

Lucid pulls plug on Aurora Live! festival



By Brock Weir

Remaining organizers behind Aurora Live! have pulled the plug on the music festival.

George Roche, director of Lucid Community Development, pulled out of the Festival, which was slated for Machell Park for the last weekend of July citing numerous problems with going forward.

The move came little over a week after many of the big names attached to Lucid, including Canadian Idol judge Farley Flex, former broadcaster Christine Bentley, Canadian Idol winners, and So You Think You Can Dance Canada finalists, citing "philosophical" differences with Mr. Roche.

Councillors were also due this week to give their verdict on Lucid's plans for the festival. Municipal staff were tasked by Council with doing some further review with Lucid's proposal and to meet with the organizers to ensure that all municipal requirements are addressed and are compliant.?

?The role of the Town with regards to the proposed Music Festival has been reduced down to the issuance of a permit,? said Al Downey in his report on the latest Festival Proposal. ?No services in-kind or partnerships with other Town events are requested or contemplated.?

Mr. Downey also noted he had contacted Lucid's references, as directed by Council, an issue which had become thorny between certain elected representatives.



IN HAPPIER TIMES -- Members of Lucid Community Development heralded their new music festival at Aurora Council in February. From left: Canadian Idol winner Brian Melo, Councillor John Abel, Lucid's George Roche, So You Think You Can Dance Canada's Miles Faber, broadcaster Christine Bentley, Councillor Paul Pirri, Mayor Geoffrey Dawe, Councillors Sandra Humfries and Evelyn Buck, Canadian Idol's Farley Flex, and Councillors John Gallo and Michael Thompson.

?Two references were contacted; however, it was clear that neither reference had been involved with Lucid for a music festival, but were involved in their fundraising initiative developing a coupon book,? said Mr. Downey. ?The newly formed partnership of Lucid has not operated a Music Festival, as proposed, to our knowledge.?

Speaking to The Auran, Mr. Roche said he had enough of being ?badgered? by Council and spoke of the wars of words that had

erupted between the key players in this that spread throughout the media ? traditional and social.

He also cited anonymous emails that had made the rounds questioning his integrity and his family life, allegations he said were untrue but the lingering issue would raise a ?red flag? for people, whether they are potential partners, Councillors or readers.

?Even though it is not true, it may govern the manner in which they make decisions to become involved in the festival,? he said. Elaborating on the reasons why he was pulling out of Aurora Live, Mr. Roche also cited developing friction between himself and Councillor John Abel, one of the proposal's staunchest supporters since the company first came to Town in January looking for ways to become involved with the Aurora 150 celebrations.

Although they arrived late in the game and that ship had already sailed, it was suggested there might be an opportunity to work with the Town to develop a new music festival based on the organizers of the Aurora Jazz Festival's decision to take their festival to Newmarket this summer.

Councillor Abel, who was also in attendance at the January meeting, helped get the ball rolling on their proposal with municipal staff and members of Council.

Mr. Roche said he noticed ?significant oscillations? between himself and Councillor Abel, particularly when it came to talent. He claims Councillor Abel ?demanded? one particular local artist be paid \$1,200 for the concert in a ?nepotistic? way.

Councillor Abel declined to comment on Mr. Roche's allegation other than to say commenting on the claim would ?attack [Mr. Roche's] personal character rather than anything else.?

He added it wasn't ?appropriate? that he was singled out in this way, and said his confidence in the group started to waiver with Lucid's mass defections earlier this month.

?With all the adversity, Mr. Roche confidently forged ahead, however, in my mind, it became apparent that the breakup of the group would have a significant impact on the execution of the proposal and this could put some within our community at risk, so for now I feel I must step back and withdraw my support.

?George is the only one left standing and he, in my mind, by himself, is not going to be able to pull this off without a team and I feel if he goes forward he is not going to be able to fulfil his obligations to make sure that is done in the proper detail. It is a huge risk.?

With Lucid pulling out, however, Councillor Abel said other interested parties have since come forward to put forward a music festival ?aware of the politics and aware of what happened.?

?I think the Town does want a music festival and we're going to get a music festival,? he said. ?It will be delivered but it is just not going to happen at this time with Lucid Productions.?

The changing nature of the proposals brought forward by Lucid since they filed their first one with the Town has been a source of much consternation from Councillors. The latest proposal, which was submitted for staff review and was to be up for consideration this week included a model which they billed as ?both effective and sustainable? and the grand finale of a series of events designed to engage residents, businesses, and youth.

The Town of Aurora also stood to gain 25 per cent of net proceeds brought in by Aurora Live under the final proposal.

Looking at the latest proposal, Councillor Chris Ballard, one of the most vocal critics of the whole Lucid saga said what is expected to be before Council this week answered many of the questions he had.

?This is a lot more lucid and a lot more clear of what the [Town's] requirements are and I can only wish the first iteration that was put before us was this clear,? he said. ?If [future groups looking to create a music festival] want Town involvement, they have to be very, very clear with what they are asking for and what the financial implications are for the Town. I wouldn't dismiss it out of hand,

but they have to be very clear on what it is they want.?