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The Blue Place is acting up, so I have to use X again. This morning, we're at Breezy Breakfast to hear from Mayor Cam Guthrie as he starts the last few months of his mayoralty.



Cllr Allt thanks Mayor Guthrie for being here today and notes that they don't have anything prepared. Notes that this is the mayor's first public forum since announcing his retiring.

Almost.



Mayor Cam Guthrie: A community path outside politics - Municipal World

Cam Guthrie is stepping away as Guelph's mayor to make space for family, reset after the grind of public life, and chart a path beyond politics.

<https://www.municipalworld.com/feature-story/mayor-cam-guthrie-path-outside-politics>

Guthrie says this was a family decision and was in the works for about a year. In fact, he says that he made it pre-budget last year and even had a statement ready to go the week before Christmas. What happened? Bike lanes.

Then, in January, the daytime shelter space issue arose and put it on hold again. It's been on the radar for a while, and he felt it was important to announce early to give anyone wanted to run a long runway b/c it's a big undertaking.

He says he doesn't have anything lined up, and it's a little scary. He has faith in God though that we will find something new. He needed something different and the conversation kept coming up enough that it was nudging him.

Guthrie says his wife told him that it's not the type of job where you can say "Give it another six months..." it's a 4 year commitment.

Guthrie says he googled "mayor retirement" and that seemed like the time, December. He took special inspiration from former Stratford Mayor Dan Matheson.

On a side note, he has considered training for mayors and councillors as a next chapter.

Allt asks about how much faith drove him during his political career. Guthrie says he's done a good job not crossing streams on church and state, but in last 1-1.5 years he felt nudges that he was being called to something different tho he's not sure what.

Guthrie adds that leaving has been harder than the impulse to sign up to begin with.

Guthrie says he has found the job of mayor to be very hard on his faith, "and I'm just going to leave it at that."

Guthrie says he's not sure there's a lot in music in his future, but his wife's been getting a lot of singing gigs and he's been drafted to play accompaniment on the drums more and more. He says this city is better off b/c of Rachel's guidance. 😊

Allt asks why Guthrie uses humour a lot, why? Guthrie says he might be his distractor, and maybe it's smoothed the edges for people who are consistently against him. It's not a mayor thing, it's who he is. It breaks the ice.

He also adds that people need to take things not so serious sometimes.

Allt notes that this has been a decade of big change, but what's his proudest achievement? Guthrie says it falls into different categories. Relationships: County relations were fractured and he's glad he's been able to make it better.

He says constantly bashing upper levels of government is not health for the city, you have to build relationships in the good times in order to weather the bad times, and that's paid back to the city in millions of dollars in grants.

In terms of capital: He's proud of South End Community Centre, turning around underperforming asset on Baker, and ending District Energy, not that it's bad when it's "implemented right."

On operating, Guthrie says free transit for the most vulnerable is a source of pride. He's met a lot of people who have been grateful for the extra \$240/year in their pocket.

Room for improvement? Guthrie says closing Centennial Pool. He's was on the fence, and it would cost \$1 million to refurbish so considering the demand, they might have missed the boat on that one. Credits Cllr Downer for trying to save it.

Guthrie adds that he's sure that he didn't just make one mistake in 12 years.

On COVID legacy, Guthrie says "that almost did me in." In 2022, 17 of the 29 OBCM changed hands and he blames the pandemic for that. He says the blame that the mayor got every single day was unbearable, especially from service industries like salons and gyms.

Guthrie says he followed public health the whole time, and he's proud of that. The city needed to see the mayor show leadership, and he's glad he stayed firm, but was getting hit from businesses, and conspiracy theorists.

Guthrie says last week, we went back to the beginning of his Instagram feed and it was all positive and smile, then you see the difference after COVID. The whole engagement is different.

Allt asks about relationship with staff. He says the team assembled after the state of the emergency was tremendous and he also wants to "condemn" (we meant compliment) the council at the time for not overstepping b/c there was a lot of dysfunction in other councils.

Guthrie notes that he's also proud of the work they did on reserves to build up those funds so as the rainy day hit Guelph could more easily weather the storm. Also, his efforts as Chair of OBCM helped with the financial picture and extra funding.

Questions from the floor now: First, are bike lanes wasted capital? Guthrie says the next cycling master plan will see more emphasis on wayfinding and less on new bike lanes. He doesn't like the lanes on Silvercreek and Scottsdale, wants them to be better.

Next, wouldn't the money from DE been paid back by now and help environmentally? Guthrie says no, the one in the Hanlon Creek was burning gas and the capital outlay to replace the pipes would have never paid money back, and 3 independent audits proved that.

New Q, was there sufficient money in the beginning for the 200th, and can't we bring royalty here for it? Guthrie notes that he sent that formal invite, but that can't make anyone come here. As for the money, he says probably not and there's never enough for every issue.

Guthrie adds that he's been more hopeful lately that there are sponsors coming onboard, and believes fundamentally that gov't can't do everything. That's the balancing act, all they can do really is nudge.

Q: Was any consideration given to the 200th when capital plans developed? Guthrie says he doesn't believe so, the drivers were clay pipes cracking and housing.

Next person says last council seemed to be a "nightmare" and commends Guthrie for that.

Q? What is something he wishes someone had told him in 2014?

Guthrie says that he wish that he had known that council that gets elected may not fully agree with the voters. He says he ran on platform to keep taxes low to rate of inflation, and that got voted down. He wishes he had learn to get over stuff that that doesn't go ur way quicker

He also says try your best to speak last. There have been moments when someone has said something in a debate that has completely changed his perspective. Listen more, and you might make a completely different vote.

Guthrie says that at a town hall a couple of years ago, Morgan Dandie completely changed his mind about something to do with transit. So you've got to be open to changing your mind.

Allt asks about the pressures being put on cities from the ONgov. Guthrie says he agrees with Strong Mayor Powers, but it's all about how you use them, and he thinks he used them responsibly. He's brought all SM directives to council to vote.

It brought info faster, affordable housing on city-owned land, and it has helped with budgets, which came in 9 per cent lower than what's projected. Advice to next mayor: Leave the staff alone. He's willing to use SMP again though.

Allt notes that SMP can work in areas where there is ambivalence on council, and the bike lanes was a good example of that.

Questions about turning OR into Urban Park and turf grass lands. Nothing new to report about OR, still owned by Infrastructure Ontario tho council agreed in principle with urban park concept.

On the 245 acres being developed by Fusion, Guthrie says he would rather a local developer build that out b/c they will have pride of ownership. All the block plans have been approved and in May/June that will go to next step, but three years before shovels will go in.

Allt asks follow-up about the hospital. Guthrie says it's provincial jurisdiction, city staff/council do not sit on hospital board or anything, the only responsibility is 10% local share. Guthrie says he and OBCM have been fighting that.

He notes that different communities have different wallets, Oakville has a different wallet than Scarborough for example. He has considered ongoing hospital levy to send a signal we need a new hospital.

He would run on keeping the levy if he were running again. In so much as people are pissed about property taxes, no one thinks the levy is money misspent.

Next question is about increasing encroachment on local authority by ONgov? Guthrie says we've crossed over the line on a lot of things, both federal and provincial. Municipalities are paying 4-5% more for things that are provincial jurisdiction. Not getting funding needed.

Second-to-last Q: Does Guthrie personally support an urban park? Guthrie says he was the one no-vote, and that's because of hospital site selection. Didn't want to send mixed signals. There's a lot of debate if a hospital can even happen, but otherwise he's thumbs up.

Also, why were you opposed to building a new library for so long? Guthrie says cost, he still thinks it's too much.

Guthrie says it was an 8-5 vote to approve and he would have used Strong Mayor Powers to veto that one. 🙄🙄

Guthrie is asked about his favourite non-Guelph city, he says Kingston, there's a lot in common with Guelph. Barrie too.

How is Guthrie doing personally? He says it's been a roller coaster every single day, and while he felt he had a good opportunity to be re-elected, no big scandals, but every day it gets better. Only anxiety is that he doesn't have another job lined up.

Last Q: Martin Collier asks about the increasing costs of Emma-Earl Bridge, any chance he'd pull the plug? Guthrie says no, and he returned from vacation twice to make sure he voted no to bike lanes on Speedvale. Also, there were a lot of delays, and 🚩 COVID costs.

Also, that bridge was finally approved by ONgov was because of a BBQ at Ford's house for the OBCM. The MoE was in front of him in the chow line and talked to him about approvals which came through shortly after.

Guthrie says he lost his first time running for city council, and you learn a lot when you lose. So this was a 20 year journey, his entire kids' lives, and 4/5 of his marriage. He reached his goals, wanted to mayor since 16, and its been an honour of a lifetime.

Guthrie has one last story: One time he deked out in the middle of a council meeting, when he was a councillor, to see his daughter's dance recital. No regrets.

That's a wrap from here at Uptown Grill. Allt promises to donate an honorarium today in the mayor's name, and Guthrie chooses Elora House, which helps trafficking victims.

Good Morning!

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