

King gives Kettleby Fair a helping hand to cover shortfall

By Angela Gismondi

The Kettleby Fair is getting a helping hand from the Township of King.

Council decided to approve one-time funding assistance for the Kettleby Fair at a meeting Monday. Kettleby Fair coordinators Carol Ann Trabert and Gary Vogan requested financial assistance after a shortfall was experienced two years in a row due to inclement weather, which resulted in poor attendance.

"We have, unfortunately a situation that after 35 years of good weather, we had two years of bad weather," said Michael Hogg, a member of the fair committee.

Council granted the committee \$2,517.21. The funds, which will be taken from the Mayor's Charity Golf Tournament account, will be used to pay off debts incurred at this year's fair. In 2012, the event was cancelled due to the weather. Organizers tried to minimize their losses by cancelling entertainers in advance of the event.

This year, the committee decided to go ahead with the fair in the hopes that the weather would clear up. Unfortunately, the weather did not cooperate and attendance was down considerably, resulting in a loss of revenue.

"We want to invite you all back on Sept. 6, 2014 but before that can happen we need to deal with the past," said Hogg.

Hogg explained that in recent years, the fair has changed. Many volunteer groups from across the township help run the event and, in turn, the groups use the fair as a venue to promote their organizations. The fair typically sees a profit of between \$1,500 and \$2,000 and just started to put money aside for emergency situations but they depleted that reserve in the past two years. Hogg explained that the committee had to take a loan from a local resident to settle some bills.

"We're here on bended knee to ask for assistance to discharge this debt," Hogg said.

Mayor Steve Pellegrini brought up the matter under new business at the last council meeting. He pointed out that Kettleby is known for the fall fair, which takes place every year at the beginning of September.

"I am 100 per cent in support of this," said Pellegrini, adding the money is not coming from taxpayer dollars. "It's not about bailing out an organization. It's a matter of working with people. They did have a rainy day fund but they used it up twice. I think it's a very fitting cause."

While she realized it might set a precedent, Councillor Debbie Schaefer said she was in support of helping the fair. She pointed out that the Kettleby Fair is an important festival in the township that people look forward to every year and serves to showcase community groups.

"I really see this financial problem is one that if not handled appropriately, is going to have an effect across the entire township," said Schaefer. "If there was an organization that had a comparable problem, I would feel that we should support them too."

Councillor Cleve Mortelliti suggested a policy be put in place to deal with these sorts of situations. He was also supportive of providing financial assistance to the fair.

"I would be in support of it for any one of our events in the township if they experienced something like the Kettleby Fair," he said. "I would hate to see for an event like this cause the Kettleby Fair not to run next year."

Councillor Peter Grandilli warned councillors that this could set a precedent and other organizations could be knocking on the door if their events are unsuccessful.

"I don't think this is a wise move," he said.

Councillor Bill Cober said Grandilli had a valid point, but argued this is a special circumstance and a one-time thing. Should other organizations come forward, they will be dealt with on a case-by-case basis, he added.

"It's coming out of the money from the golf tournament, not taxpayer dollars," said Cober. "It's fundraising dollars not tax dollars, which makes a very big difference."