

Candidates debate at Loyalist

By Micah Bond

"Every day I put my pants on and I become the mayor," said Richard Courneyea Tuesday.

Seven mayoral candidates attended a debate at Loyalist College. The candidates discussed a variety of topics, ranging from stimulating the economy by growing the city's talent pool with more science and technology courses at Loyalist to concerns and alternatives to the costly proposed bike trail linking Loyalist to downtown.

Several other miscellaneous items also came up, including construction of the new police station, palliative care facilities, renewable energy and care for the homeless and elderly.

In his opening statement, Lonnie Herrington said families in Belleville are falling apart.

"Every year, our children are leaving Belleville for reasons like higher levels of education, jobs, housing and personal security. Once they are gone and find out what other communities have to offer, they don't come back," he said.

Jill Raycroft said Loyalist needs to ensure its students are taking viable courses that will allow them to stay in the area and encourage new industry to come to Belleville because of its existing talent pool.

"We have excellent programs that often send our students, our graduates, around the world. What can we do to keep them here?" she said.

Raycroft was a program coordinator/development officer at Loyalist for 13 years.

Herrington echoed this sentiment. "We need to have Loyalist upgrade their courses and get more into science and technology programs."

In conversation with people in perspective industry, Herrington said he has found the biggest concern they have is finding a viable workforce in Belleville.

He also said the city should reallocate money for infrastructure and invest it in education.

Richard Courneyea took a different approach and said he plans to encourage entrepreneurs and small businesses by providing venture capital or some other form of assistance.

"Small business represents 71 per cent of our business population in our community and is the engine that actually drives our community forward," he said.

Taso Christopher said that increasing infrastructure is key to attracting the investment industry to Belleville because it shows that the city is proactive and forward thinking.

He said that that the city needs to create an infrastructure environment that the private sector will invest in. That will put more than 100 jobs on the table, he



Photo by Andrew Lahodrynsky

Mayoral hopeful Kenzo Dozono shows his support for the Loyalist College women's soccer team that has recently advanced to the playoffs during his opening remarks. The college held a debate Tuesday involving all seven candidates running for the top position. Topics ranged from where funding was going to come from to expanding career opportunities in the city.

said.

The candidates disagreed over the proposed bike path that would run from Bridge Street West to Loyalist on a number of different points.

Courneyea said, "We have a huge deficiency in our roads, people can't ride their bikes in some cases on the roads. In my opinion, the decision to spend \$2.8 million on a bike trail to Loyalist College is premature."

"I'm not saying it should never happen, but I think at this time we have higher priorities that need to be addressed."

He mentioned the possibility of making transit to Loyalist faster using the existing bus system but did not go into

detail.

Raycroft said the original plan was to extend Bridge Street to the college. She said Loyalist already has a Walk Safe program on campus because of safety concerns and said this is an issue with the proposed and isolated bike path.

She said for that reason extending Bridge Street to the college should be reconsidered.

Pat Culhane said the city's transportation master plan contains a cycling component for the whole city. She said it's a dream that will cost upwards of \$43 million. "If you don't start somewhere, you will never achieve your goal."

She said that biking is essential to the eventual decrease in dependence on automobiles and it will bring more people to the community.

Courneyea raised concerns that the decision to spend money on the path was not transparent and there was no public consultation. He said that council has to be held accountable for that in this election.

Raycroft said, "I would agree that the process by which they went from \$85,000 to \$2.8 million to decide on that bike lane was flawed. Anybody sitting in that room wondered what happened except for the council members, apparently."

Christopher defended the decision.

"The transportation master plan did go through public information centres," he said, adding there were also a number of open public meetings.

"The money was in the reserves so there was no extra load on the taxpayers and when it was done, it was done in an open transparent session," he said.

Loyalist College president, Maureen Piercy, attended the event and asked, given Loyalist's effect on the economy, how the candidates planned to continue supporting the college. She said Loyalist is responsible for approximately 5.4 per cent of the Loyalist Service Region's Gross Regional Product.

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Cars PURR along for humane society

By Dillan Cools

Families and friends came from all corners of Prince Edward County and beyond last Saturday to participate in the first Picton Ultimate Road Rally, with proceeds being donated to the Loyalist Humane Society.

The rally took 25 teams on a scenic four-hour drive around the County where they racked up points by answering questions, completing challenges and collecting samples.

"It was a great day. I was kind of thinking 'oh no!' What did we get ourselves in to, but it was a lot of fun," said Karen Dernford-McIntosh, who participated in the rally with her husband Brian McIntosh.

"I mean, we live in Picton so we know the County, but even living here for a year now and coming here for years and years, we still managed to find things we hadn't seen before," she added.

The family friendly rally was open to teams of all ages and sizes with the largest team having seven members, six of whom were young girls celebrating a friend's birthday. Despite the dodgy weather which might have made some of the unregistered teams shy away from the course, the turnout was strong with over 60 registered participants showing up and many arriving early, eager to get started.

"I've been on two or three car rallies in the past and I always found them a lot of fun," said Bev Humphrey, a key organizer who came up with the idea.

"We wanted it to be a little different than some rallies, some are just a poker run, some are just answering questions all along the way, generally that's what you see. On our route, people had to be observant because there would be a list of things they had to look for and there were challenges that we made," said Humphrey.

The first challenge spot was at H.J. McFarland Conservation Area and keeping aligned to the feline theme, teams threw litter bags through holes in a board that had been painted with cats and dogs by local artist and core rally organizer Lorrie Scott.

"It was a lot of fun!" said Julie Miller, who, along with Deb Hedges, supervised the first challenge and both sit on the Picton Recreation Committee which played a large role in making the rally a reality.

The Picton Recreation Committee is a community organization that hosts cultural and recreational activities in the area and promotes an active lifestyle.

Humphrey and her team were faced with the creation of a complex event that required a lot of preparation, seamless organization and of course, money.

"It was just me and some friends and then we thought, well, how are we going to do that, how are we going to cover the costs," said Humphrey.

Last year, Miller and Hedges organized a kayak-paddling event with the help of the committee and proceeds were also donated to the Loyalist Humane Society.

"We thought we would help them because they helped us, things like this all run on volunteers and the more you have the easier," said Miller.

"They gave us a budget to work with, it was fantastic and then we just sort of hit the ground running," said Humphrey.

"We thought, wouldn't it be nice if we had the acronym PURR, what could we call it then. So we started with the acronym and built the words around it, so it's the Picton Ultimate Road Rally," explained Humphrey.

The money received from the Picton Recreation Committee offset the expensive advertising costs and allowed for the registration money to go directly to the Loyalist Humane Society. At the end of the day, total proceeds generated by the PURR cleared \$1,000 and were estimated to be as high as \$1,400.

"I'm always looking for ways to give them more money because they do so much with so very little," said Humphrey, who has experience working as a fundraiser for Pathways to Independence.

The second challenge spot located in Cherry Valley included two timed events; one had teams solve a handmade puzzle

designed by Lorrie Scott with the Loyalist Humane Society's emblem on it, and the other was a catwalk maze that had been built by Bev Humphrey.

"We've gone right from people not having a clue, to people being able to do the puzzle and finishing it in record time," said Debbie Rankin, a member of the Picton Recreation Committee who supervised the stage.

While in Cherry Valley, teams got a kick out of counting the number of tires surrounding a large oak tree which, just like the puzzle, proved to be much more difficult than anticipated. Some go-getters also seized the perfect opportunity to collect an acorn from below the tree as it was worth one of the maximum 100 points at the end of the day.

"At the last possible minute, Matt jumps out of the car, runs across the road and takes a selfie of himself with a horse and it counted for two points," said DeeDee Coackley, who was first to finish the circuit along with friends Matthew and Becky Weaver, who learned of the rally on Facebook.

The group attributed a combination of having been born and raised in Picton, knowing the area well, being close friends and a slight competitive nature to their speedy return.

The rally commenced with a barbecue and raffle at the Picton Curling Club where scores were tabulated and the winners announced. Thanks to the generous donations made by numerous sponsors and local stores, there was a large collection of door prizes and none of the teams went home empty handed.

"There is something happening almost every weekend, some fundraiser or some sort of group so a lot of businesses get people in every day asking for donations and considering that ... they were still very generous, they were still very supportive, and we really appreciated it as I know the other groups do to," said Humphrey.

"If we can keep our volunteer base up we'd like to do it again, only a different time of year," said Humphrey.

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Photo by William Acri

Shane Patrick Sabourin, of Carleton Place, Ont., is removed by police from Loyalist College Tuesday. Sabourin was charged with one count each of possession of a dangerous weapon, assault of a police officer, resisting arrest and possession of a controlled substance. The 24-year-old was seen on Loyalist College campus acting suspiciously but did not brandish a weapon. He was later subdued with pepper spray after being confrontational with officers.