

Conflict leaves future of Aurora Tigers, Home Show in question

By Jeff Doner

The Aurora Tigers Junior A hockey club and the Aurora Chamber of Commerce are hoping to iron out a few issues with the Town of Aurora this week regarding facility availability for the Aurora Community Centre every April.

Just this spring, a conflict arose when the Aurora Tigers run to the OJHL finals overlapped the Chamber's annual Home Show, causing the Tigers to move their final series home games to York University.

Now, the two sides are looking to the Town to help bridge the gap, starting with a presentation at Town Hall this week.

"We're not looking for much, to be honest with you," Barry Quinn, Tigers VP, said Tuesday. "We [Tigers] need to provide what they call 'continuity of venue' to satisfy the OJHL [and] Hockey Canada and that's all we're really looking for."

Quinn said the OJHL and Hockey Canada are asking the team to have guaranteed availability of ACC#1 every spring for the playoffs, or else the team could face a hefty fine or sanctions from the league and governing body.

"We entertained and exhausted all possible alternatives within the Town of Aurora," he said. "The SARC will never be able to accommodate 500 fans at any one rink and that's part of the Hockey Canada requirement for a venue that you have to provide."

Historically, both long-time tenants have been able to run without trouble, but recent changes by the OJHL to the playoff format have altered things for the Tigers.

Previously, the first two rounds of the playoffs were five games, now they are seven, which has pushed the final end date back and caused the conflict with the Chamber's Home Show in the event the Tigers make it to the finals.

"I don't want anyone thinking that we're going after the Chamber of Commerce, because we're not," Quinn said. "We have to provide continuity of venue and if we can't do that, then we could be sanctioned by the OJHL and Hockey Canada and then we would have to make the decision whether or not we would leave the team in Aurora."

Quinn said that he just wants council and the Town of Aurora to know that the organization's back is against the wall and the issue needs to be figured out by July in order to be ready for training camp on August 15.

As for the Home Show this past spring, Quinn said he understands why the Chamber was unable to move the show last minute and hopes the two sides can work together with the Town for a solution for the future.

"Hopefully we get support from the Town of Aurora to extend the ice availability for two weeks and that's all we want to allow us to continue to operate in the Town of Aurora," Quinn said. "Don't misunderstand me, that doesn't mean we're going to move, I just don't know."

Judy Marshall, CEO of the Aurora Chamber of Commerce, also said she hopes an amicable agreement can be made for the future.

Marshall said the Town was hoping the Chamber would consider moving the date or the location of the Home Show.

"The date can't be changed; we have to do it then, in April. Everyone is booked and it's the cycle we're in," she said. "I'm sure council is wanting to hear that we're willing to move and I'll have to be honest with you, and I'm not sure this will be totally supported, but there will be some very positive things with moving to [SARC] that will be exciting, but the parking is limited, access is limited."

Marshall said if the Home Show is moved, it will take a large amount of planning, restructuring, advertising and essentially the creation of a whole new show.

?It is possible and I think in some ways it will be exciting, but it's just the expense and the planning.?