

**THE CORPORATION OF THE TOWN OF GEORGINA**

**REPORT NO. RC-2016-0019**

**FOR CONSIDERATION OF  
COUNCIL  
JUNE 15, 2016**

**SUBJECT: MULTI-USE RECREATION COMPLEX (MURC) - UPDATE**

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**1. RECOMMENDATIONS:**

- 1. That Council receive Report No. RC-2016-0019 prepared by the Recreation and Culture Department dated June 15, 2016 respecting Multi-Use Recreation Complex (MURC) - Update.**
- 2. That staff report back to Council the fall of 2016 with a MURC update following the completion of the various studies (outlined in this report).**
- 3. That Council confirm whether to rebuild West Park ball diamonds in their current site or to replace West Park ball diamonds in a new site (possibly with the proposed MURC) and to direct staff to begin preparing a capital plan for future budget consideration.**

**2. PURPOSE:**

The purpose of this report is to provide Council with an update on the proposed Multi-Use Recreation Complex (MURC) and to obtain Council direction of the future of West Park ball diamonds.

**3. BACKGROUND:**

In 2014, Council adopted in principle the Recreation Facility Needs Study (RFNS) which included 44 recommendations (Attachment 1) for Georgina's future recreation facility needs. The RFNS took into account the demographic changes and future trends anticipated to 2031. Some of those included an understanding that there has been a dramatic change in Georgina's age profile where older adult and senior populations have increased while children and youth has actually declined in recent years. Looking ahead, growth is expected across every age cohort with the older adult and senior population continuing to lead the way.

The RFNS reviewed and provided recommendations on all areas of Georgina's recreational facilities, including:

- ice pads
- curling
- aquatics
- youth centres
- seniors centres
- gymnasiums
- program rooms
- fitness facilities
- community halls
- arts and culture facilities
- soccer fields
- ball diamonds
- tennis
- basketball
- skateboard parks
- playgrounds
- splash pads
- parkland and open space

Note: (Trails and Active Transportation were covered in a separate study in 2014).

The RFNS considered the following inputs:

- quantitative provision targets based on industry standards, utilization levels, and community input; and
- geographic distribution and level of service, which considers both location and a qualitative measure of service that accounts for factors such as facility condition, design, etc.

Based on those findings, the RFNS recommended a Multi-Use Recreation Complex (MURC) in south Keswick area.

Local support for a MURC was substantial. 88% of respondents to the online survey agreed or strongly agreed with the following statement: *"The Town should consider developing a Recreation Centre in the Keswick area with components such as an indoor pool, arena, gymnasium, walking-track, and/or community rooms."* It is important to note, that it is very likely Keswick residents would agree with this statement, however, two-thirds of the residents in other communities are also supportive of this initiative.

The needs assessment confirmed that there would be justification for the following components within the proposed MURC in south Keswick:

- multi-tank aquatics complex capable of accommodating competitive swimming (e.g., 25-metre, 6-lane), instructional swimming, recreational swimming, and wellness/therapeutic activities
- double gymnasium with walking track

- dedicated seniors lounge
- dedicated youth lounge
- multi-use program and meeting rooms
- active living centre (e.g. fitness studio)
- library branch
- ancillary spaces, such as minor sports organization offices, food and beverage services, storage, etc.

Other potential MURC components to be considered through further study include:

- fitness centre (equipment based) if operated by a third party
- civic administration offices
- retail/commercial uses (as defined by Expression of Interest and Request for Proposal)
- outdoor amenities (to be determined based on site/facility fit exercise)

The RFNS confirmed that a multi-use recreation facility can provide a great number of benefits. The degree and nature of these benefits would depend on local circumstances but research has proven that multi-use recreation facilities have the potential to generate substantial economic, social, and environmental gains for the local municipality. Larger multi-use facilities are more economical to build and operate versus stand-alone facilities. They also serve as a 'one-stop shop' destination that become a 'hub' within the community.

The RFNS also recommended that investment in recreation facilities should be part of a larger vision for the Town as this can provide significant benefits to the local quality of life and economic success. Quality recreation opportunities are known to be key factors that attract and retain residents and business. With many other municipalities investing in new and expanded facilities, there is competition for sport tourism, economic development, and growth. Sustainable, functional and attractive recreational facilities would help to position the town to maximize its potential.

Since the approved RFNS, the MURC facility has generated a significant amount of discussion and interest. The RFNS recommended building the MURC by 2018, however, it also identified a number of other possible considerations in finalizing the scope of the facility. Some of those were identified above such as the Civic Administration office, satellite library services, etc. The RFNS also made some assumptions related to timing of the construction based on the potential that 33% of the users for the proposed MURC would be coming from surrounding areas, including residents to the south of Georgina (i.e. East Gwillimbury).

Through staff discussions with Town of East Gwillimbury (E.G.), it was confirmed that E.G. is also destined for a multi-use recreation facility set on a similar timeframe as proposed for Georgina's facility. Therefore, working together to further define the timing of the projects and opportunities would be valuable in moving forward with such a large capital and ongoing operating investment. In September 2015, Council approved funding to perform an Analysis for the MURC in conjunction with the Town of East Gwillimbury (E.G.).

In January 2016, Council and staff worked on defining Georgina's Corporate Strategic Plan. During those discussions a number of goals were identified and proposed to be included in the

final plan which speak to the overall goal for a new recreational facility and need to be considered throughout the decision making for the MURC. Some of the proposed goals are:

- “Grow our Economy” – Sustainable Economic Growth & Employment
- “Promote a High Quality of Life” – Healthy, Safe, Sustainable Communities
- “Engage Our Community & Build Partnerships” – Communication, Engagement, Collaboration & Partnerships

As the Town continues planning towards the implementation of the MURC, there are a number of factors that need to be considered to help define the scope of the MURC project.

#### **4. ANALYSIS:**

Although the RFNS proposed a number of amenities to be considered for the MURC, further review is needed to confirm the amenities that need to go into the scope of the project and also the financial plan for the investment.

The Senior Management staff have considered the implications of the MURC and how their various initiatives will impact the final outcome for the MURC project.

##### **4.1 Georgina Library Services Review**

It has long been identified that the south end of Keswick has been under-served by the library, due to transportation challenges, and growth to the area. The Library Board is currently in the process of overseeing the review of a Facility and Services Master Plan to assess the current library facilities and the need for a south Keswick service point to reflect evolving library needs and trends. Libraries today are more modular, with flexible furniture and equipment, allowing the spaces to adapt to various activities, from traditional study and programming, to performance space and maker technology space. It is also important to the Library Board that we have a service point in a busy community hub – providing service where the people are.

The Master Plan will be completed this summer and will provide a more detailed vision of the service point that could possibly be accommodated in the MURC.

In the fall, the Library will be updating the Library Strategic Plan, and based on the recommendations of the Master Plan, it is expected that working with the Town to achieve the MURC as another library site will be a top priority.

##### **4.2 Georgina Fire Services Review**

Georgina Fire is in the beginning stages of a Fire Services Master Plan study that will guide the Department over the next 10 years. One of the areas to be assessed will be fire station location, condition and the ability to meet the needs of the community. The MURC may have the ability to assist the Fire Department in meeting its service level needs in the future. This will only be known at the completion of the Fire Services Master Plan later this year.

The contract has been awarded for the Fire Services Master Plan and the initial meeting was held in May. Review will take approximately 5 months, with the completion anticipated in September.

### **4.3 Civic Centre Functional Analysis Study**

The functional analysis study for the Civic Centre (how much political and administrative space we need for the long term) and the site option study will be issued together, in a joint RFP by the end of June. One of the options in the site selection part of the project will be co-locating with the MURC.

### **4.4 Economic Action Plan**

The Town of Georgina is in the process of updating its 2009 Socio-Economic Mission and Strategic Plan. This update will result in the development of a comprehensive Economic Action Plan and is set to be completed by the end of June. This Economic Action Plan will focus on four key strategies for enhancing the economic vitality of our community while keeping in mind the need to protect and provide stewardship of our natural heritage resources, primarily the Lake Simcoe watershed and rural agricultural lands. The four key strategies focus on business retention and expansion, enhancing and diversifying the tourism product, leveraging the economic impact of agriculture and agri-tourism and ensuring an investment ready environment.

There have been a number of key opportunities mentioned throughout the background research that include siting a new Civic Centre together with providing incubator/accelerator space within the business park and may be a catalyst to development within the Business Park. This together with growing the sport tourism industry and supporting an increased diversity of sporting activities are important considerations in formalizing the scope of the MURC.

### **4.5 West Park Site Analysis**

It has been well known for some time that the West Park ball diamonds are in need of significant repair or rebuild. As recommended in the RFNS, it is important to confirm the viability of maintaining active recreational uses of West Park. The RFNS stated that if the review of West Park confirmed that the park was not deemed viable, replacement diamonds would need to be considered at a new site (possibly with the MURC).

The biggest issue with West Park is the soil and drainage. Even in the dryer summers, diamonds have been closed due to the land not draining properly. Majority of the West Park lands are within the flood plain, are located adjacent to a Provincially Significant Wetland and located within an area of High Aquifer Vulnerability. Staff met with the Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority who said they may permit the Town to bring in fill to raise the diamonds, however, they would need to see the final design and plans before they could confirm. Along with the cost of added fill, there would be a significant investment needed to install a proper drainage plan, and then constructing the diamonds and all of their amenities.

One of the first steps in determining the viability of rebuilding West Park was to obtain geotechnical soil testing. Therefore, in October 2015, Soil Engineers Ltd. was contracted to provide soil testing of West Park. The recommendations from the testing confirm that West Park can be improved. However, this would require a number of steps to alleviate the drainage issues including removal and replacement of a significant amount of fill and the installation of a drainage plan.

Knowing that West Park may be viable, staff obtained a cost estimate to provide the necessary renovation of the 4 ball diamonds. In order to incorporate all site condition remediation, removal and replacement of fill, drainage, diamond amenities, etc., the estimate is approximately \$7-\$8 million.

Alternatively, West Park could be left as passive land and new ball diamonds could be constructed at an alternative site which the cost could be less (approximately \$6 million) depending on those soil conditions.

From a funding perspective, because the West Park ball diamonds are an existing facility, the construction costs are not eligible for Development Charge funding. Therefore, alternative funding sources (potential grants, tax levy contribution, and long term debt) would be necessary to fund this project regardless of its location.

With the viability of rebuilding the current West Park site confirmed, a decision of Council is required to either rebuild the diamonds in their current site or to build the diamonds new in an alternative site. It will likely cost the Town more to rebuild the diamonds in their current site, however, the current site is known to be a favorable site by our user groups and building new on an alternative site would require using up parkland dedication to facilitate the development of the ball diamonds where that parkland dedication could be allocated to serve other recreational purposes.

In order to build 4 ball diamonds (including accessory buildings and parking), approximately 5-6 hectares of land would be required.

#### **4.6 Financial Planning for the MURC**

Financial planning for the MURC is described below:

1. The Town's approved budget includes annual contributions of \$683,070 to a Reserve for the MURC. At the end of 2016, it is anticipated that the Reserve will maintain a balance of \$2,869,044.
2. The Development Charges Background Study dated April 2016 projects growth related costs of \$30,875,900 for the MURC including additional library facilities within the MURC, of which \$27,608,310 is eligible for funding from Development Charges. It is anticipated that \$21,032,963 of the required DC funding will be achieved through growth in the period 2016 to 2025.
3. The Town's Long Term Financial Plan is currently underway. This plan includes funding provisions for the MURC, with respect to both capital investment and annual operating

costs. It is anticipated that the Plan will propose funding options, including tax levy contributions, potential grants, and long term debt.

#### **4.7 MURC Site Selection**

From a land use planning perspective, the MURC will need to be appropriately located in the vicinity of the Woodbine Ave. corridor and with a planned east/west collector road and within the evolving South Keswick Development Area Plan (SKDAP- i.e. Simcoe Landing) under the current Keswick Secondary Plan. The feasibility/timing/cost of extending municipal services to the site is an important consideration.

Preliminary discussions have taken place with the developer in the desired area to consider some options for a MURC site. Confirming the size of the site is important to finalizing a site selection but this contingent on confirming exactly how many other features (noted previously in this report) need to be accommodated on the same site. The developer is anticipating further discussions following the outcome of the various studies.

#### **4.8 MURC Analysis**

Through staff discussions with the Town of East Gwillimbury, it was confirmed that based on the population growth projections of 39,600 in 2021 for East Gwillimbury, they are planning a recreation complex for 2021 which is scheduled to include an aquatics centre. With the provision target of 1 pool per 35,000 population, East Gwillimbury will meet the required target all within their borders. At this point, the Town of East Gwillimbury does not have a municipal pool and therefore, a new pool to serve their residents is an appropriate capital infrastructure project for East Gwillimbury. Paralleling that, is Georgina's desire for an aquatic centre in south Keswick.

The Recreation Facility Needs Study (2014) recommended a MURC facility that includes an aquatic centre. However, the study also made some assumptions at that time that the operating model of Georgina's facility would be taking into account resident utilization from surrounding municipalities (i.e. East Gwillimbury). With the new information confirmed that E.G. is progressing with their own aquatic facility, it is important to obtain an update to the Recreation Facility Needs Study (RFNS) projections.

With the population growth projections of 51,700 in 2021 for Georgina, the question arises as to what is the appropriate timing for Georgina's MURC. Acknowledging that Georgina has a pool already, however, with the provision target of 1 pool for 35,000 residents that still leaves Georgina shy of serving all of its residents. Originally, the results of the RFNS suggested that the proposed MURC would service those Georgina residents not yet serviced by the existing pool while accommodating residents from surrounding municipalities. However, with the new information regarding East Gwillimbury's pool, this still leaves a gap in service for Georgina's residents and yet potentially leaves the utilization of either the proposed MURC or Georgina's existing pool underutilized. Therefore, the question of timing of the MURC is imperative in the success of a new aquatic centre.

In May, Monteith Brown Planning Consultants (consulting firm that prepared the RFNS in 2014) were contracted to provide an update to the MURC section of the 2014 Study. Their objective is to reassess the recommendations relative to the proposed Multi-use Recreation Complex. A particular focus will be placed on determining the preferred timing for delivery of this facility and its various components, given recent changes in regional facility provision (E.G.'s facility), population growth changes (in 2014, York Region projected Georgina to have a population of 70,300 by 2031, now in a recent study by York Region, Georgina is projected to reach only 62,200 by 2031), and local participation trends. This project will re-examine the key demand assumptions for the MURC, including the size of the primary and secondary markets and the potential for phasing the project (building some aspects before others). This update will serve as an Appendix to the 2014 Study.

The update will rely on several inputs, including engagement with key Town staff, existing staff/corporate reports, updated demographic and usage data, targeted research and available information on regional facility supplies. The update is anticipated to be complete by the September.

**5. FINANCIAL AND BUDGETARY IMPACT:**

Not applicable at this time.

**6. PUBLIC CONSULTATION AND NOTICE REQUIREMENTS:**

As further information arises on the MURC project, the public will be provided information on the Town's website. The public may be involved with a variety of the studies/plans noted throughout this report.

**7. CONCLUSION:**

The MURC project is an exciting opportunity for Georgina. In order to properly plan and execute the project, various reports/plans need to be finalized to provide a more clearly defined scope, timing and funding for the project. In addition, staff are seeking Council direction of their desire to rebuild West Park in its current location or to plan for replacing West Park ball diamonds on a new site.

Recommended by:

Approved by:

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