

Local music gets a boost as summer edition of Aurora Winter Blues Fest gets green light

By Brock Weir

The Aurora Winter Blues Festival will enjoy some summer warmth this September as the music program brings their own popular brand of fun to Town Park on Wednesday, September 2.

Council approved permitting the Park to the Festival (AWBF) for the week following the formal conclusion of the Town's annual Concerts in the Park series at the Committee level last week, a decision expected to be formally ratified by Council on Tuesday.

Following the green light, the AWBF will program a "Blues and Cruise" event featuring a Juno-award nominated Blues band to be announced along with the participation of the Aurora Car Club.

Although a report before Council opined that the addition of a Blues event to the Concerts in the Park series did not "add value" to the program and had "the potential of introducing conflicting programming at additional costs", this was not a conclusion shared by Council.

"This series covers a wide genre of music and it is a tradition," said Councillor John Abel. "I know people love going there in the summer and it is very well attended, and residents expect a concert during the eight weeks. However, this year, we have nine weeks in the summer and we also have a genre not covered. We have one week and I think our residents would expect another [concert]."

"Adding the AWBF that last week and providing some blues is great."

Citing the fundraising the Festival does each year for Blue Door Shelters and CHATS (Community & Home Assistance to Seniors), Councillor Abel said it is hard to imagine any other festival in Town raising as much money for community organizations, not to mention their work with mentoring young musicians.

"I think this is something we should promote," he concluded. "We will see a Juno-nominated blues performer, which is exciting, and possibly one or two of our youth showcasing two or three songs during the breaks and the talent will be outstanding."

Council's approval also came with the proviso the Town should do more to communicate the many live music events going on throughout Aurora during the summer months, including this month's Second Annual Gospel Festival, also slated for Town Park.

Mayor Geoff Dawe supported this motion, but added it is important to be "clear" on which events are municipally run and which are operated by a third party. This was a view shared by Councillor Michael Thompson who said other events are bound to come forward for due consideration.

"We haven't set up a criteria of who is going to be promoted, but I think it falls within what we're trying to accomplish with our Cultural Map," said Al Downey, Aurora's Director of Parks and Recreation, citing an ongoing effort of his department to chart the many cultural resources within the municipality in a living, interactive document. "We are going to be holding a meeting [this month] with the committee that assisted us with the Cultural Master Plan and presenting them with a program [for developing the map] people can then access."

"That information would then be provided by the vendor themselves and we would be setting up criteria as to what vendors would be permitted, provide information on that website, and who would not. It would be great if the AWBF could simply access the site and then they could then combine all their information and that would go out to anyone who was then interested in any cultural event happening in Aurora."