



COMMUNITY SERVICES – RECREATION & CULTURE
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November 25, 2014

**COMMUNITY SERVICES – Recreation & Culture
DEVELOPMENT & INFRASTRUCTURE SERVICES – Public Works Services
JOINT REPORT 2014 - 30**

TO: Committee of the Whole

SUBJECT: Outdoor Skating Rinks

ORIGIN: Community Services – Recreation & Culture
Development and Infrastructure Services – Public Works Services

RECOMMENDATIONS

THAT the Joint Community Services, Development and Infrastructure Services – Public Works Services Report 2014 – 30 dated November 25, 2014 regarding Outdoor Skating Rinks in the Town of Newmarket be received and the following recommendations be adopted:

- 1. THAT the Town of Newmarket approve offering a pilot project “End of Night Pick up Hockey” as outlined in this report;**
- 2. AND THAT the Town of Newmarket approve offering a pilot project “Community Run Outdoor Rink” as outlined in this report;**

COMMENTS

The Town of Newmarket currently operates one outdoor skating surface at Riverwalk Commons. This skating feature is open daily from 9:00 a.m. to 10:30 p.m. The ice surface and surrounding space was designed to facilitate leisure skating. This ice surface is designed to operate as an unsupervised space, with staff regularly flooding the ice to maintain good ice quality. It is a widely accessed facility and community feedback indicates that residents of Newmarket value and appreciate the opportunity to enjoy this space at a wide range of times, at no cost.

Over the last few years there has been an increased occurrence of people attempting to play hockey on the ice surface at Riverwalk Commons. This usually occurs after 9:00 p.m.; however, there have been occasions where recreational skaters were essentially forced off by hockey players as early as 8:00 p.m. While there is ample signage posted that outlines sticks are not permitted on the ice surface, as mentioned previously, this is an unsupervised space. Consequently, there have been instances where confrontations between residents have occurred.

Residents have strongly suggested, over the last couple of years in particular, that an outdoor ice surface that allows pickup hockey, at no cost, is needed in the community. As the winter season is now upon us, there have already been a few confrontations at Riverwalk Commons between leisure skaters and hockey players. In order to address this, improved enforcement of rules and provision of viable alternatives are

needed. Staff are proposing two pilot projects to be considered for this season, while also exploring long term options as part of the Recreation Playbook process.

Enforcement:

The Community Centre is currently staffed with a person responsible for facility maintenance during the hours of operation. The facility maintenance staff currently undertakes regular inspection of the ice to ensure safe ice conditions are provided. During these inspections they will now also remind users of the rules and enforcement potential.

It should be noted that in some cases groups of individuals have become quite threatening when rules are enforced. Facility maintenance staff will be trained to contact By-law Enforcement Officers in the event they are confronted with individuals who refuse to follow the rules after this initial interaction. By-law Enforcement Officers can issue fines through the Parks By-law provisions; however, it is anticipated that police intervention may also be necessary, as this has been the case on a few previous occasions. The Town is working with York Regional Police to ensure that Riverwalk Commons continues to be a safe and enjoyable asset for the community to enjoy.

It is still recommended that the facility maintain its structure with signage as an unsupervised facility. Given that usage of the facility is so dependent upon weather, staffing with skate cruisers would be an extremely expensive proposition. Additionally, there are health and safety concerns in keeping staff outdoors for such prolonged periods during cold weather.

Alternative Pilot Projects

Enforcement of the rules at Riverwalk Commons may not completely resolve the issue of potential confrontation between leisure skaters and hockey players; therefore, providing additional alternatives for hockey players, while enforcing rules, should produce more positive outcomes. Staff are proposing two alternatives as pilot projects for this winter season:

End of Night Pickup Hockey at Riverwalk Commons

Currently, it is common to drive by Riverwalk Commons any night of the week and you will likely see individuals playing hockey, often in the dark after 11 pm. Individuals often show up as early as 9:00 p.m. to begin pickup games.

Staff are recommending that hockey be allowed from 10:00 p.m. to Midnight daily, with lights to remain on during this time period.

Appropriate signage would be created and displayed prominently that outlines the following key principles:

- Hockey is permitted only during the time periods of 10:00 p.m. to Midnight
- Only sponge pucks or tennis balls are permitted (i.e., no hard pucks)
- Ice is not maintained after 10:00 p.m. and is not supervised, so participants are playing at their own risk
- Appropriate equipment is encouraged
- This will be offered on a trial basis pending appropriate usage by participants

By allowing this alternative to accommodate hockey, staff expect better compliance with the existing rules.

The lights are currently on a timer, and ice would not be maintained after 10 pm so there is no additional operational expense anticipated in offering this pilot program. The success of the pilot program will really

be dependent upon ongoing communication and engagement of those individuals interested in playing pickup hockey at Riverwalk Commons.

Community Run Outdoor Rink

Numerous models of community run outdoor rinks are currently used by municipalities and differ considerably in terms of involvement and costs to the municipality. A brief outline is provided below:

Neighbourhood Association or Incorporated Group – Some municipalities, including Brantford, London and Markham allow a formal organization to access municipally owned land for the purpose of creating a public skating rink. Some municipalities provide only land, others provide land and water, while others provide land, water and a financial subsidy. Financial subsidy can include an upfront preset amount or a reimbursement based on number of days opened in a season.

Local Citizens forming an “Rink Team” – Some municipalities, including Waterloo and Orangeville rely on local citizens to form a “Rink Team” who collectively maintain and operate an outdoor rink. Similar to the previous model, some municipalities provide only land, others provide land and water, while others provide land, water and a financial subsidy. Financial subsidy can include an upfront preset amount or a reimbursement based on number of days opened in a season.

The key to success in either model is to ensure that a strong group of dedicated volunteers is willing to take on maintenance with clear expectations set forth in a written agreement between the group and the Town. The written agreement must stipulate the following:

- The Town has exclusive right to establish criteria for a site and have final approval for any potential sites
- Financial expectations and resources offered by the Town are clearly set forth at the onset of the agreement
- Ice standards required – with the Town having the access to audit the ice conditions as the Town feels necessary
- Appropriate signage is posted, approved by the Town, releasing the Town from all liability associated with use of the facility
- The group is able to obtain appropriate insurance coverage and payment of said coverage is addressed within the context of the agreement

Staff are recommending putting out a call for an expression of interest to a community group or group of individuals to operate a community run rink at a site where the town can provide land and water. It is further recommended that the Town enter into a formal agreement with a group with the Town providing the following:

- That all principles in the fore mentioned are addressed within the agreement
- That the Town provide only land and water and no financial subsidy at this time. Please note the presence of water and other conducive site characteristics such as level grade and parking will dictate where viable sites can occur.
- Groups will be eligible to apply for a one time grant through the Recreation & Culture Department of up to \$1,000. These funds can be utilized to assist with purchase of equipment and insurance.

Future Rink Development

These pilot projects are being recommended to address the immediate requests of residents. Through the Recreation Playbook an extensive public consultation has been done as well as a facility peer review. The Playbook will be presented to Council in Spring 2015. Through this process a long term vision and strategy for provision of Outdoor Rinks will be developed.

CONSULTATION

This report is a joint report between Recreation & Culture and Public Works. Legislative Services was also consulted from a by-law enforcement and risk management perspective.

BUSINESS PLAN AND STRATEGIC PLAN LINKAGES

Well-balanced

- Striving for cultural harmony and ethnic diversity
- Events that help shape identity and contribute to community spirit

Well-equipped & managed

- Small town feel with city amenities
- Clear vision of the future and aligned corporate/business plans

Well-respected

- Being well thought of and valued for our judgment and insight
- Discovering innovative and creative solutions for future well-being
- Being a champion for co-operation and collaboration
- Being tradition-based and forward-looking

BUDGET IMPACT

Budget impact is minimal for both pilot projects. Essentially there is a moderate amount of staff time associated with coordination and cost of water to be considered. Groups will be eligible to apply for a one time grant of up to \$1,000 through the Recreation & Culture Grant Program.

CONTACT

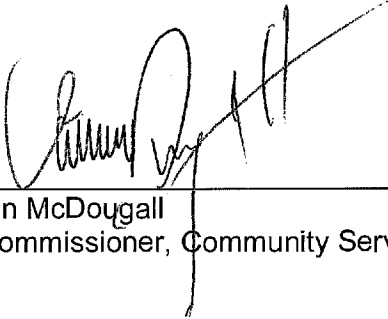
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