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**BEEN THERE.
DONE THAT.**

**RENFREW'S MUNICIPAL ELECTION
DECISION 2026**

PART 2: THE BEEN THERE AND DONE THATS

The next cadre of candidates seeking election as councillor are three veterans, two having been previously elected as councillor, one a previous mayor, one an unsuccessful candidate for mayor, and a third who was a department head who also took a crack at council in 2022 but came up short.

In other words, all three of these candidates were candidates back in the 2022 election, two going down in the mayor's race and the third unsuccessful as a candidate for councillor.

All three have name recognition. They are Sandi Heins, Kate Windle, and Guy Longtin.

SANDI HEINS: (861 votes for mayor in 2022)

Of the candidates running for council as councillors, Sandi Heins has by far the most padded résumé in the pack when it comes to political experience. She alone comes the closest to Peter Emon in this regard, and she wouldn't be far off in my estimation, although Emon is running on the other side as a candidate for mayor.

Heins served as Renfrew's mayor for twelve years, from 1998 to 2010, so in that sense, her name recognition is essentially unrivalled. She also served as a councillor on the 2018 to 2022 council, before running for mayor again and finishing only a dozen points back of the eventual winner, Tom Sidney.

For the number of years that Ms. Heins has served her community, it would be completely understandable to consider her as an "institutional" candidate because of her vast experience and understanding of how the place works. She would also represent what could be referred to as institutional memory, having been around long enough to know where the salt shakers are hidden.

Being a council member for that length of time would have to be considered a considerable strength, and it is, or would be in any other election other than the one in 2026. Because while on council as a councillor, she was part of the notorious 2018-2022 council that appears to have fumbled the ball over Ma-Te-Way. That said, hers was the only name I'm aware of who voiced significant concerns around the reporting of the *Director of Parks and Recreation* and his seeming inability to follow established protocols. My apologies to any others around the table who may have voiced similar concerns around Ma-Te-Way at the time, but still, I've only heard her name as one who knew something was wrong.



This is a peculiar thing in governance, especially municipal governance I suppose. As a councillor, as Heins was, your political antennae, procedural knowledge and experience can alert you to something that's just not right, and perhaps not right at all. I've said before that Ma-Te-Way got past quite a few experienced politicians and it's hard to fully understand that. And yes, Heins was one of those politicians, fair and square. It would be easy to criticize Ms. Heins for not following up on those concerns, but that would be unfair criticism in my mind. Anybody who knows how Town Hall works would be able to tell you that councillors are not political rainmakers, nor do they have very much power at all. In fact, I would argue they have essentially none, and exist merely to put their hands in the air to vote on things. Councillors are continually rebuffed by senior staff when requesting information, a situation that really makes a person wonder who it is that's actually in charge of the place. If you thought the mayor and councillors were, well, you'd be wrong.



So yes, even if you're Sandi Heins, with that impressive political résumé and a former mayor yourself, there's no way you're going to be able to penetrate that iron curtain of silence that the bureaucrats have built for themselves. The absurdity of a town councillor needing to file a freedom of information request for basic information is not far-fetched. It's one of the reasons I could never be a councillor. All this said, I am unaware of any subsequent attempts to get

greater clarity on Ma-Te-Way by Heins, although, as I said, she did express concerns, as she and many others ought to have.

One problem with being involved in municipal politics for an extended period of time is that your name can stick to events perceived as negative by the general community. Although nothing will come close to the danger Ma-Te-Way might represent to her prospects, her longevity has also seen her name come up prominently in other things as well, such as the whole George Jackson Toyota thing that cost the town a major provider of important tax revenue. Because of back and forth disagreements around development fees and the like, the dealership, who are no strangers to playing hardball themselves, picked up stakes and jumped the fence to build their new dealership in Horton Township, something I'm sure Horton is delighted with. Except for possibly the part of having to deal with them.

Again, not necessarily her fault, but she was in the thick of it.

This represents the thankless job that it is to be a politician and then decision-maker. Every decision amounts to almost a zero-sum affair where there often winners and losers, not just in campaigns but in council votes. And for some unfortunate reason, people tend to remember their "losses" more than their "wins" in the sense that, the people angry at you for your decision seem to have better memories than the people whose wishes you supported. So despite being a leader of some respect, people tend to remember you for the times you went against their wishes, and forget you for all the times you voted in support of the things they wanted.

Absolutely unfair, but there it is.

Another vulnerability may be the "*time for a change*" thing that is definitely an uphill battle to deal with. When people start getting into their heads the notion of "*out with the old and in with the new,*" then veteran politicians like Sandi Heins many face headwinds despite their experience. There may be a desire for new blood on council, and if that thought gets any legs as time closes in on election day, it can be troublesome for Heins.

How she fares on election night will be one of the more interesting stories of this campaign. ChatGPT has her finishing first among councillors, but readers are advised not to throw all in on chat-bot responses. Bots aren't human and they don't get angry.

But people do.

GUY LONGTIN

As I said, I don't have the voting results for unsuccessful candidates from the 2022 municipal election because, well, I guess that's just the way they do it. But I do know that Guy Longtin was indeed unsuccessful in that effort.

Longtin represents one of the better stories among council candidates.

As the town's fire chief and a firefighter for over thirty years, Longtin has sat at the council table as a head of department perhaps longer than any other candidate has as an elected politician. So with that, Mr. Longtin stands as the only candidate who has also served as a member of the town's administrative staff. That kind of experience could be worth something.



Another thing about him being the former chief is that he was fired for being too old to be a fire chief. He was only sixty years of age at the time.

There was some suggestion that this was all part of a personality struggle with former Mayor Don Eady, since Eady was the subject of a harassment complaint filed by Longtin. Then, not long after, suddenly there's this motion on the floor to cap the fire chief's service ceiling at the age of sixty, right where Longtin was at the time. If true, it certainly wouldn't surprise me because the politics practiced by council members and town staff isn't necessarily the

prettiest form of the art, and while a terrible thing to say, the knives seem to come out pretty quickly.

The council at that time sided with Eady and Longtin was let go, whereupon the now deposed fire chief filed a wrongful dismissal suit claiming discrimination by virtue of age. I don't know about wins and losses, but there was a settlement payout for Mr. Longtin, a sure-fire indicator that he was successful to some degree with his case. I believe there is also the ubiquitous non-disclosure condition surrounding the outcome of that case, because, well, this town likes to keep its secrets. Especially when it comes to covering up embarrassments.

I think Mr. Longtin's chances are dependant upon how he fares versus the crop of newcomers and the other two candidates in this category. He was in the same 2022 race with the four incumbent councillors and they out-pollled him significantly. Short of a major decline in the fortunes of his opponents, or an out-of world performance over the course of the campaign, I don't know how he can generate additional numbers that would support him challenging any of the incumbents. In my view, Mr. Longtin is in the fight for the fifth and sixth council seats.

There is clearly some substance to this candidate, but I think we're just going to have to wait and see what happens on election day. That said, Guy Longtin may surprise.

KATE WINDLE: (168 votes for mayor in 2022)

In 508 BCE, the Greeks, and more specifically the Athenians, began the practice of democracy. One year later, in 507 BCE, Kate Windle ran in her first campaign for public office. And she's been running ever since.

You have to admire her pluck, because sometimes she gets elected, and has in fact been elected as a councillor previously. As I said, this sometimes successful candidate has taken a stab at just about everything on offer when it comes to council, running for mayor last time out to go along with all of her attempts, including some past success, in running as a councillor.

In 2022 she ran for mayor, and it didn't go well for Kate. She finished the race next to last, and was barely ahead of Cal Scott, which for better or worse, says something.



That said, that was a race for mayor, not council, and she has been elected to council before, so people need to look at her as a serious enough contender.

Some interesting background with respect to Windle is that she is both a barber and a media company owner, which I guess sort of counts as one stop-shopping if you're in the market for a trim and a new website.

I don't know if Kathryn will be able to overtake the incumbents in this race. One singular advantage that she holds is the fact that she was not part of the 2018-2022 council that birthed the Ma-Te-Way disaster, whereas another veteran, Sandi Heins, was. So it'll be interesting to see how that plays out, if in fact it plays out at all.