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Ajax council report cards 2011

2011 Report Card logo. 2011 municipal report cards

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Steve Parish

Mayor

This year's grade: B+

Last year's grade: C+

Council and committee attendance: 39/42

Regional Council: 11/12, Committee 3/11

Expenses and travel: $10,983.21 (local), $3,998.18 (Regional)

Under Mayor Steve Parish's leadership, Ajax has seen a number of major projects come to fruition in the past year, including the upgrades to the Memorial Outdoor Pool and the soon-to-be-opened St. Francis Centre. Shovels have hit the ground for a new community centre in north Ajax. These projects will benefit all residents for years to come.

The fall municipal election campaign presented little challenge for Mayor Parish and the moment when he strongly and eloquently defended the Town's decision to fly the Pride flag showed that he's a mayor who represents all residents of Ajax. He also played a large part pushing Durham towards an elected chairman, including getting the issue on all Durham ballots, and residents eagerly embraced the idea.

He wasn't as successful in convincing his Regional colleagues about reviewing the composition of council.

Mayor Parish seems to spend much of his time at the Region thwarting efforts by other municipalities from getting a share of money from the slots operation.

Though passionate in his beliefs, Mayor Parish can come off as somewhat abrasive at times. The mayor should finesse certain relationships including the Town's relationship with Pickering Village business owners to help promote the area. Better relationships at Regional council may have yielded a better result on the issue of council representation.

Shaun Collier

Ward 1 and 2 Regional Councillor

This year's grade: B+

Last year's grade: C+

Council and committee attendance: 39/42; 9/9 Regional Council; 10/10 Regional Committee

Expenses and travel: $6,404.44 (local), $0 (Regional)

Though new in his role as a Regional councillor, Shaun Collier is now a political veteran and has taken to Regional issues with relative ease.

On one of his first votes at the Region, he broke with his fellow councillors on the choice of Regional chairman, but has united with his fellow Ajax councillors in most other major issues including trying to get more representation for our under-represented town.

Coun. Collier is among the trio of north Ajax councillors who are hosting ward meetings in an attempt to better communicate with residents and he's also opened a Twitter account. Those efforts are to be commended.

During the election he ran as a corporate donation-free candidate, yet he accepted donations from individual developers. He did nothing technically wrong as he can accept donations from anyone he wants, but he should have made the distinction clear to voters.

At the Region Coun. Collier chooses his battles, including an attempt to get money for an MRI machine the Rouge Valley Ajax and Pickering hospital. He's learning on the run.

Colleen Jordan

Ward 3 and 4 Regional Councillor

This year's grade: B+

Last year's grade: C+

Council and committee attendance: 42/42

Regional Council: 11/12, Committee 10/11

Expenses and travel: $8,979.91 (local), $1,102.95 (Regional)

Colleen Jordan is a steady and experienced voice on Ajax council. She has long been an advocate of environmental, health and safety issues. At the Region, along with Mayor Parish, she has been a strong advocate against the conversion of the northeast Pickering lands, which include the head waters of the Carruther's Creek, into urban lands.

Though she received a downright chilly reception by some Pickering councillors who refused to allow her to share a slideshow, Coun. Jordan eloquently argued her case that development may cause flooding downstream in Ajax at a Pickering council meeting in front of hundreds in February.

She campaigned hard for more Ajax representation at the Regional table. Not all residents agree with all of Coun. Jordan's causes but they can count on her to fight hard for the issues she champions.

At the Region, she brings a left-of-centre perspective to a largely right-of-centre body.

Marilyn Crawford

Ward 1 Local Councillor

This year's grade: B

Last year's grade: N/A

Council and committee attendance: 28/29

Expenses and travel: $376.07

As the only rookie on Ajax council, Marilyn Crawford fits in well at the council table. She listens carefully during meetings and isn't afraid to ask questions so she has a full understanding of the issues.

She's the type of councillor who brings everyday questions to the table. For example, at one meeting she pointed to a home store flyer that listed all the municipalities that gave rebates for low-flow toilets and questioned why Durham was absent from the list.

When talking about Town-wide programs and services, she's usually the first one to ask 'what's in it for the north'?

From the beginning, Coun. Crawford has made an effort to communicate with residents through regular public meetings for her ward.

Renrick Ashby

Ward 2 Local Councillor

This year's grade: B+

Last year's grade: C+

Council and committee attendance: 42/42

Expenses and travel: $8,329.55

Renrick Ashby continues to bring his urban planning experience to the table at council sessions.

Along with Coun. Collier and Coun. Crawford, he kept a campaign promise to oppose the construction of a condo at the corner of Rossland Road and Harwood Avenue and has begun hosting ward meetings to improve communication with his constituents.

Coun. Ashby makes an effort to reach out to youth in his community including hosting an annual motorcycle ride to support scholarships for local high school students and organizing basketball games for local youth.

He's also worked with local MPs and MPPs to bring job fairs to Ajax which benefit youth and adults and those efforts are much needed when the local economy struggles.

Joanne Dies

Ward 3 Local Councillor

This year's grade: B+

Last year's grade: C+

Council and committee attendance: 41/42

Expenses and travel: $8,921.09

Joanne Dies is known for promoting culture in Ajax. For example, in a discussion about art in public spaces, she said she saw it as an economic and tourism benefit to the whole town.

Along with Coun. Crawford, Coun. Dies serves on the Pickering Village Business Improvement Area board where the relationship between business owners and the Town have been strained. As the veteran councillor in the area, it'll be up to her to work with businesses to make the new Pickering Village a success.

Coun. Dies frequently attends public events and issue-specific community meetings in her ward, however it would be nice to see her and her fellow south Ajax councillors hosting general ward meetings with their residents as north Ajax councillors do.

Pat Brown

Ward 4 Local Councillor

This year's grade: B+

Last year's grade: C+

Council and committee attendance: 41/42

Expenses and travel: $9,454.32

Pat Brown has seen some major issues crop up in the past year, including shoreline improvement plans in the Pickering Beach area, an environmental assessment that's come up with a solution to remove dozens of homes from a flood plain designation and a controversial proposal to create a natural burial cemetery in the Greenbelt portion of her ward.

She has been there for her constituents as a source of information on all of those issues.

This year she has frequently spoken about the issue of speeding in her ward, a problem in many Ajax communities. In particular she took Durham police to task over the issue during a recent committee meeting.

Coun. Brown served as this year's budget chairwoman and ushered in a 2.75-per cent tax increase in what she called a status quo budget.

Expenses are for the 2010 year

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