

Councillor responds to jazz

(Re: Council ?blew it? on music fest, August 21, 2013)

In her letter to The Auroran on August 21, Ms. McNellis mentioned she enjoyed the jazz+ Fest when it was hosted in Aurora. I too enjoyed jazz+ Fest, attending each year. The festival was a great success, in no small part to the talent assembled and the many volunteers who participated.

Ms. McNellis and others are disappointed that the jazz+ Fest chose to leave Aurora and they are not alone. However, it needs to be clearly stated that they left Aurora of their own accord.

The Town has always shown interest in partnering with businesses and organizations, to promote and participate in community events. jazz+ Fest was no different.

Our Council does not waive permit fees for individuals, charities or businesses, but provides support through ?in kind? donations. Service ?in kind? provides valuable assistance to event organizers by assisting with overall funding. In 2012, as in previous years, the Town provided extra benches, garbage receptacles, extended venue space to include the ball diamond, approval of the exterior fencing, extra staff to maintain waste and the washrooms, traffic barrier fencing, lighting of the ball diamond, public notification on the Town web page and notification boards, signage approval on the streets and the use of the Town logo.

This represents thousands of dollars of support to an event.

Further, in 2011, Town Council provided \$5,000 to assist jazz+ Fest. Not an insignificant sum!

With this level of assistance, it is curious that jazz+ Fest further asked the Town in 2012 to waive fees. Under the circumstances, this was an inappropriate request, which was rightfully rejected by Council.

Despite a history of support, jazz+ Fest took the Town logo off their promotions, severing the relationship with the Town. These actions were followed by a series of ill-advised comments from the organizers after last year's event, suggesting that both Mayor Dawe and I should not attend for fear of being rude to senior members of government who were invited.

Despite these actions, Council approved a motion to tender for a music festival in 2013, inviting any group ? including jazz+ Fest ? to submit bids. jazz+ Fest ultimately declined to bid, and another group came forward to host a festival.

Throughout this process, acrimony seems to have abounded. Many residents whom I respect and admire have asked why I didn't do anything to try and resolve the situation. I think the comments made publicly in the pages of this newspaper by the event organizers speak for themselves, in working to exclude me from any potential solution despite a history of support for their efforts.

I understand that the larger venue in Riverwalk Commons in Newmarket worked very well for jazz+Fest this year. I am very pleased that this excellent music festival continues to flourish.

I should point out that it was not with assistance from Newmarket Council but the Newmarket Business Improvement Association that jazz+ Fest found success in their new venue. They did not ask the Town of Newmarket for funding but only for the Mayor and Council to attend the ribbon-cutting.

Apparently they didn't feel that they would be rude.

For those who suggest jazz+ Fest's relocation has anything to do with Aurora Town Council, our well-documented history of ongoing support clearly suggests otherwise.

I am glad we had several years of hosting jazz+ Fest and I wish the organizers continued success in their new location.

Councillor John Abel
Aurora