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Pickleball Follow Up Report Staff Report to Council

Report Number: 2024-13

Department(s): Recreation & Culture Department

Author(s): Colin Service, Director, Recreation & Culture

Meeting Date: February 26, 2024

Recommendations

1. That the report entitled “Pickleball Follow Up Report” dated February 26, 2024 be received; and,
2. That the designated full sized soccer field located in the southern section of George Richardson Park be approved as the site of a new pickleball facility; and,
3. That this new pickleball facility be constructed to include a modest clubhouse and capacity for bubbling be approved; and,
4. That Staff find a replacement full sized soccer field elsewhere in the community through a programming partnership with the school board(s) to maintain the current programmable inventory; and,
5. That Staff be authorized and directed to do all things necessary to give effect to this resolution.

Purpose

On December 4th, 2023 a report was considered by Council entitled “Update on the Provision of Pickelball”. The purpose of this report is to amend the preferred site within George Richardson Park, outlining additional factors that were considered by staff.

Background

Like all communities across North America, the Town of Newmarket has seen tremendous growth and interest in the sport of Pickleball. It continues to be the fastest growing sport in North America.

The most recent report considered by Council around Pickleball was the “Update on Provision of Pickleball” report, on December 4th, 2023. Within that report, a site was recommended at the north end of George Richardson Park. The report outlined that after analysis of all town owned properties, George Richardson Park represented the site most capable of positively addressing the established criteria:

- Ability to accommodate at least 14 - 20 courts with the capacity to bubble the courts
- Distribution of recreation facilities throughout the Town
- Potential displacement of other recreational facilities or amenities
- Proximity to residences
- Parking considerations

At the December 4th, 2023 meeting, a number of deputations spoke to concerns around the proposed location at the north end of the park. Council deferred the final location, asking staff to explore all options within George Richardson Park and to report back.

Discussion

Staff explored all existing fields at George Richardson Park examining the proximity to houses, parking considerations, and natural features that could buffer the facility. Staff also explored alternative service delivery options for full sized soccer fields or baseball diamonds.

After detailed analysis and exploration of the park, there is one clear site that can effectively meet the criteria – the southern full sized soccer field, as shown in Appendix A.

South Full Sized Soccer Field

Staff are recommending the construction of an unlit facility containing between 14 and 20 courts, located at the south end of George Richardson Park on the site currently occupied by a full sized soccer field. This would also include a modest clubhouse facility with changerooms/ washrooms. This site provides an ideal location within the park, meeting the following criteria:

- It can accommodate up to 20 bubbled courts.
- It places a premiere facility in a ward with fewer recreational amenities.
- It represents the loss of a full sized soccer field. Staff believe this loss can be addressed through partnership opportunities with school boards.
- The closest residents are over 300 feet away and are already separated by a variety of natural features including a large number of mature trees, a creek and a fair bit of space to add additional buffering.
- There is ample parking to address day-time use. This particular parking lot is the least used lot in the entire park area.

This site was removed from consideration in the December 4th report as staff were not confident that an alternative full sized soccer field could be realized. Upon further review and positive discussions with potential partners, staff no longer have that concern.

Preliminary discussions have been held with the Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority (LSRCA) and they have provided assurances that a pickleball facility (and bubble), and a clubhouse could be constructed at this site.

It is anticipated that construction of a facility of this magnitude will cost between \$3 Million and \$6 Million. This project could be funded through recreation related development charges, and therefore as a result have no tax impact. In the coming months a plan for recreation capital projects and corresponding funding sources will be presented to Council. This facility will fit within that plan.

Bubbling The Pickleball Facility

In the December 4th, 2023 report, a business plan was presented and approved by Council for the bubbling and operation of a pickleball facility. This site would accommodate the previously presented operating plan. Please see Appendix B for a copy of the operating budget previously approved by Council.

Key Milestones & Timing

Should Council approve this project, staff would immediately work to secure an architect/project manager to oversee final design, firm costing and construction project management. It is expected that a design can be completed, and construction can begin in 2024. Ideally, this would lead to an opening in time for the fall of 2025.

Conclusion

The sport of pickleball is experiencing exponential growth and is showing no signs of slowing down. The Town has developed a multifaceted approach that has included resurfacing some existing courts, and dual lining of select tennis courts. Developing a premiere facility of this nature would put Newmarket at the forefront of communities and provide an excellent opportunity for sport tourism through provision of a space capable of hosting tournaments. Consolidating courts as proposed also leads to operational efficiencies in terms of ongoing parks and facilities maintenance.

Business Plan and Strategic Plan Linkages

This approach aligns with our fiscal strategy while demonstrating a well managed and balanced approach. This approach will put Newmarket at the forefront in creating extraordinary spaces for physical activity and specifically the sport of pickleball.

Consultation

Staff continue to connect with various members of the pickleball community and have been working closely with leadership of the Newmarket Pickleball Club to ensure that recommendations align with resident and player expectations.

Notices were sent to all residents within 1,500 feet of the proposed site, as well as residents within 1,000 feet of the previously recommended site. Offers were made for staff to sit down individually with anyone within 600 feet for further discussion around any buffering measures. No individual meetings were requested. There were a handful of concerns expressed via email as well as a comparable number of supportive emails from neighbours.

Staff have had discussions with Newmarket Soccer Club around the proposed location for the pickleball facility and alternative field locations for soccer.

Human Resource Considerations

Human Resource considerations were addressed in previous reports.

Budget Impact

Budget impacts were addressed in previous reports.

Attachments

Appendix A – Court Layout at George Richardson Park

Approval

Colin Service, Director, Recreation & Culture

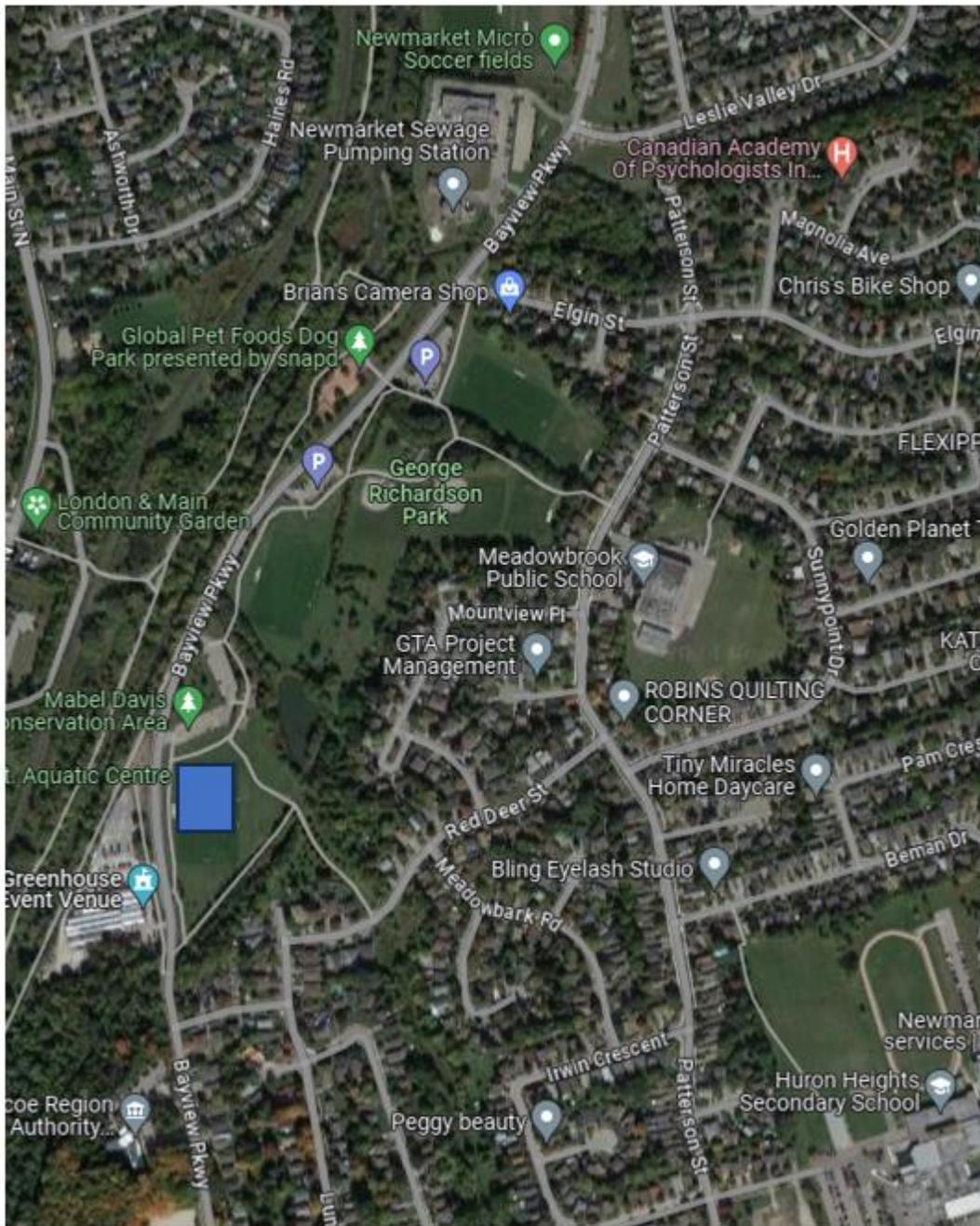
Jeff Payne, Commissioner, Community Services

Ian McDougall, CAO

Contact

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Appendix A – Proposed Site



 - site or proposed Pickleball Facility

Appendix B – Operating Plan for Bubbled Facility

Anticipated Annual Operating Plan

Revenue Type	Annual Projected Rev.	Details to Note
Memberships	\$112,000	Approximately 750 members anticipated (mixture of different categories)
Court Rentals	\$100,000	Assumption that courts are booked or programmed 85% of the time
Lessons/Clinics	\$125,000	Predominantly driven by introductory courses and one day clinics.
Leagues/Programs	\$265,000	Assumes drop in fees with sessions accommodating up 100 people at a time.
Tournaments	\$150,000	This will have the potential to be a premiere venue for tournaments.
TOTAL REVENUE	\$750,000	
Expense Type	Annual Projected Exp.	Details to Note
Staffing	\$300,000	Includes a variety of part time staff including instructors, facility workers and front desk
Utilities	\$80,000	\$10,000 per month, 8 month operation. Based on other bubble comparators
Annual bubble installation/tear down and storage	\$60,000	Based on precedent with tennis bubbles
Bubble Repayment	\$50,000	Based on 20 year life of bubble costing \$1Million
Supplies	\$100,000	Cleaning supplies and program supplies
Annual Repairs & Maintenance	\$75,000	General provision
TOTAL EXPENSES	\$665,000	
TOTAL ANNUAL SURPLUS	\$85,000	