

Council votes down motion to review governance of Aurora Farmers' Market



By Brock Weir

It is business as usual for the Aurora Farmers' Market after Council voted down a motion from Councillor Evelyn Buck to take a closer look at its governance last week.

Councillor Buck's motion to have municipal staff review the existing Farmers' Market bylaw to ensure vendor representation with a view of achieving problem-free management and efficient communication failed to get a seconder at the Council table ensuring the motion went undiscussed.

The motion was spawned after a series of appearances before Council by former Market vendor David Heard who spoke out against what he thought was unfair placement for his booth that did not take into account his hearing loss.

After years of manning his stall featuring crafts, art, and other items that promote Aurora's heritage outside of Wells Street School, the Market executive placed his booth in Town Park across from the band shell, which he said would cause him undue hearing problems on special event days when bands take to the stage.

Before Council reached the point to discuss Councillor Buck's motion, they were addressed by Market Chair Anna Kroeplin who took aim at the clause suggesting better representation on the Market executive.

The Market and two staff members work diligently to contribute to the vendors' success that includes drawing customers, working closely with the Health department to be in compliance, assuring safe food handling, and we also uphold safety for our vendors and the public and volunteers.

Meetings are held once a month and minutes are taken to document proceedings. The Committee members are selected firstly by being past members to retain our intellectual capital and experience. We start to receive outdoor applications in February. We start to review these applications mid-March and we submit our final vendor layout plan in early April. Each application is screened to ensure they are in compliance with the AFM constitution and policies, the rules and regulation criteria of Farmers' Markets Ontario, York Region Health Services, and the Town bylaw.

Although Councillor John Abel questioned why, in this case, farmers rather than artisans and other vendors were not coming forward to be part of the executive committee, Ms. Kroeplin suggested it would require an investment in time.

Mr. Heard, who was also in the audience, followed Ms. Kroeplin as a delegate to once again state his case. Judging by the presentation and the tone at the table, he said it did not give him hope that his case would gain traction.

?After hearing the presentation, I feel like I am probably ending a long tenure at the Market because for whatever is right, for whatever is good, and for whatever is just, I stand here humbled but I need to tell the truth,? he said. ?I believe every attempt was done this year by myself to be clear?that I have a concern for my safety and health. I didn't tell people I had a hearing challenge. Until lately, I was a member, proud to tell people that I can be a little bit loud and I can be hard to talk to sometimes because I can read lips.?

His issue, he said, was sensory, stemming from 60 per cent hearing in his left ear, which is hyper-sensitive. Being in line with the band shell would have ?adverse impacts? on him.

?I am asking you, maybe not for me, but moving forward for everyone else,? he said. ?I am appealing to Council today for all people with sensory disabilities and hearing challenges. I may not be visually disabled, but I do tell you I have a disability and it is difficult because unless people can see it, they don't recognize it.? Before he finished, he added he disagreed with comments made about the Market's electoral process, having sat on the board himself.

?The most important thing for me is inclusivity. I would like everyone moving forward with accommodations to be included in the Farmers' Market.?