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## Ward 14 debate gets down to business

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Published on Oct 20, 2006

While the first all-candidates' debate, hosted last week by the Committee to Free Flamborough (CFF), was a mellow affair, this week's square-off between municipal and mayoral candidates showed signs of more spirited debate.

Incumbent mayor Larry Di Ianni and mayoral hopefuls Fred Eisenberger and Diane Elms locked horns on a number of issues, including urban expansion, a local quarry application and the mayor's recent brush with the Municipal Elections Act regarding illegal contributions during the 2003 election campaign. Their war of words overshadowed the competition for the Ward 14 councillor's seat by Mountsberg area farmer Rob Pasuta and former city arena manager Grant Maloney of Rockton. But despite the fray around them, both men grabbed the opportunity to show enthusiastic commitment to filling the seat held by Dave Braden, who chose not to seek re-election.

Speaking to a crowd of about 70 residents at the Rockton fairgrounds, Maloney stressed he will be a full-time representative for residents of the rural Flamborough ward if elected. He said his decision to run has meant personal sacrifices, including taking an unpaid leave of absence from his job as senior facility operator at the Chedoke Twin Pad Arena and loss of 22 years' seniority as a city employee, if elected.

Pasuta shot back that he has had to make career adjustments as well, cutting back on hog production on his farm. He said it would take two to three years to rebuild his farm operation if he doesn't win the Ward 14 seat. "It's not a job to me; it's a commitment," he said of his bid for councillor.

When Troy area resident Sue McMaster asked the two men what experience they could bring to the table at the federal and provincial level to represent the area's interests and "get Flamborough where it wants to be," Pasuta said his involvement with many farm and volunteer groups has resulted in meetings with top-level politicians at the provincial level, including the Minister of Agriculture, as well as local representative, MPP Ted McMeekin, and federal MP David Sweet.

Acknowledging that he doesn't have a political background, Maloney said, "What I've got going for me is, this will be my full-time job. Twenty or 30 hours won't cut it. I'm talking 50 hours a week." Negotiations with upper-tier levels of government need to be conducted on a full-time basis, he added.

McMaster is co-chair of Citizens Opposed to Paving the Escarpment, a group that is fighting the provincial government's proposal to build a four-lane superhighway through rural Flamborough as part of a mid-peninsula route from Fort Erie to the north Burlington area.

Dennis Noonan, debate moderator and media relations officer of the Committee to Free Flamborough (CFF), posed a question on behalf of a Flamborough resident asking candidates for their stance on a binding de-amalgamation referendum and what they would do, municipally and provincially, to make it happen.

"My answer is two-fold," Maloney told the crowd. "I believe with a lot of hard work, this city can work." Noting that the transition from one system of government to another was "tough" for Flamborough and is "still not smooth today," he said, "I support a referendum, if that's what our residents call for."

Pasuta suggested more study is needed about what would happen if de-amalgamation occurs. "We have to see if we can handle this financially," he said, warning that future revenues from the slots at Flamboro Downs

might not be as secure as many think particularly given recent cutbacks that have hit casinos in Niagara Falls and Windsor. Like Maloney, he said there is a need for the ward councilor to work co-operatively with city council.

The proposed St. Mary's quarry in northeast Flamborough, although outside Ward 14, drew considerable debate, if not divergent views.

Pasuta, who lives in Ward 15 less than two kilometers from the proposed site, stated his opposition to the proposal, saying that the area is environmentally sensitive and surrounded by many agricultural uses, including farming and horse barns that will be affected by the dust and water issues arising from a quarry operation. Despite arguments against the proposal, Pasuta said, "We have to work through the process. Even the greenbelt (legislation) allows for quarries."

Noting existing problems in Flamborough because of quarry truckers taking the back roads while bypassing Hwy. 6 and roads to Cambridge, Maloney said he supports residents who oppose the Mountsberg area quarry. Reacting to a comment by mayoral hopeful Gino Speziale, who suggested that the city cannot afford to be "close-minded" about the need for aggregate to build roads and create new revenue, Maloney said the city resident "does not understand what rural residents in Carlisle will go through if this quarry goes in."

Di Ianni came under fire by Eisenberger when he suggested residents could determine his position on the issue if they visited the Friends of Rural Communities and the Environment (FORCE) web site. The mayor said he has "real concerns about water and truck traffic" issues and that his "predisposition is to be very skeptical" about the quarry proposal. Even so, it is council's responsibility to review both sides of the issue, he added.

Eisenberger, who said he's definitely not in favour of the quarry, said of the mayor's response, "I'm not sure where he was going with that. It's not clear to me." Suggesting that the area has enough quarries, he said one of his biggest concerns is that "quarries tend to become landfill sites."

A verbal clash erupted when Elms criticized the recent judgment surrounding Di Ianni's guilty plea for accepting more contributions than allowed during his 2003 mayoral campaign. She suggested that Di Ianni should have been removed from office. The judge ruled that removal from office would be a "cruel and unusual" penalty for someone who had unwittingly committed the offences, the mayor responded.

Earlier in the debate, a skirmish broke out when Di Ianni accused Eisenberger of supporting urban boundary expansion. Eisenberger denied the charge and said records of his past municipal council experience will bear him out.

"The records show you voted in favour of it," Di Ianni shot back.

Eisenberger countered that there is "an anomaly in the recording process."

The third all-candidates' meeting hosted by the CFF will take place Monday at 7:30 p.m. at the Carlisle Community Centre. Ward 15 candidates Margaret McCarthy and Judi Partridge will join mayoral candidates in the debate.



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