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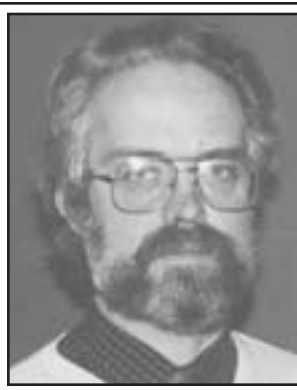
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**Bill's
Bulletin
Board**

By Bill Rea

The two men currently in the running for the Ward 2 seat on King Township council have announced they have reached an agreement on how many campaign signs they will post, and where they will put them.

I hate to criticize such an agreement, especially since it's obvious the hearts of both Peter Grandilli and Jeff Laidlaw are in the right places.

"Election signs can create controversy within neighbourhoods, are sometimes an eyesore and are an unnecessary use of resources," they observed in a joint statement they issued. "We believe that the people are better served in this manner, and we will focus on issues and not sign wars."

Lofty words which address one of the down-sides of our political process.

The fact is these two men have struck this agreement because they don't like the results when too many of these signs are posted. Since they have both entered into the deal

voluntarily, one can presume they will keep their individual ends. And since they have both gone to some lengths to make the deal public, either of these guys found in violation will have some amount of public explaining to do. As well, there is still time for a third of fourth or fifth candidate to get in the race, and they will not be party to the agreement, which means the deal might be in the bucket before too many days have gone by.

Granted these signs can sometimes be a major eyesore, although I think things have improved over the years.

I recall municipal elections I covered early in my life as a newspaper guy, in which candidates saved a few bucks by purchasing cheap signs. After a few days exposure to fall weather, complete with rain, wind and sometimes snow, many of these signs looked like hideous, shapeless wads of paper suspended from sticks in the ground. On the other side of the debate, something like that is not likely to attract a lot of

votes.

I well remember one young woman, barely out of high school, who ran for school trustee. She evidently put some thought into her sign campaign and bought good sturdy ones made of wood, something of a rarity in those days. They looked spiffy the day they were hammered into the ground, and looked just as great when people went to the polls. I can't comment on how they looked the day after the election. After narrowly losing the race, the young lady in question and some of her friends went out and collected the signs. They were all gone by the next morning.

This same woman successfully stood for a municipal council seat three years later.

Gone are the days when signs are stuck in the ground, or pasted on fences, and left there forever. Even in the cities, you don't see many campaign signs left for months on the sides of buildings, making it look like a scene out of West Side Story.

Despite that, there seems to be a push against these signs from some quarters. It's one of those sort of sexy issues that's hard to argue against. It appeals to people's appreciation of aesthetics, and it's seen as being good for the environment, a position that's very safe for a politician embrace, and very dangerous to oppose, or be seen to

oppose.

And Grandilli made another good point when he pointed out campaign signs could set neighbours against each other. I guess there might be a problem if a Grandilli supporter lives next to a Laidlaw backer (or the other wayaround). If they were to both put up signs, we could have a feud on our hands, assuming the neighbours in question decide to put their adult instincts on hold (something that unfortunately happens far too frequently in the political arena).

So there are some good arguments in favour of restricting the posting of campaign signs. If you want to take things far enough, you could come up with a position for banning them completely.

But there's the other position, the one with which I side.

An election sign, among other things, is a symbol of our society, which is supposed to be a democracy. It usually is, although people tend to argue to the contrary when election results are not to their liking. Such a sign is part of the democratic process, and I would submit there are few among us who would like to see restrictions placed on that.

Even if these signs are a blight on the landscape, they only represent a temporary eyesore, and over the last couple of years, candidates and their teams have been pretty good about getting them cleared

away in good time.

I have always been a supporter of political candidates getting their messages out, whether I agree with them or no. And I am disturbed when I see efforts that could prevent that.

For example, a neighbouring community held its annual fall fair over the weekend, and the folks in charge of that event decided about a week before that they would not allow the handing out of campaign material or the waving of signs. Now I am aware that it's their event, and they have the right to set certain rules. But it was also a public, community attraction, at which politicians have always been known to use to meet and talk to prospective constituents. Fair organizers maintained in the past, some of this political activity has been loud and disruptive, but I have to wonder how much of a problem was really being created.

For a couple of weeks every couple of years, we have to put up what some might view as an excessive number of signs. No matter how ugly these things are, I think what they represent is very attractive and appealing; not to mention something few of us would choose to be without.

Is a couple of weeks of clutter too much to put up with in the name of facilitating an open democratic process? I don't think so. In fact, I think it's a pretty small price to pay.

Editorial**Sometimes it takes a look from the outside
to appreciate how great things are inside**

Despite its vastness and beauty, King Township has, alas, been a location for a lot of internal acrimony, bickering and squabbling over the last couple of years.

Now granted things aren't as bad as they once were. Opposing forces have demonstrated a couple of times the ability to work together for the common good, but we still have a few pockets of hostility. And the memory of some of the antics that went down not too long ago have not completely disappeared.

With that in mind, it might be hard for some of us to appreciate what we have here in King, both in terms of what nature has bestowed, but also in the human resources.

Sometimes it requires the observations of some people from outside to see what

those close to the ground might miss.

"A visitor must experience the Township of King to appreciate the green rural farms and forests. Here, there is an oasis from the fast food and coffee shops, the pace of life is slowed and traffic is reduced to mainly that on the through highway leading to Toronto or Barrie."

Those words aren't ours. They appeared in the report issued over the weekend by the two judges from the Communities in Bloom national competition, who toured King in August.

And things got better as their report progressed.

"At first, the visitor is surprised that the Township of King is not encouraging growth, does not want subdivisions and box stores, will not allow new development on existing farms, will

not allow the forest to be cut or even individual trees cut without a permit. These things are so foreign to those of us who are living and travelling in other municipalities, however, the judges experienced a different atmosphere in the Township of King and enjoyed this rural life. Everyone seemed to know one another and the warm sense of friendship that exists."

The two judges awarded the local effort a score of 831 out of a possible 1,000 points; an impressive score which allows local residents a certain amount of bragging rights, combined with clear indications that there's still some room for improvement.

David Urquhart and Ed Toop spent a couple of days in August touring the township, and their comments at

the conclusion left a lot of good feeling, as they both had words of praise for what they saw.

Urquhart pointed out in August it's easy for two men judging 12 communities across the country to have their vision blunted by what they have seen.

"You don't forget the people," he remarked. "People is what makes things work."

With that in mind, it doesn't surprise us that of the eight categories in the judging, King's highest marks came in terms of community involvement.

True, those involved in the local effort made sure King was putting forth its Sunday best to impress the judges, but so were the organizers in every community that was taking part in the competition. It's also true these judges have been

doing this long enough to see beneath the shine and look for substance, and it's clear that's what they found in King.

The effort was headed by Nobleton resident Lynda Rogers and was aided by Councillors Steve Pellegrini and Peter Grandilli, Joan Jackaman, Jeff Laidlaw, Judy Craig, Peter King, Cathy Webster, Brian Chung, Ed Sikkema, Bert Duclos and Patty Fleetwood, along with Catherine Purcell, Laura Campbell, Kyle Brett and Scott Donald from the Township.

These were the people who fronted King's entry. And they are entitled to some of the share of the 83.1 per cent score. But the real credit goes far beyond that. It belongs with them, and all the rest of the people in King who pitched in.