

Details to be hammered out over Home Show's move to SARC

By Brock Weir

When push came to shove, ultimately the Aurora Tigers' claws had more might than the Aurora Chamber of Commerce.

Further details are set to be hammered out over the next couple of months to ensure the continued success of the Aurora Home Show after they decided to move their operations from the Aurora Community Centre (ACC), their Home Show abode for the last 28 years, to the Stronach Aurora Recreation Complex (SARC).

Although it wasn't the Chamber's choice, it was the only viable option available to them, they said after reaching an impasse with the Aurora Tigers Hockey Team over space at the ACC. Hockey Canada extended their season this year, putting them in direct conflict with the booking held by the Chamber and without any other viable hockey venues in the area, a decision in the other direction would have prompted the Tigers to look for a new home in another town.

After a lengthy debate at the Committee level the previous week, Councillors kept last week's discussions short and sweet, looking for ways to make sure both parties continue to experience success in their community.

?It took a while to come to a solution, there were some challenges, but I think we are getting there,? said Mayor Geoffrey Dawe last week. ?There are still going to be some concerns for the Chamber and we will do our best to work with them to ensure that all those challenges are answered.?

Just what those challenges are, however, remain to be seen, but the Chamber has a good idea ? and lack of parking at the SARC tops the list.

Parking woes are not new to Aurora, and previous examples include the annual Haunted Forest event, held in the lead-up to Hallowe'en each year at Sheppard's Bush. To address this problem, Aurora's Parks and Recreation Department ran a shuttle to Sheppard's Bush from the Aurora Family Leisure Centre parking lot, and could do so in this instance.

In discussions around the Council table, some said they were sympathetic to special provisions asked of Council by the Aurora Chamber to lessen the impact a move to the SARC would have on them.

?It is a huge change for the Chamber,? agreed Councillor Sandra Humfries. ?It is a brand new show, there will be lots of work, there was 28 years of experience behind the previous show, they had it down pat and everyone had a good idea of where things needed to be laid out,? she said. ?I think whatever investment we put forward through staff, and the waiver permitting fees will come back to us from an economic development perspective. The businesses will see that the Town absolutely supports their businesses and to thrive this is integral.?

Councillor Paul Pirri, on the other hand, said he was supportive of looking at what would serve the needs of the Chamber, but said he was reluctant to agree to anything at this point without a full report coming back to Council on various options.

?I think we need to make sure all the cards are on the table so we know everything that is in play,? he said. ?I think it makes sense to do that all at once, when we have the report in front of us. I think it makes sense to look at those options along with every other option we have available to us.?

Expressing a similar view was Councillor Michael Thompson. He underscored Aurora's ?partnership? relationship with both the Tigers and the Chamber and the work everyone put in to finding a ?workable solution.? That being said, options need to be looked at to ?minimize the impact? the shift will have on the Chamber.

?Monetary is one aspect, but there might be logistical issues and I know when they were before us, they were talking about a number

of different things, like parking and so forth, and I would like us to look at the whole situation. Maybe there are other ways we can support them and help them make sure the show is a success.?

Additional concerns raised by Councillor John Abel included getting involvement from Aurora's Economic Development Advisory Committee in helping with ?streamlining? the event and aiding the transition, and possible volunteers to help ?strategize? parking, transportation, and other incentives which might be put into the mix.

For this year's Home Show, the Aurora Chamber of Commerce paid \$10,756 to use the Aurora Community Centre over five days.