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BY FRANK MATYS

fmatys@simcoe.com

Orillia Today,

Council votes to extend feral cat program

A pilot program aimed at curbing Orillia's homeless cat population continues in 2011.

"This is a real win for our community, a real win for partnerships," said Coun. Michael Fogarty.

An inaugural project last year targeted three colonies and resulted in 159 cats being trapped, of which 109 were sterilized.

Thirty-eight fetuses were aborted.

Georgian College was paid \$18,000 for veterinary services while Comfie Cat Shelter, a volunteer rescue group, trapped, cared for and released the spayed/neutered animals.

Cats received a rabies vaccine and a long-lasting antibiotic, and were ear-tipped for identification.

Fogarty urged council to fund the program in 2011, with an additional \$2,000 for Comfie Cat Shelter in recognition of costs it absorbs, including food and litter.

Coun. Andrew Hill, the owner of three cats, supported the program after initially suggesting feral felines should be euthanized.

Fixing the animals would not stop them from wreaking havoc on neighborhoods, said Hill, describing feral cats as "a big health concern in many neighborhoods."

Killing cats is not a solution, said Fogarty, warning that new populations of feral animals are inevitable because many residents view them as "disposable pets."

"If we euthanized every feral cat in the city today, we are sitting here having the same conversation next year, because they will repopulate, and they will repopulate quickly," he added.

The former Sundial Inn will be demolished

by the city and the owner billed if the work isn't undertaken by July 30.

"It's an eyesore ... we don't want any more fires or safety issues arising from a dilapidated building," said Mayor Angelo Orsi.

The shuttered hotel was the site of a suspicious fire in the building's south wing in late April.

The owner, Royal Host Hotels, was ordered to demolish the building in 2010 due to concerns over its deteriorating state, which included excessive mould growth.

Vandalism was frequent, as was the theft of wiring and plumbing.

Staff said the owner is "anxious" to move forward with demolition but is awaiting decisions from its insurance company.

The lowest of four demolition quotes came in at close to \$600,000.

A necessary upgrade to local hydro lines will take place along the Millennium Trail, council committee has decided.

Members rejected a recommendation by the Orillia Power Corporation to install taller poles on Cowan Street rather than upgrading existing lines along the trail, a process that will require cutting trees.

Councillors instead voted to upgrade hydro lines along the trail, noting residents along Cowan Street were opposed to the placement of larger poles on their road.

"The trees will grow back," said Coun. Andrew Hill.

Burying the lines would have cost \$300,000.

An estimated 1,000 campers will spend two nights at Orillia's Tudhope Park during the Ride For Sight event, taking place June 17-19.

Billed as a "thank-you" for participants in Canada's longest-running motorcycle charity fundraiser, the weekend event will feature

live bands, a beer tent and a parade through the downtown.

Ride For Sight supports the Foundation Fighting Blindness.

Coun. Linda Murray said she supported the cause but had concerns over allowing camping and alcohol use in the park.

"We are talking about precedent setting like we have never had before," she said, noting the event was approved by the previous council.

"We have said no (to general camping at) the Mariposa Folk Festival so many times that they have stopped asking."

Council committee granted a requested extension of the city's noise bylaw to midnight for the weekend event.

A municipal road that will serve the OPP's future Regional Command Centre will be named for Neil Hurtubise, a retired OPP officer who was shot in the line of duty.

Hurtubise Drive will provide access to the command centre from the Highway 12 bypass. Councillors approved the road name in principle, pending a formal approval process.

The city will provide a meeting room at Brian Orser Arena for an after-school youth program. The Boys and Girls Club of Orillia was established in 2008, and offers an after-school program for children in grades one through six at the city's temporary library.

With the library scheduled to move to its new facility later this year, club officials wish to stay in the south end, home to the majority of students attending the program.

Staff recommended the city offer the use of a meeting room at Brian Orser Arena.

Council votes to extend feral cat program

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Changing Lives Building Futures

FUNDRAISER: Event expected to attract 1,000 motorcyclists

Ride for Sight was a boon to Quinte West, says councillor

NATHAN TAYLOR
The Packet & Times

Up to 1,000 motorcycles will parade into Orillia on the weekend for a new fundraiser that is hoping to call the Sunshine City its new home.

The Ride for Sight — which raises money for the Foundation Fighting Blindness — takes place in various provinces, and this year, for the first time in its 33-year history, the Ontario ride is coming to Orillia.

"This is as much for the City of Orillia as it is for Ride for Sight," said Debbie Dixon, national director of marketing and events with Ride for Sight Canada.

She said it would benefit the community — something to which Leslie Roseblade can attest.

Roseblade, a city councillor with Quinte West, said the event had "class-act organizers" when the ride was in that eastern Ontario city from 2004-08.

"It was great," said Roseblade, who, at the time, was the city's supervisor of recreation. "We were actually disappointed that they left. Motorcyclists come with a credit card in their pockets and, when they're here, they need food and gas."

The economic spinoff was evident, she added.

"We had restaurants saying they ran out of food for breakfast."

It was the previous Orillia city council that approved this year's Ride for Sight in town. The city's culture and heritage director, and Dixon, faced a number of questions from the current

council. Their concerns centred on camping in the park, damage to the park, late-night noise, controlled fires and the types of bikers the event could attract.

As far as attracting members of outlaw biker gangs, "that's not our event," Dickson said.

"I want them to understand, first and foremost, people who look like me are motorcyclists who attend; people who are VPs of national corporations attend. You have every type of rider."

During the four years the ride was in Quinte West, police were on hand for the event and not one charge was laid.

The bikers will parade to Orillia, from Vaughan, on Saturday, starting at 10 a.m. and arriving around noon, led the entire way by the OPP Golden Helmets motorcycle squad. The June 17-19 event will take place at Tudhope Park and will feature live entertainment, games, a show-and-shine and a freestyle motocross stunt show.

In past years, the event has been held in various municipalities — Bowmanville last year and Collingwood from 1996 to 2003, and again in 2009 — but organizers were looking for something more central, and they were drawn to Orillia and its scenery, Dixon said.

"It's a beautiful waterfront city," she said. "People like to feel like they're going north, out of the city, that they're venturing out a bit."

But it's not just a bunch of out-of-towners zooming in and out for a weekend; it's a community event. Anyone can attend the

event, even if they're not motorcyclists, but are required to raise at least \$75 for the cause.

"It's going to be something for the city to see."

The goal is to hold the event in Orillia "for at least three to five years," Dixon said.

For pledge information, visit www.rideforsight.com. People can show up as early as 9 a.m. Friday, submit their pledges, register, receive a wristband and come and go throughout the weekend.

The live entertainment will include Bruce Springsteen tribute band Glory Days on Friday night and Chilliwack on Saturday night.

For more information, visit the website, email info@rideforsight.com or call 1-800-461-3331.

ntaylor@orilliapacket.com

SCHEDULE OF EVENTS

FRIDAY

9 a.m.: Registration opens

10 a.m. to 10 p.m.: Marketplace operating hours

10 a.m. to 4 p.m.: Demo rides

1, 3 and 5 p.m.: Freestyle motocross stunt shows (weather permitting)

Evening: Concerts

SATURDAY

9 a.m.: Registration opens

10 a.m.: Parade departing from Paradise Banquet and Convention Centre

10 a.m. to 10 p.m.: Marketplace operating hours

10 a.m. to 4 p.m.: Demo rides

12-12:30 p.m.: Parade arriving at Tudhope Park

1, 3 and 5 p.m.: Freestyle motocross stunt shows (weather permitting)

2 p.m.: OPP Golden Helmets demonstration

10 a.m. to 2 p.m.: Show and shine (judging from 2-2:45 p.m.; winners announced at 3 p.m.)

3 p.m. Bike games, presented by HGTV host Jim Caruk (registration for these games is 10 a.m. to 2:45 p.m.)

Evening: Concerts

SUNDAY

Pack up and head out

