

Groups collaborate on new music festival

By Brock Weir

With their permit fees paid and the schedule falling into place, the proposed 2013 Music Festival for the Town of Aurora appears to be a go.

Organizers of the music festival paid their park permit fees last week for the use of Town Park on the last weekend in July 26 ? 28 ? and with a few more Is to dot, a few more Ts to cross, and assembling the lineup of local talent is the next step in the process.

After the Aurora Jazz+ Festival packed up their guitars and drums to head to Newmarket and a potential deal on a music festival with Lucid Productions fell through after a significant chunk of the talent left the organization, two groups came forward this spring for a chance to hold a music festival.

The first was Habachat, a local social media company, run by Aurora's Debbie McGrath. The second was a group led by former Canadian Idol judge Farley Flex and many of the other members from Lucid. Habachat proposed a music and arts festival for Town Park, while Mr. Flex's group suggested a similar music festival for Machell Park. In the intervening weeks, the two groups have put their heads together and have combined their talents for a three-day extravaganza in Town Park.

?Friday night will be a Heroes and Icons event, like a Hall of Fame for Aurora,? explains Ms. McGrath of the Festival kick-off. ?We will be looking for nominations of people across several categories and then on the Saturday and Sunday we will be back to the grassroots of the music festival, putting together a plan and we will be looking for local talent.?

While Ms. McGrath and her people are doing much of the outreach and logistics work, Mr. Flex is spearheading the music department. Having recently sent out emails to both the York Region District School Board and the York Catholic District School Board informing them that through the festival there will be opportunities not only to perform, but also volunteer, the hunt is on for the talent that will take the stage for the festivities.

?We're in the midst right now of confirming local talent from around the region and the GTA but we want to have a heavy local component,? says Mr. Flex. ?I went to Machell Park a while ago, but hadn't had a chance to see Town Park until recently and it is a nice controllable space with good sightlines. It's not a good location, but a great location.

?From the music standpoint, it is going to be very eclectic from both the era and genre standpoint and we want to cater to all community members, from the folks who like classic rock and roll and classic R&B, and then we will sort of rejuvenate it with more contemporary rock and roll singers and songwriters.?

Getting the ball rolling on the festival relatively late in the game has presented its own challenges, he says, so it is also a matter of pulling in some of his own contacts to make that happen when it comes to local outreach. Performers coming in from outside the community will be ?relatively established? artists, and he says he is looking forward to seeing the talent Aurora has to offer, whether it can be through a collaboration of auditions in and around Town, or even at Town events like Concerts in the Park.

?I don't know much of the talent in Aurora until I hear it, so the people we're bringing in are amazing,? he says. ?That is, for us, the exciting part of building a hybrid model. It's really about that eclectic balance we need. The more stuff we see locally, the more stuff will be on the bill. If we had 100 per cent Aurora talent we would be fine with that, but it is about quality not quantity.?