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CITY OF DUNCAN COUNCILOR CANDIDATE

"Bringing Community Together"

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This is my first official foray into the realm of politics other than serving on the Cowichan Valley Regional District's Environment Commission for the past 3 years. That experience certainly has given me a good taste of what goes on around the Regional District's board table and I'm certainly now well versed in the workings of the 'ruler of all things political' under the guise of "Robert's Rules."

But when it came right down to answering the question that has been posed to me several times recently, "So why are you running?", I have had to give this a lot of serious thought.

I can't say that I totally have a plan formulated in my mind on how I'm going to solve the problems of the world – or at least the problems of Duncan that's for sure. But one can't run a campaign if one doesn't have some sort of a plan, so I forged ahead to really figure out – what do I bring to the table and what really are my passions?

Well, certainly the first and foremost goal I have for our community is an increased sustainability. This can take the form of many initiatives but certainly food security is at the core of everything I do professionally at the moment, so that is definitely something that I'm well versed in and that I can speak to and help others understand.

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As defined in the **Cowichan Food Charter** , which the City of Duncan signed in December 2009, “Food security exists when ALL members of our community have access to enough nutritious, safe, ecologically sustainable, and culturally appropriate food at all times.”

This is very far from a reality for members of our Duncan community, so there are many opportunities for us to look at this issue and create some supportive policies around increasing production and access to more local, healthy, sustainable food.

Supporting a recent proposed by-law allowing for **Urban Backyard Chickens** is just one way that can promote increased local food sustainability. I have attended the two public meetings and have listened very closely to both the ‘pro-chicken’ side and the ‘con-chicken’ side. I have lived on a farm and I’ve raised chickens, so I know firsthand all the ups and downs of looking after chickens and roosters.



I’m definitely supportive of proceeding with this new by-law and am more than willing to have ongoing discussions to help address concerns that people might have about this issue.



Other initiatives I would support would encourage more **edible landscapes** within the city-owned properties, including public lands, parks, boulevards, lawn spaces etc. Supporting more **community gardens** and even amending by-laws to allow the selling of vegetables and produce grown on private properties at local farmers’ markets or pocket markets is another option.

Promoting a permanent, year-round location for a farmers’ market is another idea as well as encouraging a mid-week farmers’ market to support local farmers and food producers direct market their products.

The **Urban Forest Strategy** is also something that peaks my interest and can not only be a way to increase food production by planting fruit and nut trees but that also will go to support the reduction of our carbon emissions which is mandated by Bill 27 and the



Climate Action Charter.

Even before considering joining council, I had many discussions with the Director of Planning regarding this initiative and offered to assist with the planning of an Urban Forest Strategy Conference for 2012, which unfortunately did not transpire but that still could occur in the future.



The upcoming **Anti-Idling** by-law that will be enacted in January 2012 is also something that I have been helping the City to launch. CGC is creating kid-friendly anti-idling educational materials to help get the word out and help educate children about the negative effects of leaving cars running.

Through my work at the Warmland House Shelter, including the creation of the community garden there, I've engaged with many people from many walks of life. My life has been made richer through some of my experiences with residents from this shelter over the last couple of years.

I've had opportunities to hire some of those individuals to work with me and I've supported several people by offering sponsorships into CGC's canning and preserving workshops. Since volunteering at shelters and food programs for over ten years, I have a lot of admiration for people who have faced such challenges and yet who still overcome and continue to inspire me.

But I've realized again and again that the lack of **affordable housing** is of a critical concern. The trend of higher-end single family homes has to be seriously looked at in favor of denser, lower-income supportive houses that create space for people from diverse backgrounds and diverse economic abilities. And although at this point, I am not versed in all the zoning by-laws within the city limits, this is something that really intrigues me as an important issue and I want to spend some time educating myself and researching other like-communities for best practices and see if we can increase our ability to offer affordable housing while creating a balance within the community.



The City supported the creation of the **Age Friendly Senior Safety Report** which outlines several key issues and opportunities and I will be spending some time reviewing this document in the months to come.



And lastly, I don't think any campaign that I'm involved in would be complete without talking about a hot topic, namely **transportation**. This is another very complex issue that certainly cannot be solved overnight, but certainly the City of Duncan has been doing its homework with the current **Active Transportation Plan** including the **Active Transportation Survey** .

Of course, I'm all for facilitating the folks on bicycles as well as people who walk a lot and who use mobility devices. It can be challenging to be on the streets of this town if you're not in a vehicle, so I'm very supportive of the study that is going on right now and I've contributed my feedback to the survey and the study that is being conducted and I look forward to more discussion and implementation in the near future.

So for someone who thought they didn't really have a platform, I certainly look like I have my work cut out for me. I really am looking forward to having the opportunity to delve into all these issues, and a few more, in more detail and helping to formulate some creative solutions.

I guarantee that no matter what issues are brought forward, I will look at them all with an open mind and with the tenacity that I'm known for. We may not always agree on every topic – and that's totally ok – but you can always count on me to listen to your opinion, weigh all the options, and work my hardest to come up with solutions that are for the greater good.

For me, the bottom line for wanting to work for the community on the other side of the council table is because I truly believe that real change happens at the local level. And when we all strive to work together – we really can make history.