

## Arts, Beats and Eats moving to Royal Oak

By Jeremy Carroll  
C & G Staff Writer

ROYAL OAK — Calling it the worst-kept secret around, Oakland County Executive L. Brooks Patterson confirmed speculation that Arts, Beats and Eats will be moving from Pontiac to Royal Oak for 2010 and beyond at a press conference Dec. 8.

“It’s an exciting move that will bode well for the sustainability for this festival,” said Patterson, who founded the event and has been honorary chairperson of it for the 12 years it has been in Pontiac.

The announcement came about 20 hours after the Royal Oak City Commission approved a contract with Arts, Beats and Eats to move the annual Labor Day event to the city for five years.

“This event will be good for the city of Royal Oak,” Mayor Jim Ellison said. “And I think the city of Royal Oak will be good for this event.”

The signing of the contact ended a four-week process that started when the producer of the event, Jon Witz, came to the city to walk through and scout the location. Without a deal in place with Pontiac for the 2010 festival, Witz said he approached Royal Oak.

“This location will have the same exact linear footage as Pontiac,” he said.

The festival layout is planned for Washington Avenue; Fourth, Fifth, Sixth and Seventh streets; and Center Street. The main stage will be in the former Jim Fresard Body Shop parking lot that the city and the Downtown Development Authority recently purchased, between Sixth and Seventh streets, off of Main Street.

Witz said they planned to have 45-50 restaurants participating, 150 artists on hand and six or seven musical stages, all of which might top the 2009 festival, which drew 225,000 people to downtown Pontiac.

“Royal Oak will perfectly suit Arts, Beats and Eats,” he said.

The event does come with a financial risk for the city, which plans to spend approximately \$100,000 on police, fire and Department of Public Service workers for the four-day event. The DDA has also committed to sponsoring the event for \$100,000.

The city will recoup money through parking revenue. The charge will be \$10 per car in city lots for the weekend. There will also be a \$3 admission fee, and the city will receive 25 cents per person after the first 15,000 people pass through the gates.

City Manager Don Johnson said the city’s portion of the money will be paid back first, and the DDA will only receive money once the city’s general fund is made whole.

“I’m 99 percent confident that we’ll get our money back,” Johnson said about the city’s general fund. “Even if the DDA doesn’t get their money back, the dollar per person ratio is much better than any other event we put on.”

If the event manages to pay the DDA back fully, any revenue will be split with 20 percent going to Arts, Beats and Eats, 20 percent going to the DDA and the remaining 40 percent going to the city.

The city has an out on the contract after three years if it is unable to recoup costs.

Witz said the event would also help the Royal Oak nonprofit community as half of the drink stands will be available to be operated by Royal Oak groups that will share in the profits. He said the groups stand to make a total of \$30,000 to \$35,000 over the course of the weekend.

Jim Domanski, a member of the DDA, said the buzz in the downtown Royal Oak



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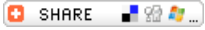
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community has been unbelievable after speculation started that the event would be coming to the city.

“I’m so happy that the buzz is not speculation anymore,” he said. “This is going to turn one of our slowest weekends of the year and overnight will turn it into one of the busiest.”

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