

Plans come forward for 2013 music fest: The Pitches

By Brock Weir

When it rains, it pours ? but the recent music festival drought in Aurora was quenched last week by a two interested parties wanting to pick up the slack.

Little more than a week after Council decided to scrap hopes for a 2013 music festival and cast their sights on 2014 instead, two groups came forward see if something could be salvaged for this year. While the proposals came from both from within and outside of the community, community is the very focus of what both groups pitched to Council on Tuesday.

The first, was a music and arts festival pitched by Habachat, a local social media company.

?Our main mandate is to support our local community, local charities and local businesses by running local events,? said Tim Newnham of Habachat. ?We have successfully created a number of events like Iron Chef Aurora, and Taste of Aurora, and we have a strong belief that engaging the local community members and local events is the way we have a vital community. That is our belief and we will continue to do that with events four times a year throughout the Town to engage that.

?Our vision is to have more of a grassroots type of thing and take it back to Aurora Town Park. We would like this not just to be a music festival, but a cultural event that includes music, the arts and crafts, and local food artisans.?

In his presentation, Mr. Newnham underscored Habachat's relationships with local restaurants and ?foodies? through their two upcoming events this week and said their vision for the Town Park event included running it in a similar way to Concerts in the Park and Dancing In The Park, two existing Town initiatives, but run over two days instead.

?We want to run the event with local business owners and committees, the same as we're doing with Taste of Aurora and Iron Chef Aurora. Our desire is to have 100 per cent local involved, he added, noting this extends to local sponsorships and revenue generation.

Their plan also looks to the Town with help towards street and electronic signage.

The second proposal came from Farley Flex, former Canadian Idol judge, and a former principle of Lucid Community Development, which previously came forward with a plan for the Aurora Live! music festival at Machell Park for the last weekend of July.

That plan imploded earlier this spring when Mr. Flex and a number of celebrities associated with Lucid broke away from the company and formed one of their own. Mr. Flex's REAL Corp proposed the ?Celebrate Aurora? festival in the same location and the same weekend.

?Foundational to our intent is the inclusion of the community, especially youth through the REAL School model,? said Mr. Flex, citing his plan to provide youth with hands-on experiences with every facet of the entertainment business both on stage and behind the scenes.

?We are aware that time is running short, however, our wheels have not stopped turning,? he said. ?If approved, we will welcome any and all support that Council and any community members may provide. Sponsorship opportunities will be sought, as well as community partnerships and local talent, to us, is an absolute must. In terms of the features, Celebrate Aurora is 19 hours of live stage entertainment with talent of all sorts, secured locally and through some really great working relationships.?

If approved, Mr. Flex said his model would include ?colourful and exciting? play areas for children, local vendors and artisans, a beer tent, and involvement from community organizations.

?Celebrate Aurora is about inclusivity,? he concluded. ?Diversity is one of Ontario's most appealing attributes and we believe that an inclusive approach better prepares residents of Aurora for the changing demographics of the Region. Our culture is defined by its food, its music, its art, its fashion and its languages. We welcome participants from the entire spectrum to reach out to us and get involved as we will reach out to them.?

Although Council authorised staff to discuss options with both parties for what will ultimately happen that weekend, there is no clear picture yet on the horizon of what that picture will be. Nevertheless, after their presentations, both men expressed a willingness to look at the possibility of putting their heads together and forming some sort of collaboration in the weeks ahead.