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LOCAL NEWS

Four more council candidates join race

Election hopefuls come from all walks of life municipal election Christopher Poon
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A longtime follower of Whistler's political scene has declared his intent to run for council.

David Buzzard, a Whistler-based photographer, has said he will be running for a seat on Whistler council after years of watching things unfold at muni hall.

"I've been a pretty severe critic of council for a couple of years and figured I'm in a pretty good position to put my money where my mouth is," he said.

This is the second time Buzzard will be running for council, the first being the 2008 race.

"I have to admit it wasn't a really positive experience for me and I wasn't really planning to go again," recalled Buzzard. "Before I got involved with the Cheakamus Crossing guys I really didn't want to have anything more to do with politics in Whistler."

But with friends increasingly expressing their frustrations with the asphalt plant, Buzzard began tuning in to municipal politics once more.

"It was kind of a perfect storm for what goes on in Whistler," said Buzzard of the issue. "It had land use, the way that different businesses in Whistler are treated, how the municipality does business and the way they communicate to people — and so those are issues that are bigger than just the asphalt issue, which is kind of what drew me back in."

On top of the asphalt plant, Buzzard has been a critic of municipal staffing and wages, fiscal responsibility and pay parking — all things he said he'd address differently than the current council.

"People really feel that the municipality is not looking out for them," he said. "That's why I'm running again."

David Buzzard can be reached at www.votedavidbuzzard.com and on twitter @davidbuzzard.

Rolston hopes to engage local youth

A second 20-something has also thrown his name into the race —29-year-old Jay Rolston.

The longtime Whistler resident said after years of watching the municipality conduct itself without what he sees as adequate dialogue with local businesses, it's time to elect somebody who is willing to listen to local concerns.

“I think the time for change is now,” said Rolston. “With the coming economic uncertainty I think we need a council that’s fiscally responsible and will take the concerns of the citizens to heart and does things that are economically beneficial to Whistler as a whole.”

According to Rolston, the current council has pushed the budget far past Whistler’s means, which means the next council has to be more fiscally restrained.

“Salaries have increased and now they’re talking about increasing property taxes. If the budget is not within our means then we shouldn’t be looking at property taxes,” he said. “We need to do a productivity assessment and force our civil servants to be more efficient.”

Rolston also said he hopes to encourage local youth to vote — a demographic he said is underrepresented in Whistler.

“I’m hoping that I’ll be a candidate that speaks to them and they’ll... think there’s someone running who will actually listen to them and represent their viewpoints,” he said.

Jay Rolston can be reached at www.whistlervotes2011.com and on twitter @whistlervotes.

Brooks pledges to fight tax increases

From Street to Peak to a council seat.

That’s where Hi Brooks hopes to be after voting day on Nov. 19. The former owner of Street to Peak, which went out of business last week, hopes to be a true representative of all Whistlerites if he’s elected to council.

“Those who know me after 14 years of managing retail businesses in Whistler know my decision to commit three years to our community has been a passionate one, long-coming and much-discussed” said Brooks in a release.

Brooks said he has been an outspoken proponent of positive change for Whistler, something he feels didn’t happen in the 2008 municipal elections.

“How many times and how many millions of dollars later are the words ringing in our ears when we open our tax bills: ‘We can’t afford not to spend the money?’” said Brooks.

In response, Brooks said he promises to fight against tax increases, noting that home and business owners simply can’t bear the burden anymore.

“There must be a balanced budget ensuring a tax freeze at the RMOW and a systematic review of costs to reach that end,” said Brooks. “The next mayor and council must budget reasonably within our means and work collaboratively to reduce costs and clarify roles with RMOW partners at (Whistler Blackcomb, Tourism Whistler and the Whistler Chamber of Commerce).”

Brooks also said that he hopes to restore the trust that the public should have in municipal hall by listening and serving the people.

“Imagine there was someone on the Whistler council who would listen to you and say the things people like you and I want to say. I want to bring that voice, your voice, to the town hall,” he said.

Budget efficiencies can be found: Anderson

According to council-hopeful Steve Anderson, the municipality needs to be financially mean and lean — and with his business experience, he's the right person to achieve that.

“We need to look at taking the burden off of businesses and residents,” said the longtime resident, who's been in Whistler since 1974. “We need to find efficiencies.”

This is Anderson's first time venturing into politics, something he felt driven to do following the last election in 2008.

“From what I recall of the last election cycle, there was really no hint (of) the draconian tax increases that came for homeowners like myself,” he said. “After that election there was an announcement from the blue ribbon panels that we're going to have to cough up extra money for shortfalls, and I didn't agree with that and thought that there were far better ways to approach the costs than raising taxes.”

And it's there that Anderson hopes to change things at the muni, by finding efficiencies that he thinks only a business-minded individual like himself can offer.

“After dealing with small businesses for so many years, you learn to streamline and make the most of efficiencies,” said Anderson.

And as for the hot-button election issue of municipal staffing and wages, Anderson said he wouldn't be as quick to make cuts as some other candidates have said they would.

“I've heard some people that want to get in there and slash muni hall in half, but we need people in there,” he said. “I see other ways of maximizing efficiencies and getting back to the core services like roads, sewers, water and snow clearing, and I really think we need to take a closer look before we start cutting.”

Steve Anderson can be found online at <http://tinyurl.com/3tnc94n>.

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