

Community Craft Beer Festival set for June

Craft beer lovers are expected to descend on Machell Park this June for the Community Craft Beer Festival.

Set for June 17 ? 19, the Festival, which was held twice in Newmarket prior to the global pandemic, will feature scores of Ontario breweries, cideries, distilleries and fare from local restaurants, catering companies and food trucks ? including Niagara College's Canadian Food & Wine Institute at the Aurora Armoury.

Council gave the tentative green light to the Festival application at last week's General Committee meeting. The decision, which is set to be confirmed at Council on April 26, will pave the way for the Father's Day weekend event.

?Previously operated as the Newmarket Craft Beer Festival, the event location is not available in Newmarket this year and organizers have requested a permit for Machell Park in order to relocate the event,? John Firman, Manager of Business Support for the Town of Aurora. ?As part of an annual series, this event is planned for Father's Day weekend each year.

?As per the application, the Community Craft Beer Festival, in partnership with the Canadian Food & Wine Institute (CFWI) features a variety of food and beverage vendors, culinary artisans, Ontario producers, workshops, demos, activities and entertainment.?

While Council ultimately approved the application, Councillor Rachel Gilliland said she was cautious about giving their full approval as this event has not taken place in Aurora before. A better path, she said, would keep the door open for keeping tabs on the application as it moves forward.

?This is a vendor we haven't worked with before,? she said. ?This simply isn't a rinse and repeat; I love the idea of having a craft beer festival here, I think it is great for our Town; however, I have to make sure they're following all the rules and crossing all their Ts and dotting their Is.

?While I really want to see this event happening ? I am in full support of staff reviewing the application and the permitting process as we're going through this since we haven't worked with this vendor before.?

Asking staff whether it is something they would recommend, Mr. Firman said it is simply a matter of authorizing them to hold the event on Town property through existing municipal policies, and staff underscored Council's involvement was giving the thumbs-up to their alcohol permit application.

The majority of Council supported the application outright, saying it was a great event to bring to Aurora from Newmarket.

?This is a good news story [as] we have an event in Newmarket that is looking to come to Aurora ? bad news for Newmarket, good for Aurora,? said Councillor Michael Thompson, adding that a partnership with the CFWI was what Council envisioned when they partnered with Niagara College on the Armoury. ?I had a brief conversation with the event planners and they told me that their first year in Newmarket, over 8,000 people came though on the weekend. That is a tremendous number to be coming through our Town and visiting.

?I think that is an exciting time and I think this is going to be an exciting event, and also the fact that part of that conversation I had with the event planners is this is not just a one-off, they plan on having this here long-term on an annual basis in the Town of Aurora. They're not leaving. I am looking forward to another successful event.?

By Brock WeirEditorLocal Journalism Initiative Reporter