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MARKHAM VOTES: Mayoral candidates face off on controversies surrounding developers

Mayor Frank Scarpitti running for re-election against deputy mayor Don Hamilton in 2022 Markham municipal election

By [Irene Wong](#), [Scarlett Liu](#), Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

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More than 100 residents packed in the hall of Thornlea Secondary School in Thornhill on Oct. 13 for the all-candidates debate organized by the Aileen-Willowbrook Residents Association (AWRA) and Ward 1 (South) Thornhill Residents Inc. (WOSTRI), featuring two candidates vying for the position of Markham mayor.

It's a two-person race for mayor, with incumbent Frank Scarpitti running for re-election against challenger Don Hamilton, the current deputy mayor and regional councillor.

Though Hamilton and Scarpitti were sitting on opposite end of the stage during the debate, the battle for mayor had the spotlight. Hamilton and Scarpitti addressed each other as "my opponent" throughout the meeting and brought up dirt on their opponent.



When the topic of conflict of interest came up, Hamilton was the first to respond, saying: “When I was first elected, I paid for my own campaign, not a nickel fee from anybody. For three terms, as a local councillor, I paid for my own campaign.”

Hamilton said he has since started taking donations, including those from developers, because it is required by the provincial government to fundraise for a mayoral campaign.

“The only option is to go to the people, which I've done, including developers, including anybody, in fact, anybody who would like to make a contribution to my campaign.”

Scarpitti replied by saying, “Well, I'll tell you, things have changed. Not only is he getting contributions, but these are directly approaching them.” He continued to read an email sent to the developer but did not quote name of the sender. “We will work well together in the past and hope to continue our positive relationship going forward.”

He continued, “And developers will also tell you that they've had personal phone calls from my opponent, sometimes with some slight intimidation, and I'm afraid you don't let them come forward at the appropriate time.”

A testy exchange was triggered when the moderator brought up the question of lobbyist registry.

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Hamilton supported a lobbyist registry and said the developers do not have a problem with it.

“However, my opponent, your current mayor, said that he can meet with anybody he wants any time he wants, anywhere he wants, and he doesn't have to report anything. And I said, Mr. Mayor, nobody cares if you meet with this person in that place at that time. We just want you to report it. And he said no.”

Scarpitti said he is not hiding anything. “We meet with developers. This is the work that we do and at the end of the day, I say judge me on the results.

“Any time I meet with a developer, it's not about doing something for them. It's about doing something for you. When they come to us and show us their plans, I want to make sure of what that building is going to look like.”

Scarpitti continued to strike back, saying, “I've had a document that recalled the deputy mayor and how many times we met with Liberty to get the property. How long do you think that would have stayed a secret? How long do you think those negotiations would have happened? What my opponent wanted to know when we published all those proposals in the council? He didn't say this is great for the community. His first question was, why is Liberty doing this?”

The transparency of council activities had also touched off a debate on another public meeting that happened on Oct. 3, hosted at Swan Lake Village. Hamilton cited the need for better transparency and noted that he supported lobbyist registry, but Scarpitti had voted against a new registry that would require all council members to record who they were meeting and for what reason. Scarpitti said it is well known that he and all councillors meet with developers on a regular basis and that he often meets with businesses exploring moving their operations to Markham. He reinstated that a registry recording these meetings would serve no practical purpose.

Irene Wong is a reporter for the Markham Economist & Sun and YorkRegion.com. Irene speaks English, Cantonese and Mandarin. Connect with her at iwong@metroland.com.

Scarlett Liu is a Local Journalism Initiative (LJI) journalist working for Torstar Community Brands, York Region. She covers news in Markham and Richmond Hill, with a focus on the Chinese community. She speaks English and Chinese. The LJI supports the creation of original civic journalism. Scarlett Liu是多倫多星報旗下社區新聞的一名Local Journalism Initiative記者，她主要負責萬錦市和烈治文山市的社區新聞，特別關注華裔社區，可以講中英雙語。Local Journalism Initiative旨在支持原創新聞，以滿足加拿大各地，不同社區的新聞需求。作為這個倡議的一部分，並且為了更好地服務華人社區，yorkregion.com現推出精選文章中文版，希望大家支持

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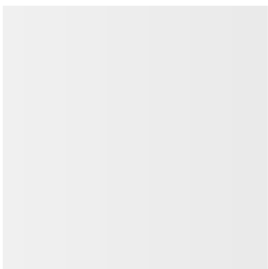
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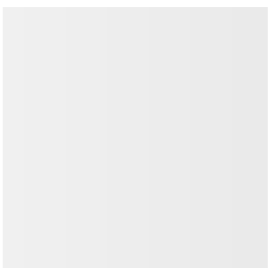
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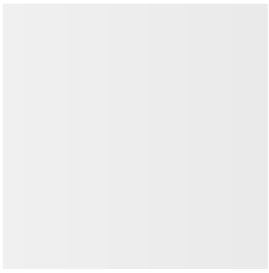
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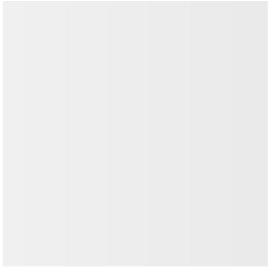


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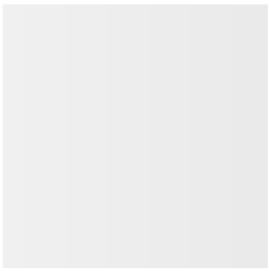
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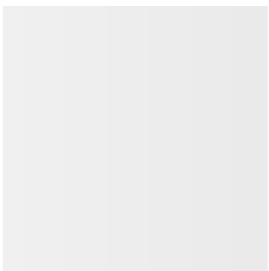
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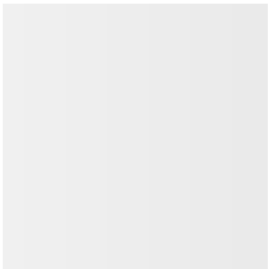
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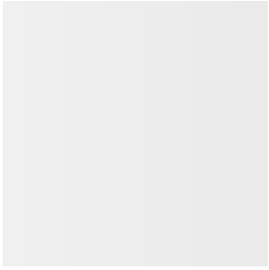


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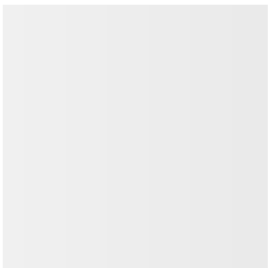
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