

Thompson Park Relocation Opportunities

RECOMMENDATION:

That Council direct staff to commence the field needs assessment portion of the Parks and Recreation Master plan in Q4 2019 in consultation with the PoCo Sports Alliance and its members at a total cost of \$25,000 to be funded from accumulated surplus, and that the financial plan be amended as required.

PREVIOUS COUNCIL/COMMITTEE ACTION

In July 2018, the Finance and Budget Committee approved a reduction in the 2019 budget for Thompson Park Baseball Field Renovations from \$800,000 to \$150,000 (\$120,000 capital and \$30,000 in ongoing rehabilitation) to fund interim renovation measures as part of the 2018-2019 Capital Plan.

On April 16, 2019 Council requested staff to investigate potential School District 43 (SD43) sites to determine if there were any sites large enough to accommodate the relocation of Thompson Park baseball fields through a cooperative agreement between the City and SD43.

REPORT SUMMARY

This report summarizes the potential relocation opportunities for Thompson Park to an SD43 site and recommends that the field needs assessment portion of the Parks and Recreation Master plan scheduled to commence in 2020 be brought forward to commence in Q4 2019.

BACKGROUND

The Thompson Park ball fields have a long history of differential settlement. They were built over a boggy area that was backfilled with hog fuel (wood chips) that has decomposed and settled over the years, resulting in inconsistent and uneven playing surfaces, fencing issues and localized ponding.

In 2018, the Finance and Budget Committee contemplated two improvement scopes for Thompson Park. One option was a short term solution (5 to 7 years) including new outfield fencing, a new and expanded irrigation system, improved field drainage, localized levelling of the outfields and new grass. The second option was a longer term solution (15 to 20 years) which included a pre-loading phase of 6 months and required all new field infrastructure.

Considering neither option contemplated the removal of the deep compressible underlying layers, there was still the future potential for settlement even after the preload. Also, commencing with preload would mean that baseball operations would be required to relocate their league play for a complete season during construction.

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Accordingly, Committee elected to fund interim renovation measures as part of the 2018-2019 Capital Plan.

Committee also directed staff review other long term solutions, including evaluating alternative locations, with better ground conditions, across the community where the ball fields could be replicated. Recognizing that the City has limited land availability for such a project, Committee requested Staff meet with SD43 to determine if there were any possibilities for relocating this sports complex to SD43 land under a joint use and funding agreement.

DISCUSSION

On May 3, 2019, City Staff and School District staff met to discuss the opportunity for partnership on a minor baseball complex similar to the amenities existing at Thompson Park. School District staff were open to the idea and committed to reviewing their inventory for potential sites and following up with possible locations.

Subsequently, SD43 staff reported back that they had completed a cursory review and had identified Irvine Elementary as a potential location for a single youth diamond. They also offered to review additional school sites should the City identify interest in alternative locations.

City Staff have now had an opportunity to review all 19 SD43 school sites within Port Coquitlam as well as any potential greenfield development locations. While there are sites which could accommodate single fields, no sites capable of facilitating multiple fields were identified. Considering the limited sportsfield expansion opportunities, staff also reviewed the utilization of our existing amenities and investigated the potential to review demands versus allocations across the sporting groups.

On September 9, 2019 staff met with the PoCo Sports Alliance to discuss field requirements for: PoCo Minor Baseball and PoCo Minor Softball. Consideration was also given to adult slow pitch, baseball and fast pitch. Through initial discussions it appears as though all sporting groups are interested in revisiting current field allocations with the goal of re-organizing allocations to provide a defined home park for each group capable of supporting current and future demands. This option was preferred over the construction of single field facilities across the community.

Accordingly a field needs assessment is recommended. A field needs assessment would typically be part of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan update which is currently scheduled to commence in Q1 2020 (subject to budget approval). Understanding that there is interest in starting this work as soon as possible, it is suggested that this portion of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan be isolated and commenced in Q4 2019.

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A comprehensive sports field needs assessment would include, at a minimum, a review and analysis of the following items:

- current field inventory and condition assessment
- capacity assessment
- demographic and user trends
- gaps and opportunities within the current field inventory
- benchmarking against other regional municipalities
- user surveys and feedback
- interviews/discussions with user group representatives

Some potential recommendations which could result from this process include: lighting fields to increase playable hours, reorganizing leagues and which parks they play out of, renovation of existing field infrastructure to meet demand and construction of additional field infrastructure.

FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

A comprehensive sports field needs assessment will be predominantly staff driven, however will require consultant support. Accordingly, the recommended amendment to the Financial Plan is to fund \$25,000 towards a sports field needs assessment from accumulated surplus. If approved, the capital request for the Parks and Recreation Master Plan revision for 2020 will be reduced accordingly.

OPTIONS (✓ = Staff Recommendation)

	#	Description
✓	1	Commence the sports field needs assessment portion of the Parks and Recreation Master plan in Q4 2019 in consultation with the PoCo Sports Alliance and its members and approve the financial plan amendment.
	2	Complete the field needs assessment portion as part of the Parks and Recreation Master plan anticipated to commence in Q1 2020.
	3	Defer consideration for alternative field locations to a later date

ATTACHMENTS

None.

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