



Town of Newmarket
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Outdoor Rink Pilot Program at Lions Park Staff Report to Council

Report Number: 2024-69

Department(s): Recreation & Culture; Parks & Facility Services

Author(s): Colin Service, Director, Recreation & Culture; Kristi Carlen, Director, Parks & Facility Services

Meeting Date: November 11, 2024

Recommendations

1. That the report entitled Outdoor Rink Pilot Program at Lions Park dated Nov 11th, 2024 be received; and,
2. That a Pilot Program at Lions Park as outlined in this report be approved; and,
3. That Staff be authorized and directed to do all things necessary to give effect to this resolution.

Purpose

The purpose of this report is to make Council aware of innovative new technology that can be deployed to make more consistent ice at outdoor rinks. The Town is in a position to implement a pilot program at Lions Park for the 2024 – 2025 season.

Background

In 2014, the Town of Newmarket launched a Community Rink Program. Three sites were selected: Lions Park, Ken Sturgeon Park and Whipper Billy Watson Park. Volunteers were recruited to build and maintain the ice for the duration of the operations. The Town provided access to water and financial support to purchase necessary items (ie. tarps and boards). The program ran successfully over the next few seasons.

The winters since that time have become increasingly erratic with large amounts of rain, warmer than average temperatures and regular thawing periods. These conditions have made it extremely taxing on the volunteers to maintain the ice for any length of time.

Outdoor Rink Pilot Program at Lions Park

Over the last 2 years, only the rink at Lions Park has continued to operate. That rink was able to operate because one volunteer put in thousands of hours each season to ensure that the ice could be maintained. That kind of effort is not sustainable.

During this same time period, Hollingsworth Arena was decommissioned. User groups have been accommodated within the remaining 6 indoor rinks. This has reduced the amount of ice availability for recreational use, particularly recreational based hockey. Lions Park has filled a vital need in providing the space for recreational hockey to occur.

Staff have been researching alternatives. This included a site visit to “The Shed”, York Regional Police Association’s facility, where they have created an outdoor rink with a portable, refrigerated ice rink complete with boards and safety netting. Based on research and findings, staff believe this improved technology provides a cost-effective viable alternative to the community rink program.

Discussion

In response to environmental constraints, there have been significant technological advancements made over the last few years in artificial cooling plants used to make ice. There are now portable systems: A typical Refrigerated Rink System is comprised of a chiller, refrigerated mats, manifold box, and a rink frame constructed from rink boards. They are now available for both personal use in a backyard or a more commercial use that is larger in size. These portable systems can be placed on any flat area that has ready access to water. The refrigerated mats are laid out on the flat surface; they are then covered with the manifold box; the rink frame is installed; the area is then flooded; the chiller then pumps a cooling agent through the refrigerated mats which helps to cool the ice and keep it cool during above zero temperatures.

The pilot location was selected because it offers some key benefits. These benefits include:

- A central location within the Town
- The community is familiar with this being an existing rink location
- There is existing lighting
- Available parking that is already winter maintained
- An existing garage bay in close proximity to store equipment
- An existing building with a washroom
- A sheltered area for people to put skates on
- Access to water for flooding that is available in the winter
- Close proximity to electrical to run the rink system
- Existing indoor space for supporting staff
- A hard surface to support the rink and boards
- Perimeter fencing to reduce risk and prevent afterhours access

The Town also is in the process of replacing several ice resurfacers and we are able to utilize a ‘retired’ unit avoiding significant equipment costs.

Outdoor Rink Pilot Program at Lions Park

Pilot Program at Lions Park

Staff are moving forward with a pilot program at Lions Park. This would include the rental of a portable rink system that would allow for a rink that is 50 feet by 100 feet (similar in size to what has been offered in this space as a community rink).

Hours of operation will be:

Monday to Friday – 4 pm to 10 pm

Saturday & Sunday – 10 am to 10 pm

Hours of operation will be subdivided to allow shinny hockey and recreational skating based on age groupings or open time periods.

Given the investment into the rental of the portable rink system, this site will be maintained and operated by Town staff. The primary volunteer who has maintained this rink has been consulted and is aware and comfortable with this approach. After spending so many hours volunteering his time against the frustrations of weather, he is welcoming the opportunity to gain some time back in his personal life.

Financial implications are highlighted in the budget impact section. Staff will use the pilot period to assess the equipment in different weather conditions, track costs and to test different operational approaches.

Conclusion

Given the environmental factors, and the demand for recreational ice use, this pilot program provides an excellent opportunity to enhance a service in a cost effective and sustainable manner. This pilot program will be evaluated this season. At the conclusion of the pilot program, staff will report back to Council on the success and whether this technology provides an opportunity for reconsideration of a long term approach to outdoor ice implementation.

Business Plan and Strategic Plan Linkages

Creating extraordinary spaces and places – outdoor skating and recreational hockey are sought after activities synonymous with the Canadian winter experience. This pilot program provides the opportunity for this experience in the face of global warming and a climate that is no longer friendly to it.

Consultation

Staff have done extensive research and conducted a site visit. Additionally, staff have consulted with the main volunteer at Lions Park Rink, as has been highlighted in the report.

Human Resource Considerations

Additional part time staff will be needed at this site.

Budget Impact

The following chart provides a high level overview of the financial implications for this pilot:

Line	Cost
Casual Wages	\$20,000
Electrical	\$30,000
Heat	\$4,000
Water	\$3,000
Repairs and Maintenance	\$10,000
Rental of rink	\$100,000
TOTAL	\$167000

The procurement process for the rink will include a rent to own option should the pilot be successful.

Attachments

None

Approval

Colin Service, Director, Recreation & Culture

Kristi Carlen, Director, Parks & Facility Services

Jeff Payne, Commissioner, Community Services

Contact

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