Thorold Deserves a Clearer Record: Mission Possible

By Nicholas Bozza | September 30, 2026
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Thorold voters deserve to know how decisions at City Hall are made, how their councillors vote, and whose priorities those decisions serve. Before we give anyone another four years, we should be able to examine what they did with the years we already gave them.

This first article is much longer only because I want readers to understand my mandate, my concerns, and what I hope to accomplish. Moving forward, the articles will be considerably shorter and more focused. I encourage you to read the daily articles—or their executive summaries—to stay informed before you vote.

I am a registered third-party advertiser in the City of Thorold. My objective is clear: I want the councillors commonly called the “Fab 4”—or, as I prefer to call them, the UN-FAB FOUR—defeated '-**ONLY** if they cannot openly justify their records-'. I believe Thorold needs independent representatives who weigh each issue on its merits and put residents first.

The members of the UN-FAB FOUR, in no particular order, are Councillor Mike De Divitiis, Councillor Nella Dekker (D’Epiro), Councillor Tim O’Hare, and Councillor Ken Sentence.

Some readers, particularly the supporters of this group of FOUR, may see this series as targeting them personally. My focus is their public record: their decisions, priorities, transparency, and accountability. I have formed an opinion based on the information I have gathered, including notes and material I intend to examine in future articles. But I am willing to reconsider that opinion if better evidence warrants it. Readers and councillors are welcome to respond by email, challenge my conclusions, and provide information that deserves to be shared.

My purpose is to research, question, and inform so Thorold voting taxpayers can make up their own minds at the ballot box with more transparency.

My concern begins with their pattern of voting. Are they considering each issue independently, or functioning as a voting bloc at council? When the same people repeatedly vote the same way (as a bloc) on consequential decisions, residents are entitled to ask that question. They are also entitled to a clear record that helps answer it.

Finding that record has been frustrating. A public meeting may be available on video, but a resident should not have to spend days replaying footage, identifying raised

hands only to find out the camera didn't show who voted for what, or working out who supported a motion. Being able to watch a meeting and being able to follow each councillor’s voting record are two different things.

I previously raised this issue with former City of Thorold Clerk Matthew Trennum. As I recall our conversation, I pointed out that the Region could show viewers how its representatives voted on screen and asked why Thorold could not do something similar at their council meetings. I was told that Thorold lacked the necessary technology.

That explanation did not satisfy me. Others in Thorold with whom I discussed it also found it difficult to accept. If the obstacle was technical, what exactly was missing? What would it have cost to fix? Could a simple written voting matrix—a chart listing each motion and how each councillor voted—have provided the transparency Thorold taxpayers were seeking?

Residents should be able to find out who voted for what without becoming full time investigators.

My original goal was straightforward: create that voting matrix and publish it online. Each relevant motion would have a date, a short description, and a clear account of how each councillor voted. Updated after meetings, it would give voters a permanent record to consult when election time arrived.

Election time has now arrived, and that is precisely the record I wanted us all to have access to.

According to my recollection of those discussions, Councillors Anthony Longo, Jim Handley, and Carmen DeRose supported the transparency I was seeking. Yet I was left with the impression that their hands were tied and nothing could be done. If there was more support for clearer information, why did the idea go nowhere?

It must be very comforting for the members of the UN-FAB FOUR to arrive at election time without a simple, regularly updated chart showing constituents their voting records. But the comfort of councillors is not the purpose of the public record.

Residents should be able to assess performance without relying on campaign claims, personal recollections, or whichever parts of a meeting happen to circulate online.

My conversations with Thorold voters have reinforced my concern. Many people I have spoken with believe these four councillors repeatedly vote together and exercise substantial influence over Council’s decisions. Those conversations help explain why I am writing. They are not a statistical survey or a substitute for checking the votes themselves.

A shared vote alone does not prove a backroom arrangement or a hidden agenda. Councillors can independently agree. What deserves examination is the pattern

across decisions: where they agreed, where they differed, what reasons they gave, and what the consequences were for residents.

I also want to examine the Mayor's role in close or tied votes. I will attempt to distinguish what the records establish from what I believe they suggest. Where the record shows disagreement within this group, readers should see that too. A voting matrix that omits inconvenient votes would be no more useful than the incomplete picture I am assessing.

But let's be frank—and no, I don't mean let's be Nella, Tim O., Ken S., or Mike D.

When residents repeatedly see the same councillors lining up on the same side of a vote, it can feel orchestrated. Many people I have spoken with believe that perception has contributed to division and considerable anger in the community. That has also been my experience.

Some residents have told me they have lost confidence in Thorold's governance and doubt that voting will change anything. That discouragement concerns me and many others. When people stop participating, their concerns are less likely to be reflected in the outcome. I want this series to encourage informed participation and give residents a reason to examine the choices before them.

Beyond voting patterns, I want to ask whether Council's priorities put Thorold residents first. When public money and staff time go toward a project, people deserve to know its purpose, its full cost, and what other projects or needs were sidelined to approve it because there is an opportunity cost to every decision.

Neither the expense nor the opportunity cost ends with the announcement or ribbon cutting—even if some UN-FAB FOUR councillors have become remarkably proficient at the art of the selfie or being present in picture taking for an announcement. The photo opportunity ends; the taxpayer's obligations continue. Operating costs, maintenance, financing, and future commitments matter—as do the benefits we give up when that money is unavailable for other priorities.

Roads, infrastructure, core services, and responsible growth affect people's daily lives. In my view, these needs must take priority over councillors' pet projects. Council should explain how a major commitment benefits Thorold residents and why it deserves priority over other uses of their money.

One project I intend to examine is Canada Games Park and the twin-pad arena on Brock University land—the development I have referred to as the "Brock Palace." I have serious concerns about Thorold's financial commitment, how many local residents use the facility, and what the City owns or controls in return. As I understand the deal as signed, Council requires a 66% vote—four out of six councillors—to commission a review and analysis. I believe this will be almost impossible to achieve if Nella Dekker D'Epiro and Ken Sentance are re-elected, because my understanding is that they have already opposed a review and made clear

they would oppose another. If the entire UN-FAB FOUR is re-elected and continues voting as a bloc, many people I have spoken with believe the project will never be reviewed.

Simply putting financial information and estimates online is not enough. Residents need understandable explanations of the figures, the assumptions behind projections, and the commitments they represent. Information the average taxpaying voter cannot reasonably make sense of falls short of meaningful transparency.

I have described this concern as taxpayers being asked to “own nothing and be happy.” That is a sharp line, but the underlying question is serious: what, exactly, does Thorold receive for its money? Making all past and future agreements transparent should provide an answer residents can understand. Residents should have access to all the terms of a deal before the City makes a commitment. In my view, that transparency was lacking in the Brock University project.

I also want to examine how federal grants influenced Council’s priorities. A grant can help fund something a community needs, wants, or would simply like to have. But it does not automatically make a project a good choice. Residents still deserve to know their share of the costs, the conditions attached, and the obligations that continue after the grant money is spent. Grants for special projects that weren’t already prioritized by the taxpayers shift the direction of city planning it seems with decision making potentially being over influenced by our Federal MP whoever it may be.

For commitments extending over decades, including the 40-year horizon I intend to examine, we should also ask what alternative investments could do for Thorold over the same period. What other infrastructure, services, or opportunities might those municipal funds support?

Public consultation matters too. Claiming that a decision reflects “what taxpayers want” should come with an explanation of how that conclusion was reached. People need a meaningful opportunity to understand the choices and be heard.

Future articles will examine these issues individually, or together where they are connected. I will share the records I find, ask direct questions where information is unclear, and explain why particular decisions concern me and others. The councillors will have an opportunity to respond directly to me by email if they wish, and relevant responses and corrections deserve to be shared.

Readers should have enough information to reach their own conclusions, including conclusions different from mine.

I will also inject some humour along the way. Researching and explaining these issues takes considerable work, and humour helps me carry the load. Occasionally, the jokes may exaggerate a point; the factual claims still need to stand on evidence. If we are going to wade through a muddy official narrative, perhaps I should bring the antibacterial wash.

Beneath the jokes is a serious question: are we satisfied with the representation, priorities, and accountability we have received?

With six Council seats available instead of eight, voters face consequential choices. If some members of the UN-FAB FOUR return while others do not, how will those re-elected work with a different Council? Can they demonstrate independent judgment, stand alone without the power of the voting bloc, explain their decisions, and collaborate with representatives who challenge their views? Those are fair questions for any candidate.

You can still vote for the UN-FAB FOUR. My request is that you do so informed about their records, stated priorities, and explanations. If, after examining the evidence, they pass your test, that is your decision. An informed vote is the purpose of this exercise.

So, borrowing a little from *Mission: Impossible*:

Your mission, Thorold taxpayers, should you choose to accept it, is to get informed before you vote—and choose independent thinkers who will uphold transparency and accountability at City Hall.

With informed voters and an open public record, perhaps *Mission: Impossible* becomes *Mission: Possible*. And let’s make sure transparency does not self-destruct in four or five seconds—or disappear for another four years.

You get what you vote for. Before we vote again, we should be able to see what we got the last time.

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