



Neville Abbott: Councillor-Elect

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Within months of immigrating to Canada in early 2001, Penny, Lee (our son) and I settled in Lions Bay. Seventeen years later it remains the best decision we ever made. Lions Bay instantly became home. It's hard to explain, but it's true.

In 2006 I joined my current employer as a Construction Project Manager for an international engineering firm in Vancouver.

For many years, I have kept abreast of- and was involved with many initiatives and issues in the Village, such as our OCP, infrastructure and other high-profile issues. I have attended too many council meetings to count, using two-minute public participation slots or 10-minute delegations to ask questions or comment on issues at times, and attending town hall meetings. I have also listened to audio recordings of meetings and read through agenda packages so that I could fully grasp the discussions at hand.

I started asking around about how one could get involved and contribute through groups, especially the Infrastructure Committee. Several people, including a few previous councillors, told me if I really wanted to be involved then I should run for council.

Although there are many matters that come before Council – and I am aware of a number already – I do believe we're at a point where water and roads must be someone's key priority. I hope to be that person and help deliver tangible results in this regard.

That being said, I hope to hear from residents before we, as the new council, decide on the way forward over the next four years.

The main reasons I ran for Council

- Infrastructure – the number one issue in the Village and for good reason. We have a list of projects dating back to 2005 or earlier that have yet to be addressed. I am hoping that, with my professional experience, I will contribute to achieving much-needed upgrades, and ensure the Village's best interests are protected.
- Controlling expenditure – I understand how critically important it is in business and, when it's my tax dollars, I am particularly keen to ensure that every one is wisely spent. I intend to question all our spending.
- Lions Bay first – we are all part of a wider world, but for the next four years I intend to be focussed on the needs of Lions Bay. I have no further political aspirations, nor do I feel any need to be at the table in discussions that don't directly affect Lions Bay, especially bearing in mind that every meeting attended outside of Lions Bay costs tax payers several hundred dollars plus travel expenses.
- Seek out and encourage the professional expertise of residents on committees to foster volunteerism where we need it most.

My approach to our Infrastructure needs

- Stop studying and execute – we have been paying to “study” our major infrastructure issues since 2002; in 2016 we spent over \$100,000 on an Infrastructure Master Plan that outlines a list of projects very similar to a simpler 2005 version. None have been delivered fully, if at all. It is time to bring a project execution approach to getting them done. I hope to be able to contribute in this way to our Village.
- To ensure project contracts protect the interests of tax payers – bad contracts leave us exposed when engineers or contractors don’t deliver. A large part of my project management experience has been in overseeing engineering groups as well as managing construction contracts on behalf of clients.
- Planning and executing on realistic budgets – far too many of our projects get delayed or even cancelled due to being over budget. There are numerous possible reasons, however, most are manageable.
- Spending our own money – small amounts add up... for the next four years, water, roads and important infrastructure must take priority over nice-to-have items while we attend to long-overdue infrastructure needs. Every year of delay and decay means we need ever more money to carry out critical upgrades and repairs.
- Grant funding – there is clearly money to be had: are we targeting the right grants, and are we doing it early enough?
- Shovel ready projects – identify projects where a small amount of conceptual design, performance specification and scope definition puts us in a position to respond quickly with RFPs when the opportunity arises. Leave the detailed design to the contractor as part of the bid.

My approach to being a councillor

- Take a modern approach to decision-making, with all the due diligence required – do I have all the information to make a sound decision? If there are still questions or major concerns, can I vote in favour of moving forward, no matter what the issue?
- I aim to welcome comments and input no matter what the point of view – the only way to be informed is to listen to opposing views. Meeting one-on-one or in smaller groups allows people to tell you how they really feel. I intend to go out of my way to meet people in smaller groups.
- Transparency at all times – how good are we at it, really? Do we need council going in camera for extended periods at every meeting simply because the Community Charter says we “may” (not “must”)?
- To act collaboratively, but not necessarily unanimously – council comprises five members, each with a voice and vote. It is the responsibility of each councillor to vote in what they believe to be the best interest of residents. Similarly, all points of view held by council members should be communicated to the Village, and input sought continuously from residents.
- Promote participation in council meetings by making sure residents know what is up for discussion, and how it might affect them.
- Inclusivity – encourage wider involvement in community activities and associations.

