

Farmers' Market aims to stay in Town Park

By Brock Weir

The conversion of the former Wells Street School to a condominium development caused some concern for vendors and patrons of the Aurora Farmers' Market over the future of the Saturday mainstay on their Downtown Aurora home.

In fact, this was the wish of all parties ? but now Councillor Sandra Humfryes, Council's liaison with the Aurora Farmers' Market, is looking to make sure the principle is enshrined.

With new residents of the Wells Street Schoolhouse Lofts set to begin moving into their new homes later this spring, the occupancy will need a rejigging of the Market's configuration with the east side of Wells Street devoted to market vendors on Saturday morning. But, it is hoped by both the Market and Councillor Humfryes that the slack can be absorbed within Town Park.

This idea, however, recently received pushback from municipal staff, including Al Downey, Parks and Recreation Director, who said having vendor vehicles in Town Park would present liability concerns.

Councillor Humfryes Notice of Motion, which is set to be discussed later this month, calls for all parties to work together to develop a new layout in Town Park.

?I am hoping it will [receive staff support],? says Councillor Humfryes. ?Based on the last discussion, it doesn't sound very positive but the residents really want to keep the market in the park. It is what differentiates our Farmers' Market from other communities.

?I get comments from all over saying there is an ambiance at Town Park that is not in many other markets, so we want to keep it there. It works and we want to do everything we can to reduce any liability and we'll make sure we get it there. I am really hoping we [all] work together to find a way to get there.?

Some of the legwork is already done, she adds, working with Fire Prevention Officers at Central York Fire Services to come up with a plan for Wells Street that would not be of concern.

?They took a look at the plan and were very comfortable having vendors on the east side of Wells Street,? she says. ?The plan is to do as much as possible keeping the Town safe, reducing liabilities for sure, but working together with staff and Council to get everyone into alignment, where everyone is safe, and we can still have a great Farmers' Market in the park.?