

Business Excellence Awards to return in 2017 after five year hiatus

By Brock Weir

After a nearly five year hiatus, the best of Aurora's business community will once again be saluted by the Town and the Chamber of Commerce.

The Aurora Chamber of Commerce plans to re-launch their annual Business Excellence Awards Gala.

The popular annual event, which recognizes a host of local businesses in a variety of categories, was once the preeminent event in the Aurora Chamber of Commerce calendar, but was mothballed for a year while the Chamber looked at restructuring.

That was in 2012.

Now, as the Chamber looks to rebrand, it's also looking at a revival.

"This event celebrates the successes of local business and shines a spotlight on the achievements of local business people," said Chamber Board President Javed Khan at Monday night's Budget meeting where he sought a \$10,000 sponsorship from Council to make the event a reality.

On Monday night, the Chamber was among a group that included the Aurora Public Library, Aurora Cultural Centre, Aurora Historical Society, and Aurora Community Arboretum, making their respective budget pitches to local lawmakers.

"It is long overdue," said Mr. Khan of the awards' relaunch, noting it will take place in Aurora rather than several recent events which have been held by the Chamber in King Township. "When I took over as Chair, of the nine Chambers of Commerce in York Region we were the only Chamber that was not celebrating business. To me, it got to a level of ridiculousness. We looked at why [we weren't] and why it has been so long, and we just realised it is time. We had to bring it back and there was no choice."

Next year, he said, will introduce a number of new categories including sports businesses and businesses that have been particularly supportive of the sporting arena.

While the \$10,000 ask will be considered by Council at a future Budget meeting, the next one is set for next Monday, November 28 at 7 p.m. in Council Chambers. Council members hailed the event's return, as well as its location.

"I was going to say it was one of my 'pet peeves', but it is more than that, that the Aurora Chamber of Commerce would be holding its events outside of Aurora, so thank you," said Councillor Wendy Gaertner.

Added Councillor Mrakas: "I think it is excellent to promote the businesses within the Town to show them off, in essence, and show the Town what we do have here."

The Chamber also announced new initiatives set for 2017, including a springtime Aurora Businesswomen's Summit, for which they requested \$2,500 in municipal support.

"This event is focused on meeting the need of women entrepreneurs, professionals and business owners here in Aurora," said Mr. Khan. "The mission of the summit is to address the concerns of local businesswomen with a one-day conference featuring keynote speakers and breakout sessions based on pertinent topics for women in business."