ARTICLE 3 | EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Mission Possible: How Municipal Ideas Become Results

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A reader's concerns about downtown parking raise a broader question: how do municipal candidates assess problems, develop workable solutions and include taxpayers? Identifying an issue is only the beginning. Results require evidence, planning, expertise and follow-through.

This article argues that voters should treat the election as a four-year hiring decision. Assess every candidate's experience, judgment, preparation and demonstrated ability to handle responsibility. Council sets priorities, approves budgets and provides oversight; staff advise council and manage operations. Effective councillors must understand those roles and navigate the proper channels.

The missing piece: informed, participating voters

Credit goes to Ken Steeve for identifying voters as the missing piece in his speech, "The Missing Piece." His puzzle analogy illustrates how residents, staff, businesses and public agencies contribute knowledge that must be brought together. His senior management background at Darlington provides an example of experience voters can assess for its relevance to planning, risk management and accountability. Apply the same standards to every candidate.

My university thesis on communicating with physicians and navigating a complex health care system reinforced a similar lesson: ideas become useful when the right people understand them and can act on them. Residents should understand municipal proposals, contribute their experience and see how their input affects decisions.

Five questions every candidate should answer

1. What specific problem are we solving, and what evidence supports it?
2. What resources are required, including ongoing costs?
3. Who will implement the solution, and what approvals are needed?
4. What trade-offs or competing priorities must be considered?
5. How will results be measured and reported to residents?

For downtown parking, investigate availability, turnover, accessibility and the effect of City vehicles before dismissing concerns or promising solutions. Completing a project does not prove it solved the problem; taxpayers should be able to compare promises with outcomes.

The article's postscript asks how the UN-FAB FOUR would compare under the same assessment applied to Ken Steeve, and what compensation their measurable project results would justify. Its underlying question: are taxpayers receiving worthwhile services and community benefits for their money?

Citizens make the mission possible when they participate, assess candidates and make their own informed voting decisions. With planning, execution and accountability, Mission Impossible becomes Mission Possible—and Mission Possible can become Mission Accomplished.