

Organizers gear up for new Aurora Music Festival



By Brock Weir

If you happened by the north stage at the Aurora Street Festival on Sunday shortly after the noon hour, you may have been treated to an impromptu performance from the Good Brothers ? but this was just a teaser of what's to come.

The Good Brothers are set to headline the inaugural Aurora Music Festival, a new one-day music event which takes over Highland Park, home of the Aurora Soccer Club, on June 25.

?After a brief hiatus for the past couple of years, it is time for a summer music festival to return to Aurora,? said Teri Hastings, a member of the Festival's organizing committee. ?Building on Aurora's musicality, this is the perfect event to strengthen and develop community partnerships, foster growth, and encourage youth musical talent. We are now more determined than ever to make Aurora a tourist music destination.

?We are working with [award-winning music producer] Don Bird to bring in acclaimed bands including The Good Brothers on one main stage. Don has over 40 years of experience and has graciously provided his time to ensure the Aurora Music Festival features top notch talent.?

Ms. Hastings was on hand at the last Council meeting to get the word out about the upcoming festival, the proceeds from which will support Belinda's Place, the new Newmarket-based shelter for single women, Community & Home Assistance to Seniors (CHATS), and the anti-bullying campaign Say My Name Canada.

It was also a pitch as organizers turned to Council for support of their endeavour.

As such, Council donated \$1,000 towards the Festival as well as in-kind contributions ranging from signage to some services on the day of the event itself.

?This is a collaboration with plenty of opportunities for local food and industry vendors, including partnerships with local bars and clubs to generate ticket sales and local food trucks,? said Ms. Hastings. ?The intimate setting of Highland Park provides the ideal venue for local music. The Festival will be a perfect summer partner to Aurora's successful Aurora Winter Blues Festival and to the Town's Ribfest and Concerts in the Park Summer Series and, of course, the biggest musical event in Canada under one tent: the Magna Hoedown.?

In fact, the Festival is partnering with Magna this year, specifically with the Hoedown Showdown, which is a contest that crowns Canada's next up and coming country star. Previous winners and contenders, including last year's winner, Sarah MacRae, and Brad

Battle, will lend their talents to the Festival.

The Aurora Music Festival received support across the board from Councillors, although some were reluctant to give them \$1,000 from Council's contingency account right off the bat.

?It sounds wonderful, but don't we usually do this by way of a staff report with respect to requesting services in kind and any potential ask for money?? asked Councillor Wendy Gaertner. ?I think it should be a formal request as part of the Council record and not just [following] a presentation.?

While Councillor Gaertner and Mayor Geoff Dawe went head-to-head on whether such a grant had been made in the past, with the Mayor contending a similar grant was made to the former Aurora Jazz Festival and Councillor Gaertner countering they had to ?jump through hoops? for their funding, Councillor Paul Pirri had a similar viewpoint to Councillor Gaertner's.

?Although I am 100 per cent behind the intent of what we are doing, I have no issue right now approving signage and the exemption of the sign bylaw,? said Councillor Pirri, before Councillor John Abel, a primary force behind the Festival, put forward a motion for a further report. ?I do agree with Councillor Gaertner? to get a little bit more information on what we are approving when we say services in kind and what that equates to in terms of staff time.?

Other Councillors voted in favour of the \$1,000 grant right off the bat.

?I am really excited to have a summer music festival back in Aurora and I am really excited about the Good Brothers and everyone else that you're having,? said Councillor Sandra Humfries. ?It sounds like you have a great team, very organized and ready to go.?

For tickets and more information about the Aurora Summer Music Festival, visit auroramf.com.