

GUELPH-ERAMOSIA MAYOR WHITE ELECTED WARDEN OF THE COUNTY

December 11, 2010 - Scott Tracey

WELLINGTON COUNTY — Guelph-Eramosa Township Mayor Chris White was yesterday elected warden of the county. White, who was not publicly challenged for the county's top elected office, was nominated by Councillor Gord Tosh, who a couple of hours earlier had made his own bid for the warden's chair. Councillors met prior to the 11 a.m. start of the public meeting to elect their warden and the chairs of the various standing committees. The successful candidates were then "acclaimed" during the public session, which was crammed with relatives, former councillors and county staff.

"We had a gentleman's agreement to accept the outcome of the paper ballot," Tosh said after the meeting. "It avoids the situation where someone loses 15-1 with all their friends and family there." County chief administrative officer Scott Wilson noted the county used to vote by paper ballot before the public meeting, then switched to holding its votes for committee chairs in public. "We've reverted back to a more humane form of committee selection," he said, comparing the private vote to "the way you vote for your councillor or MPP"

Wilson said councillors decided during a recent orientation session to change the method of election. He conceded when councillors met Friday morning to vote for warden and committee chairs they were not yet councillors — having not been sworn in until later in the morning — "but they ratified that decision later during the public meeting."

White, 52, is the first county warden elected to a two-year term since councillors voted in late 2009 to extend the job from one year to two. Outgoing warden Joanne Ross-Zuj remained in the chair for two years by serving back-to-back one-year stints. White cited repairing the county's fractured relationship with Guelph among his priorities.

"We've got to take a good look at what we can do to repair that relationship with a fresh start," he said. City councillors Jim Furfaro, Cam Guthrie, June Hofland, Maggie Laidlaw and Leanne Piper were among those who came out to the inaugural county council meeting.

White said he will also continue to work on building partnerships between the county and its seven member municipalities on economic development strategies. "There's money out there if you can make the right connections," he said. "We need to attract more industrial, commercial and institutional development and take the tax pressure off the residential sector."

Wellington-Halton Hills MPP Ted Arnott and John Wilkinson, his counterpart from Perth-Wellington, both also attended the meeting.