Not Re-Elected BUT STILL WORTH IT.

Clarence brings the wings and Thorold brings the coffee

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JIM HANDLEY, REGRETFULLY, will not be returning to council. The voters have spoken. Whether that tells the whole story is a subject for my upcoming imaginary autopsy of the election.

That sentence alone should double my readership. From two to four which is one higher than the UN-FAB FOUR during their council meeting. Stay tuned.

But this article is about Jimmy. And before I take another detour through the municipal circus, let me say this plainly: Thorold is losing a councillor whose value to this city cannot be measured by where his name finished on a results sheet.

An election decides who gets a chair. It does not decide what a person is worth.

Jimmy cared about Thorold before this election. He cares about it today. And I suspect he will still be caring about it long after some campaign signs have enjoyed a more productive second career as garage shelving.

Now, who will Tim O'Hare have to criticize? And in my imaginary municipal comedy, where will he shop for ideas to claim as his own?

The scenes, dialogue and comic diagnoses below are invented satire, not reports of actual events.

There is a real farmers' market story beneath the joke. In his published September candidate statement, Handley said he initiated discussions with Renee Delaney of Small Scale Farms in March 2022 and brought the idea to City staff. He also acknowledged that the market became a community effort. **That is his account, and it deserves to be heard.**

Voter's opinion? When people help plant something good, remember who brought the seeds. There is usually no shortage of people willing to pose beside the harvest.

The doctor will see you now

In my imaginary cartoon, O'Hare arrives at his family physician's office looking distraught.

"Doctor, Handley hasn't been re-elected."

"And how does that make you feel?"

"Worried. Where am I going to get my ideas?"

"You still have Carm DeRose and newcomer Kieran Daniels."

"Yes, but Handley was truly special—no disrespect to DeRose or Daniels. He came with years of experience. It was like having the premium subscription."

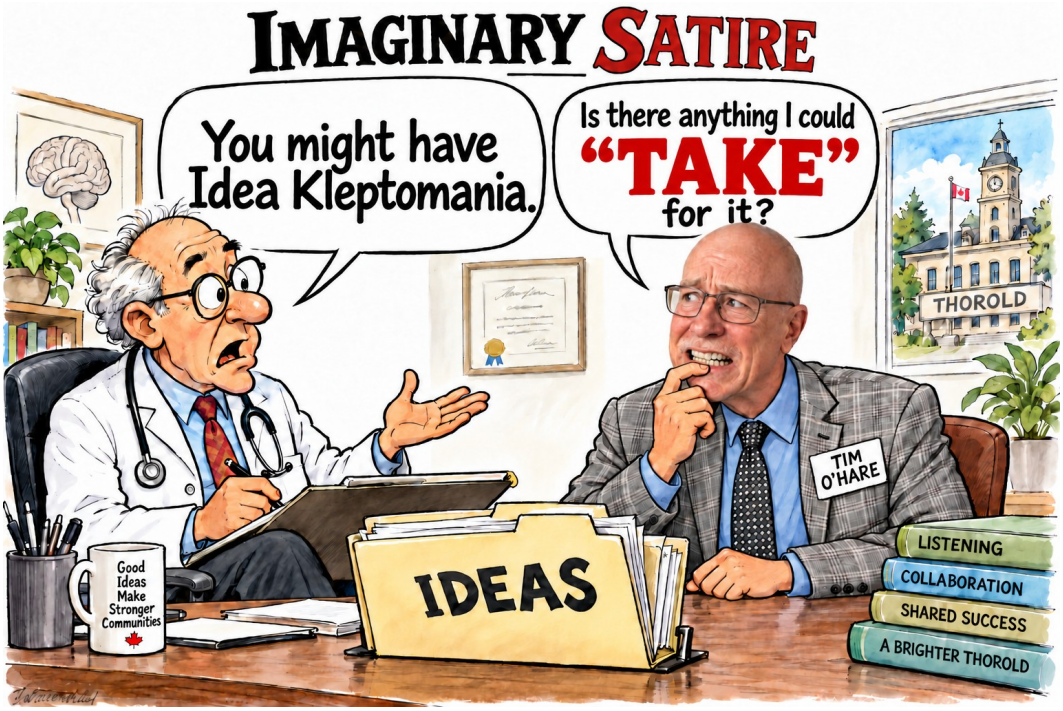
"What about your UN-FAB colleagues?"

"Doctor, I came here for real serious help."

The doctor studies him. "You might have Idea Kleptomania."

O'Hare leans forward hopefully.

"**IS THERE ANYTHING I COULD 'TAKE' FOR IT?**"



In the musical version of this imaginary story, Elton John turns up in person to teach O'Hare "Sorry Seems to Be the Hardest Word." However, O'Hare insists it's an instrumental.

Apparently, in my municipal theatre, even the apology has been referred back to staff for a report and an ad hoc committee to study its environmental impact.

The work outside the photograph

Back to David Jim Handley, affectionately known to many as Jimmy.

To me and many others, Jimmy's public service was never confined to the council chamber. I think of food giveaways, people needing help and residents looking for someone who would listen when they felt no one else would. Some of that work attracted attention. Some of it did not.

That second category matters. A person can do a great deal for a city without hiring a photographer to establish that it happened.

Jimmy was not auditioning to become a somebody. He already had something useful to do.

In my imaginary Justin Trudeau School of Selfies, the UN-FAB FOUR all graduate with honors. The final examination is simple: find a camera, locate the center of the frame and explain how the person doing the work should move slightly to the left.

Jimmy, meanwhile, would be outside asking whether someone needed a hand carrying the boxes.

Was he perfect? No. Nobody who has spent years in municipal politics gets to leave with an untouched halo. I am not asking anyone to agree with every position he took. **I am asking us to recognize the person and the service behind the arguments.**

My concern and that of many other voters is that people who keep saying yes to a community can end up giving more than anyone should reasonably expect. Jimmy's good nature sometimes seemed to make "no" the hardest word in his vocabulary.

There is a difference between recognizing that generosity and simply assuming it will always be available.

And when someone who has helped others needs support himself, a community ought to remember its own address. **Helping should run both ways.**

I hope more of the stories of Jimmy's service are told over time, with the people involved speaking for themselves. Let the record grow through their accounts. **A results sheet has room for a number beside a name. It does not have room for every person that name helped.**

My imaginary election autopsy will have plenty to say about political performance. **Jimmy's contribution deserves a longer memory than election night.**

And a genuine word of thanks to Mike De Divitiis: when push came to shove on council and Jimmy needed your vote, you came through for him. Without revisiting the specifics, that deserves recognition. I cannot let a good deed pass without giving credit where it is due. **Good on you, Mike.**

A nobody with somebody waiting

I have written before about the freedom of becoming a nobody.

When I retired, I imagined going to Speedy for validation. You remember the old idea: at Speedy, You Are A Somebody.

In my version, they refused to serve me.

"Sorry, Mr. Bozza. You're retired. You're a nobody now."

Finally. Recognition validating my arrival!

I had spent years working toward the day when I could go somewhere without being a somebody with a responsibility. Being a nobody can mean being perfectly comfortable with who you are, even when nobody else is keeping score. That will be our little secret.

Jimmy does not need an election result to validate his existence or value either. But if he takes a road trip looking for a little reassurance to Speedy, we should be waiting with a coffee and a cigar.

No speeches required. Although, knowing municipal politics, someone will propose a steering committee to determine whether the coffee is within scope.

Jimmy is an original. They broke the mould when they made Jimmy. I think that mould belongs in the Thorold historical museum, beside an imaginary exhibit entitled "Public Service Before Everything Needed a Photo."

The UN-FAB FOUR can have the interactive display. Press a button and it asks why you are asking so many questions.

As for outgoing Mayor Terry Ugulini, my assessment of his political leadership remains far less generous. But today's spotlight belongs to Jimmy. Even my imaginary L'Oréal appointment desk can wait. Jimmy's send-off should not become somebody else's audition.

I would like the City to give acting deputy mayor Jim Handley an opportunity to chair a council meeting before his term ends, subject to the proper arrangements. **Declare a Jimmy Handley Day.** Hold a modest, publicly accounted-for civic reception at the City's expense, and let residents thank him.

Give him a microphone that O'Hare refused to use at his speech at the nominees Meet and Greet at the seniors center. **Give him a proper acknowledgement.** And give him a few minutes without someone trying to claim the whole thing was their idea.

And if O'Hare attends, perhaps Jimmy should chair it remotely from somewhere warm—even if it is also Mayor Ugulini's last night. In my imaginary version, the connection is excellent. It is the irony that keeps cutting out. Maybe Handley should fill in for Ugulini, complete with an imitation of his high-pitched nasal voice?

Would Nella Dekker even show up? I would like to think so. I remember Jimmy being helpful to her when she started as a councillor, which makes what I see as her later treatment of him especially disappointing.

In my imaginary council snack mystery, I can find only one possible explanation: did Jimmy take her last biscuit? Surely, we can settle this without a staff report. Bring a replacement packet and declare a ceasefire. After that, let's leave the snacks outside the chamber.

For once, the minutes could record something uncomplicated: thank you.

Clarence has the final word

Then there is Clarence, the guardian angel from "It's a Wonderful Life".

In my imaginary Thorold sequel, he comes back to show us what this city might have looked like without Jimmy Handley: fewer ideas, more heavy lifting left undone, calls not answered, help not offered, and a resident who gave up because there was nobody left to ask.

The point is not that one man did everything. **It is that one person choosing to help can change what happens next.** And after enough years, those small changes become part of a city.

Clarence tells me Jimmy has earned his wings.

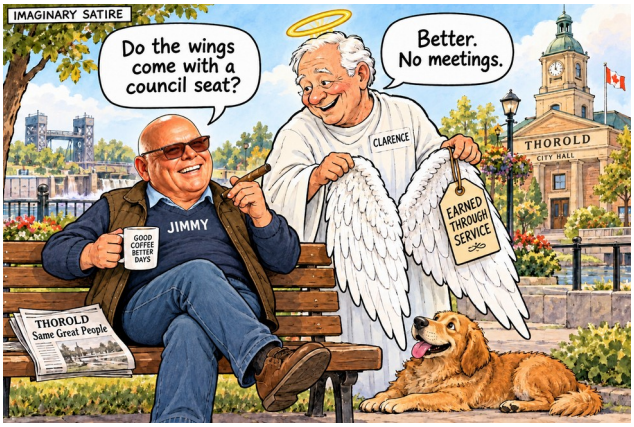
"What about a halo?" I ask.

"Those take longer, Nick. We are recognizing public service. Let's not get ahead of ourselves."

I ask whether the UN-FAB FOUR have theirs.

"Nick," he says, "this is an awards department. Not a costume rental."

He tells me this remotely, naturally. In my imaginary story, O'Hare immediately asks whether Clarence has submitted a written report and if the bandwidth from heaven's cloud was even legal.



So here is my farewell to Jimmy's time on council: enjoy the coffee. Enjoy the cigar. Enjoy the rare pleasure of an evening that does not include an agenda package.

Thorold still needs people like you. I hope the city keeps your number, and I hope it remembers to call sometimes just to ask how you are.

An election can end a term. It cannot erase the good already done.

Jimmy, with or without hair, **YOU'RE STILL WORTH IT**—and probably always will be.

And if Clarence comes calling, we'll need a different ringtone—
the Amber Alert alarm is already taken by the UN-FAB FOUR voting together or Nella sneaking a snack during council meetings.

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Disclosures

This article expresses Nicholas Bozza's opinions. The imagined scenes, dialogue, medical consultation, comic diagnoses, museum exhibits and Clarence sequel are fictional satire, not reports of actual events. Political judgments and recollections are the author's; Handley's account of the farmers' market is attributed to his published candidate statement. References to brands, songs and fictional characters imply no affiliation or endorsement. The cartoons depict invented scenes; Handley's likeness in the Clarence cartoon comes from the original L'Oréal salon cartoon.

References

ThoroldToday, "Know Your Candidates: David (Jim) Handley," September 21, 2026 — source for Handley's account of the farmers' market.

Handley's published candidate statement on his Facebook page.