

Candidates talk arts and culture

By Kyla Corpuz

FORT ST. JOHN – The Arts Council hosted an all-candidates forum on Nov. 3.

The open discussion saw Fort St. John councillor candidates and two School District 60 trustee candidates, Jaret Thompson and Darrell Pasichnyk.

Mayoral candidates were at a prior engagement at the Fort St. John Petroleum Association.

The forum was an opportunity for the public to engage with candidates on current issues surrounding the arts, culture, history and tourism in the city.

The discussion covered a whole spectrum of thoughts and ideas. It started off with downtown revitalization.

Some aspects that came up were the possibility of underground parking to couple with the use of space from the old Fort Hotel.

Counc. Larry Evans was against the idea of implementing additional parking. He said it would deter people from walking and using, the already not so used, transit system.

What he did offer was an idea to use the soon-to-be vacant fire hall on 94 St. and 100 Ave. as a possible location to house art and culture clubs like Stage North.

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ARTS

Nov 3, 2011

Kyla Corpuz photo

Councillor candidates and two School District 60 zone five candidates gathered for an open discussion about the city's arts, culture, tourism and history sector hosted by the Arts Council on Nov. 3.

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whose rehearsal space is currently operated out of a basement.

Sue Popesku, Stage North executive director, supported that idea.

Tourism also made its way into the discussion when one attendee brought up utilizing the Peace River, by making it more accessible to tourists.

While some current and new councillor candidates agreed that it could benefit the tourism sector, others, like new candidates Carol Kube and Brandon Joice were not as keen, stating that capitalizing on the area could mean that it would lose its "natural beauty" and "what it really means."

The discussion made a turn that started to focus on funding and the competition that the arts sector seems to have against sport and recreation.

Many members of the arts council said they were tired of asking the city for money to keep their programs afloat and made a notion that sports and recreation seemed to be favoured more in the city.

Davies said both pillars were equally important, but stated that most municipalities fund recreation more than arts.

Current council members, Trevor Bolin and Dan Davies pointed out that the facilities used by sports members like the Pomeroy Sport Centre are city owned as with the North Peace Cultural Centre which the city spends upwards of \$600,00 on.

The second all-candidates forum took place on Nov. 9, and had a more board-ranged discussion.