

Council to appoint next member

By Sarah Sobanski

Council wants to appoint Frank Hickey to fill its empty Ward 1 seat.

Hickey won 604 votes in the municipality's 2014 election, coming in third overall for the ward. Council voted to appoint Hickey after the sudden passing of former councillor Bert Cannon.

The appointment follows what council did when former councillor Mike Leveque died and Councillor Alex Walder was appointed ? though it had to vote three times to come to that conclusion. Mayor Vivian Bloom abstained from the vote twice so council could vote with an uneven five members instead of six. Each time, however, her abstaining counted as a ?no? vote, keeping council in a gridlock.

z Gregg Roberts said it would be better for council to call for nominees. He wanted to give someone a chance to get his or her feet wet in municipal politics. Also, with council being elected through at-large voting in 2018 following approval from the Ontario Municipal Board, picking the person who won the most votes by ward to replace Cannon didn't make as much sense, Roberts suggested.

?With the new format of our election possibly next year ? I said possibly,? said Roberts for members of the crowd who believe the OMB will have council repeal its vote to move to at-large voting at a hearing in October.

Hickey would have the option to be nominated in a call for nominations. Council would interview the nominees and choose someone.

?There's a lot of people out there that maybe don't want to commit to a four-year term, that'd be willing to commit to just over a year and get the experience. I don't want to knock out everybody in the municipality by choosing [the appointment option]. Option two [calling for nominees] gives everyone in the municipality the option to participate and get involved and at very minimal cost.?

Councillor Hald Robinson agreed but other councillors seemed to be holding onto the wards system and voters' choices.

?I'm for option one,? said Councillor Tracy Hagar. ?[Hickey] has already put his efforts into the last election. He's canvassed, he's put up signs, he's made brochures and participated in the all-candidates meeting. If you do it by nominee, anyone can apply. Anyone who has not done their work for this position can apply. I believe that him being the third person in [my ward], that's actually the people's choice, because they've actually given him the votes.?

This saves time, costs, and sticks to the previous opinion of voters of who should be on council, she said. It wouldn't just be council's choice; it would also be the ratepayers', Councillor Nancy Matheson agreed.

?The candidate would have the next highest votes by the people and it would be the least costly and the least time consuming,? said Matheson.

In the third vote, Roberts and Robinson voted against appointing a councillor to fill the position. The rest of council, including the mayor, voted in favour.