

Town Council nixes Garisto's bid for community party on Broadway

By Mike Pickford

One councillor's attempts to bring a piece of little Italy to downtown Orangeville fell on deaf ears at Town Hall on Monday night. For the past several weeks, Nick Garisto has been pushing the idea of shutting down parts of Broadway on July 28 to host what he calls a 'Community Party on Broadway'. The event would feature a local band performing on stage at the intersection of Broadway and Mill Street.

'This is something I've been talking about and wanting to do now for several years,' Coun. Garisto told the Citizen. 'This type of thing is done in Italy all through the summer months, where you bring the community together and have a good night, meet new people and have fun.'

As well as what he calls the 'obvious upside' this event would bring to the community from an entertainment standpoint, Coun. Garisto believes his community party would greatly benefit the local business sector too.

'This would be a big economic drive for the town. Businesses on Broadway and Mill Street would benefit in a big way from an event like this,' Coun. Garisto said.

He first introduced the idea at a recent Orangeville Business Improvement Area board meeting, before bringing it up again at Council this week. It was clear from the get go that there would be little support for this initiative.

Coun. Don Kidd suggested he had heard from members of the OBIA board that the organization had turned down Coun. Garisto's request for funds to help pay for the event.

'If the BIA said no, then why on earth would Council consider this?' Coun. Kidd said.

In an attempt to clarify the BIA's standing on the issue, General Manager Allison Scheel told the Citizen the organization hasn't given a definitive yes or no to Coun. Garisto.

'At Coun. Garisto's request, the OBIA board discussed the idea of twice-monthly Broadway street dance/parties at its June 20 meeting. Although no formal decision was made, the consensus was that the BIA did not have the resources to take on the events in 2018,' Ms. Scheel said.

'Coun. Garisto stated he was confident that he could garner support from the local business community and would move forward with the idea on his own,' she added.

At Monday's meeting, Coun. Garisto suggested the event would cost in the region of \$3,100 to put on. That amount accounted for a band (\$1,500), a stage (\$1,300) and insurance (\$300). The Citizen has been informed the cost for closing and re-opening Broadway comes in at approximately \$1,000.

Coun. Scott Wilson said he could hardly believe what he was hearing, portraying Coun. Garisto's proposal as an attempt to secure votes ahead of October's municipal election.

'If somebody showed up here at Town Hall and said they were thinking of having a party downtown and would like us to close Broadway, we'd tell them to get out of here,' Coun. Wilson said. 'It's telling to me that the BIA is not supporting this. Usually, when they support an event, we get a nice letter stating as such.'

He added, 'I would think we have to look carefully to see that this isn't just a campaign event for Coun. Garisto. The Town cannot be seen to support an event for a candidate. Simply put, this is not a Town event. It's not a BIA event. We shouldn't (be supporting this).'

Coun. Sylvia Bradley called the idea 'absurd' and informed Coun. Garisto if he wanted to have a campaign party, which she believes this event to be, then he should 'host it in his backyard' like the Fords do for their campaign events'. Coun. Gail Campbell felt the event was too rushed, advising Coun. Garisto to follow the correct channels and submit an official application package to Council before she would even consider accepting.

While he was disappointed the event didn't receive the support of Council, Coun. Garisto suggested he would not simply let the idea die.

'I think this would be a great thing for the community. This isn't for my personal gain, I am doing this for the people of Orangeville,' he said. 'Am I going to shut down on this idea now? No. It might not happen this year, but I'll be back again next year to see if we can make this community party happen.'