly many of the trees they planted around the homestead came down in the torrential windstorm in May. Most are still lying where they fell. My husband Brant, will have a lot left to do when he retires next year and joins me full time on the farm. I grew up on a farm outside Elora, Ontario. I was the first generation of my family to finish high school and to finish university. First to Queens for a degree in biology, and then to Waterloo for graduate degrees in chemical engineering. I had a pretty interesting career working for really big companies and really small ones, public sector and private. I designed million dollar projects. Which 25 years ago seemed very big. But now it's just a bit bigger than the scale of a small town grocery store renovation. I bought the Coe Hill Grocery Store in February of last year. And I didn't buy it because I wanted to be a grocer, although that has turned out to be a challenge that I really enjoyed, I bought the store because I wanted to be able to shop for good food in the town near my home. And when I moved here full time six years ago this was still a shopping place, with its own medical clinic, we had the Hideaway restaurant, a cafe, that restaurant served lunch to a big crowd. We had a laundromat and the Kawartha Credit Union at the township office. No longer. I think it's a good thing we still have the LCBO. I don't blame the current council for every misfortune this township faces. We did have a little challenge called COVID-19 for the past couple of years. A lot has changed over the past four years and not for the better. I want us to do better. I want us all to work together for all the people of Wollaston. So, please vote for change." Each candidate was then asked to answer each of the three questions and give their closing statements. The last day to vote is Oct. 24, and in Wollaston Township voting will be done via phone or online voting. Voting security pins should be mailed out soon, if a security pin is not mailed to a voter, then that voter is asked to get in touch with the municipal office to ensure they are on the voters list and all contact information is correct and up to date.