

From: [REDACTED]
To: [CouncilAgenda](#)
Cc: [Karen Landry](#); [REDACTED]
Subject: OBJF requests a delegation at the September 14, 2020 meeting
Date: Sunday, September 6, 2020 11:53:16 AM

The purpose of this email is request a delegation at the September 14, 2020 council meeting to repond to questions regarding our request to retain the town's 2020 grant. Please arrange for Larry Kurtz and I (Josh Leitch) to be present at the meeting to answer questions and to further explain the importance of retaining our 2020 grant.

Thank you,
Josh Leitch
President, OBJF

Backgrounder

* In response to our submission of a detailed application and financial information to the Town of Orangeville for funding through their Community Grants program, the Festival was awarded and received a grant in the amount of \$17,150 in February of 2020. These funds were to support the 2020 Festival and represented a modest but important 7% of the operating budget required to stage the Festival. The balance of funding comes from sponsorships, grants and earned income from ticket sales, events, and concessions (food vendors and beer/wine sales).

* In March of 2020, the COVID-19 Pandemic forced the Festival to suspend almost all operations and defer any planning or expenditures until such time that health restrictions would once again allow large gatherings and public events. At this point, the Festival remains postponed until further notice or such time that the public health restrictions are lifted.

* The Festival started working on producing the Festival in the Fall of 2019. The postponement of the Festival took place just 10 weeks before the Festival was to take place in June. Unfortunately, approximately \$72,993 of advanced operating costs had been incurred prior to the postponement.

* Without the Festival taking place in June and postponed until hopefully the Spring of 2021, the organization had to address the \$72, 993 financial shortfall prior to its fiscal year-end in July 2020. **Should the Festival not be able to raise the funds to reduce or eliminate the 2020 operating loss, the modest contingency funds available to the Festival would be wiped-out and the Festival would not be in a financial position to continue in 2021.**

* A financial recovery plan was quickly developed based on soliciting financial support from some of the Festival's key stakeholders. To-date over \$44,540 has been raised from the following generous Festival Partners:

TD Bank Group \$15,000

Central Counties Tourism \$10,440

Orangeville Business Improvement Association \$10,000

Department of Canadian Heritage \$9,100

* With this funding being received, the Festival reached out to the Town of Orangeville Council, to request the terms of the \$17,150 Community Grant for 2020 be modified to allow the funds to be included with the other Partnership funds as a financial contribution to help the Festival deal with the financial pressures from the Pandemic and postponement of the 2020 Festival. This support would help the Festival to move forward with a rescheduling of the Festival to the Spring of 2021.

* At the Council meeting on July 13th, Council responded to the Festival's request for financial assistance as a result of the Pandemic financial crisis and approved a motion to reduce their approved 2020 Community Grant of \$17,150 grant to the Festival by 75% to \$4,287.

Orangeville Blues & Jazz Festival

* The Festival has been operating successfully at the highest level for the last 17 years and has become one of the Town and County's primary community and tourism events. Over \$1.4M in economic impact is generated annually as a result of the Festival and over 35,000 people attend the Festival throughout the 3-day period. Clearly, the Town is one of the primary beneficiaries of the Festival and the economic and social value to the Community and the Town represents a value far greater than the \$17,150 investment made by the Town through its Community Grants program. It would be highly unlikely that the Town could produce an event on this scale without making a significantly greater investment in both financial and personnel resources. The Festival currently operates with over 200 volunteers who provide thousands of hours in volunteer services.

* The funding provided by the Town represents a **subsidy of 49 cents per Festival attendee** (35,000 attendees, \$17,150 funding from the Town). The Festival represents tremendous value for the Town's investment, and along with other sponsors and granting agencies, the Festival can provide free admission to most Festival events and subsidize the Main Stage events with a very nominal admission price (\$5 per person).

* The Festival has received numerous awards and has been recognized repeatable times as one of the Top 100 Events and Festivals in Ontario. Artistic Director Larry Kurtz was awarded Blues Booster Of The Year by the Toronto Blues Society at the Maple Blues Awards, a national recognition for promoting Blues music and the arts in Canada. There are not many communities of our size that can produce an event on this scale. Many festivals and events have not been able to build the financial and organizational resources required and subsequently have ceased to exist.

* The Festival has a strong focus in employing and showcasing local musicians along with a commitment to developing Canadian talent. This has become a cornerstone of the Festival and serves as an important connection and resource for the Community

* The Festival's financial stabilization plan would not be possible without the support of their major Partners. The local business community has suffered significant financial setbacks due to the effect of the Pandemic and the ability for local businesses to support the Festival at this time is almost non-existent. It sends a very mixed message to the Community and other funding Partners for the Town to reduce its

financial support to the Festival by 75% when clearly the Festival is considered such an important resource for the Community.

* It appeared during the Council meeting that the Council members were seeking and would have benefited from some further information regarding the Festival's financial circumstance, its plan for financial stabilization due to the Pandemic impact and how the Town's 2020 Community Grant represented a very important piece of the financial plan to ensure the Festival's survival and continuation. There was some discussion about inviting the Festival representatives to the next Council meeting in September to provide some further context. Unfortunately, Council decided not to defer a decision on reducing their 2020 Community Grant to the Festival until their next meeting in September when Festival representatives could attend the meeting to provide additional information and subsequently Council passed a motion to reduce their 2020 funding to the Festival by 75%.

* It is unclear if a similar approach has been taken with the other 2020 Community Grant recipients (or Theatre Orangeville) to reduce their grants due to postponement or temporary suspension of their activities.