

Town to be a 'Cornerstone Donor' to Sports Hall of Fame

By Brock Weir

It might have been a request which failed to fully ignite the Council table last year, but the Aurora Sports Hall of Fame was second time lucky last week, garnering enough votes around the Council table to secure \$5,000 from the Town of Aurora.

With the \$5,000 donation, the municipality becomes a Charter Cornerstone Donor in the organization, which officially cut the ribbon on their current home at Town Hall last week.

The donation allows the Sport Hall of Fame to produce plaques for the honourees, ensure they are inducted in style, maintain the personal and online presence of the Sports Hall of Fame, and provide general support to the organization.

For many Councillors around the table, the second crack at becoming a Cornerstone Donor in the organization was a long-time coming but, for others, there had not been adequate time to debate the donation around the table.

'It has now been demonstrated what a great body this encompasses,' said Councillor John Abel in support of the motion. 'They have demonstrated in the opening of their gallery their commitment. I would consider it minimal that the Town could would consider being a Cornerstone Donor. It speaks to everyone in our community on how important sport is to the culture of our community.'

Citing a speech made by 2013 Inductee Carolin 'Cal' Bouchard when the basketball star was inducted into the Hall of Fame last year, Councillor Michael Thompson said becoming a Cornerstone Donor was a natural extension of what Aurora has already done for sport.

'She kept talking about all the time she spent on the courts playing basketball, practicing her shot, and how great staff were in fixing up the nets and just getting the court ready with regards to the season,' he said. 'It is quite a testament to the collaboration between the Town and all these wonderful people who help promote the community. I think it was unfortunate we weren't able to sponsor them last year, but I am fully in support of it this year.'

For Councillor Evelyn Buck, however, Aurora may go out of its way to provide facilities where athletes can flourish but that support was more than enough. Thousands of people, she said, work and volunteer, to make these sports opportunities a reality, programs are provided, and it has been a priority for the Town.

'I remember [2014 Inductee] Greg Hotham when he played for Aurora Minor Hockey,' she said. 'I remember watching him play and following his career from that point and [the Aurora Community Centre] have him his chance. The people of Aurora gave Greg Hotham his chance. The taxpayers of Aurora provided the facilities that gave anybody who has excelled [an opportunity].'

'\$5,000 is not a lot of money, but it is \$5,000 out of the taxpayers' pockets. Is there no end to how far you are willing to put your hands into peoples' pockets and take money out?'

Opposition to the donation was also expressed by Councillors Wendy Gaertner and John Gallo. For Councillor Gaertner, it was a donation which she said should be a part of the 2015 Budget Process. On the other hand, she said she would be fine with the motion if it came along with a staff report recommending the donation, rather than a request from the Sports Hall of Fame.

'I am a huge supporter of sports and I have played many of them in this Town, and I am a huge supporter of recognizing those who have played sports in this Town,' added Councillor John Gallo. 'I find it a little bit hard to believe [that other councillors] haven't raised an issue for \$5,000, no matter what it is for, as an added item straight to Council.'

Those in favour of making the donation, however, balked at the idea that this came to Council without a report. Although a report

was not on last week's agenda, the report, they said, would be similar to the one which came before Council last year and was subsequently rejected.

?I really have a problem when there is insinuation that we are just jumping at doing this without any thought process,? said Councillor Sandra Humfryes. ?Of course we thought about it. It failed the last time. We know where it is coming from and we have got this at the table. There is no hiding it, no secrecy, and we are being very open and transparent.

?We are acting upon something we believe in. Either you believe in it, or you don't, and I think it is a great opportunity for us to support a great initiative.?

The donation was approved 5 ? 3.