

Tigers, Chamber clash over use of ACC

By Jeff Doner

The Aurora Community Centre has been a venue for a variety of events over the years, but availability for the coming week sent two long-time tenants back to the drawing board to find a solution.

The Aurora Tigers Junior A hockey club have fought their way to the OJHL championship finals this week, while the Aurora Chamber of Commerce is gearing up to host their 28th Annual Aurora Home Show this weekend.

In response to the scheduling conflict, the Tigers have moved their home games to the Canlan Arena at York University, leaving the team in the predicament of not having their home crowd.

"It's not as far as what people think if you just go down the 400 and to Highway 7, but we're going to lose some Aurora backing," said Tigers Head Coach and General Manager, James Richmond. "There's no doubt about it."

Richmond said the team first brought up the possibility of needing the ice at the ACC back in December and that he's upset about the end result. He said they made a presentation to the Chamber on the conflict and they replied, "We're not moving for a hockey team."

"It's very disappointing to see what's happening for a three or four day home show that they would just boot a tenant out, and one loyal to the ACC and the Town of Aurora."

Judy Marshall, CEO of Aurora Chamber of Commerce, said the Chamber tried to come up with a resolution, but ultimately decided there wasn't enough time and that too many resources had already been spent.

"We met with Barry Quinn [Tigers' president] and Al Downey (Director of Parks and Recreation for the Town of Aurora) and we basically just talked about it," she said. "We were asked to move about six weeks prior to the date, which is this coming weekend, and this just wasn't possible. There were some comments about taking the plan for one arena and putting it in another arena, it's not possible. The arenas are all set up totally different."

Marshall said so much of the planning and work had already been done for the upcoming show, an event that is the Chamber's largest revenue maker, drawing in roughly 5,000 visitors.

"We've looked it at a lot and have discussed it a lot with our board, volunteers, etc.," she said. "We usually book the arena a year in advance and we have been doing it for 28 years and it's always around the same time of year. We paid thousands to get the arena mapped out properly so people know where to go, people know how to get into the arena."

Marshall also referenced parking as a problem at some of the other venues in Aurora and said a lot of planning has already happened on part of the vendors.

As far as the Tigers are concerned, the other venues in Aurora also pose a problem in meeting the seating requirements for an OJHL championship series, hence the move to York University.

Quinn said the team hopes to avoid the same issue down the road.

"Geoff Dawe and John Firman [of the Town of] Aurora were outstanding, but we've got to do what's best for the Tigers, so I've already asked them what would happen next year," he said. "The issue here is the Home Show is booked and I think it's what they call a perpetual booking and unfortunately that doesn't help us at all. We'd be having a hard look at where we would play next year unless the Town can come up and say, "you're ok.""

Quinn said he hopes fans make the trek down to York University for the series and that the team will be knocking the price down to \$16 for an adult ticket for Aurora residents with identification.