

# Erin's wastewater treatment plant might be a done deal, but council hopefuls will need to earn voter trust for steps ahead

*Tabitha Wells*



News

## Transparency, communication, planning must be demonstrated

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During the past municipal term, it's undeniable that one of the biggest hot-button issues for Erin and Hillsburgh was the wastewater treatment plant. While the plant itself is now a done deal, how the project was handled — and how council hopefuls intend to handle it moving forward — will still play a role in how some residents choose to cast their vote.

"We're seeing change coming, whether we like it or not, and it's a big change," said Earl Anderson, an Erin resident. "With big change, big decisions have to be made and they have to be made fast. I'm concerned with the largesse that's historically been shown by the government, we're going to be hopelessly behind in terms of infrastructure."

One of the biggest things Anderson says he needs to see from the candidates is true transparency — something he feels has been lacking in this current term. “Transparency is a term bantered around a lot,” Anderson explained. “It has to extend past the point of just traditional infrastructure decisions that are made. We need to plan ahead for these things.”

Those are points Ed Delaporte, who vocally criticized Erin council and raised environmental and engineering concerns about the wastewater treatment plant, agrees on.

“We could sit here and commiserate, but what we really want to see is proper development and transparency,” said Delaporte. “Erin and town council have never, under the past several regimes, cared enough about the residents to be transparent.”

Throughout the whole wastewater treatment plant process, this was a regular complaint from residents and organizations who spoke out against the development.

Delaporte and Anderson both spoke to the fact that this wastewater treatment plant, and the growth it will bring is going to impact Erin no matter what — how it impacts the community will really depend on how this next term of council chooses to handle what comes next.

Part of ensuring it’s a positive impact means listening, something council hopefuls will need to demonstrate they can do if they hope to truly represent Erin and Hillsburgh’s residents.

“Being more available to the community as a whole and partnering with them; we need to come together and work together to build the community the way we want it,” said Anderson. “But this should have been talked about before the decision was made.”

This also means a focus on creating what Anderson refers to as a livable community. One example he provided was the old school that was torn down to make way for condos. “They could have made the ground floor commercial, allowing for things like a dry cleaner, hair salon or a variety store,” said Anderson. “This way, residents of this new community will have things within walking distance so that they don’t have to drive cars and clog the downtown core more.”

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Similar thoughts on working with the community were echoed by Delaporte, who noted he’s spoken to others who were vocal against the plant and they seem to be on the same page.

“We would like to see more people and more residents being able to say ‘this is the vision we see for Erin’; we don’t want to just be controlled commercially,” Delaporte said. “Erin has had a long-term history of that, and there has to come a point where we get over the nepotism, cronyism and family-ism that clogs up our ability to better serve our community and ultimately every resident here.”

For candidates in this election, Delaporte says it means demonstrating they’re willing to look at the things around the project — and others — that will impact residents, and plan ahead for issues like system failures and other problems that could potentially arise.

“We’re not against change in Erin, we’re against bad change,” said Delaporte. “We want change that suits the landscape, fits with the environment, and is going to be good for our children and their children.”

*STORY BEHIND THE STORY: Erin and Hillsburgh residents have been clearly divided over the planned wastewater treatment plant since the process began. Reporter Tabitha Wells wanted to find out how the project would impact voters who were and weren’t against the plant, and what they want to see from candidates regarding the project and how council operates moving forward.*

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