



REPORT | ADMINISTRATIVE REPORT TO COUNCIL

PRESENTED: November 21, 2017

REPORT: 17-125

FROM: Resort Experience

FILE: 8516

SUBJECT: ARTIFICIAL TURF FIELD PROJECT – SITE CONFIRMATION

COMMENT/RECOMMENDATION FROM THE CHIEF ADMINISTRATIVE OFFICER

That the recommendation of the General Manager of Resort Experience be endorsed.

RECOMMENDATION

That Council confirm Bayly Park as the location of the artificial turf field.

REFERENCES

Appendix “A” – RMOW Information Report to Council No.17-017 March 7, 2017 - Artificial Turf Field Project Update

Appendix “B” – RF Binnie and Associates – November 14 2017 Preliminary Design Plan Bayly Park Artificial Turf Field

Appendix “C” – Vancouver Coastal Health – October 17, 2017 Letter re Health Concerns Associated with Artificial Sports Turf and Crumb Rubber Infill

PURPOSE OF REPORT

The purpose of this Report is to confirm a location for the artificial turf field.

DISCUSSION

In response to community discussion originating in 2008 with development of the Bayly Park Master Plan and reinforced during the engagement phase of the Recreation and Leisure Master Plan, feedback from the Recreation and Leisure Advisory Committee and Council direction, RMOW staff began investigations into an artificial turf field in 2015.

Initially an indoor multi-purpose field-based recreation facility was considered, but it quickly became apparent that capital and operating costs were significant. Consequently the focus of the project turned to a simpler and less costly outdoor artificial turf field. A summary of this investigation was presented to Council at a December 2015 Committee of the Whole Meeting.

A needs assessment for an outdoor artificial turf field was subsequently undertaken and presented to Council at their December 6, 2016 Committee of the Whole Meeting.

Council was then presented with a comprehensive artificial turf field project update via Council Information Report No. 17-017 in March 2017. This Report, appended in Appendix “A”, included considerable detail on the following topics:

- Summary and key findings from the needs assessment phase;
- Site suitability analysis that considered seven development options at six different sites;

- Artificial turf health and recycling considerations;
- Capital budget estimates ranging between \$2,730,000 and \$6,500,000 for the seven development options at six different sites; and
- External funding opportunities.

As a preferred site was not confirmed, a value representing the average cost to develop a facility at one of the six possible sites was included within the 2017-2021 Five Year Financial Plan. This average equated to \$4,153,000.

Moving Forward - Site Confirmation and Updated Capital Budget Estimate

Following the March 2017 Report, staff and the consultant team further investigated geotechnical details for the Bayly Park option. The site suitability analysis in Appendix “A” demonstrated Bayly Park to be a favourable site and it is the least-cost option.

Staff now confirm that it is feasible to develop a full size artificial turf field with illumination at Bayly Park, with the understanding that localized settlement repairs will likely be periodically necessary given the location above the closed municipal landfill. More detail on the settlement risk, management approach and repair is provided in Appendix “A”.

Capital budget estimates for the Bayly Park site have been further refined. The total project cost is estimated at \$2,715,000 which includes the field, fencing, LED illumination, alternative field infill product, potable water service, landscaping, contingency, and professional fees. A preliminary design drawing is appended to this report as Appendix “B”.

The artificial turf product should be expected to be replaced every 10-15 years depending on intensity of use and UV exposure. The cost for this is approximately \$800,000 and includes re-leveling. Current municipal practice is to carry lifecycle replacement costs within the capital budget process. This turf replacement figure is excluded from the figures above and from operating budget estimates below.

Operating Budget Estimates

The annual costs to maintain an artificial turf field remain consistent with information presented in Appendix “A”. Typical costs of \$25,000 to \$35,000 can be expected and include hydro costs for illumination using non LED lights. Operating costs at Bayly Park are anticipated to be higher but not necessarily on an annual basis due to the anticipated periodic settlement repair.

Operating costs can be partially or fully offset by charging user fees. Comparable 2015 Lower Mainland user fees averaged \$30/hour for youth and \$60/adult. As part of the project engagement process all groups expressed a willingness to pay increased fees to use an artificial turf facility. This includes youth groups who are currently exempt from paying municipal sport field user fees as per Council policy I-06.

For reference purposes, the municipality’s existing rectangular natural grass fields cost approximately \$20,000 each per year, a portion of which is offset by user fees. By comparison, the ice arena alone at the Meadow Parks Sports Centre is subsidized approximately \$600,000 per year by municipal taxpayers and excludes lifecycle costing equipment replacement or repairs.

Bayly Park Considerations

As mentioned previously, the primary concern at the Bayly Park site is the potential for differential settlement due to its location over top of the former municipal landfill, now closed. More detail on the settlement risk, management approach and repair is provided in Appendix A.

Vehicle parking is an important consideration. The existing Bayly Park gravel parking lot has a design capacity of 60 vehicles and is used by Bayly Park users, Whistler Sport Legacies and neighbourhood residents. With the introduction of the artificial turf field and additional residential housing, use of the parking lot use should be monitored and future improvements could be considered if proven necessary. Expansion of this lot is relatively straightforward while more costly asphalt surfacing can improve parking capacity by 20-30 per cent without physical expansion. Funds for parking improvements are not included within the budget estimates provided within this report.

The existing dog off leash area is not impacted by the design of the artificial turf field. The design will provide a potable water service to the field, a branch of which will serve the dog off leash area.

User groups have expressed a desire for possible future ancillary elements of a soccer warm up area and a 100 metre sprint track. The sprint track is of particular interest to Whistler Sport Legacies. The design in Appendix “B” protects space for these two possible future elements at no additional cost to the project. For further clarity these two ancillary elements are not part of the \$2,715,000 budget estimate.

Crumb Rubber Health Concerns

As mentioned in the March 2017 Information Report, concerns about the human health impacts of crumb rubber infill commonly used in artificial turf fields has been reported in the national media and by several Whistler residents.

Attached in Appendix “C” is a letter from the Vancouver Coastal Health’s Office of the Medical Health Officer regarding artificial sports turf and crumb rubber infill. Vancouver Coastal Health (VCH) is the regional health authority for Whistler, and is funded by the provincial government to provide a range of health services including preventive health. The conclusion of the VCH letter states that *“Serious health risks including cancer are not increased from playing on artificial turf with crumb rubber infill.”*

Alternatives to crumb rubber exist at a cost premium of \$150,000 to \$200,000. In respect of concerns the municipal capital budget estimate includes a line item for an alternative infill product.

A decision regarding the type of infill product will be made by Council at the time of construction tender award. At that time Council will be provided with detailed information and costs for a range of alternative products in order to make an informed decision.

Potential External Funding Opportunities

A submission for 100 per cent project funding to the UBCM’s Gas Tax fund was made in June 2017. Announcements are expected prior to the end of January 2018. If successful, awarded funds would be used to offset stated capital costs as opposed to expanding project scope.

Throughout the life of this project a number of other external funding opportunities have been anecdotally mentioned. These include interest from the Whistler Blackcomb Foundation, artificial turf product suppliers as well as local contractors. The local soccer community is also preparing a community fundraising initiative. With confirmation of a site at Bayly Park, staff will further pursue each of these potential opportunities.

WHISTLER 2020 ANALYSIS

W2020 Strategy	TOWARD Descriptions of success that resolution moves us toward	Comments
Built Environment	Continuous encroachment on nature is avoided.	Proposed site is a brownfield site.
Natural Areas	Use of critical natural areas is avoided and use of surrounding areas is limited to ensure ecosystem integrity.	Proposed site is a brownfield site.
Natural Areas	Developed and recreation areas are designed and managed to protect as much of the natural environment within and around them as possible.	Proposed site is a brownfield site.
Partnership	Partners work toward aligned budgeting processes that leverage limited resources for increased effectiveness and efficiency	There is partnership potential both in terms of capital and operating costs.
Recreation and Leisure	Residents and visitors of all ages and abilities enjoy activities year-round that encourage healthy living, learning and a sense of community.	Provision of an artificial turf field will extend the playable season by 40% offering increased recreation opportunities.
Recreation and Leisure	Recreation and leisure are part of the Whistler lifestyle and all community members are able and encouraged to participate.	Whistler is inclusive and continues to diversify its scope of recreational offerings.
Recreation and Leisure	Local and regional stakeholders use a collaborative and comprehensive approach to developing amenities and offerings, and to resolving user conflicts.	This project has used an inclusive and regional stakeholder engagement process.
Recreation and Leisure	Recreation and leisure infrastructure and practices minimize the degradation of natural areas and are transitioning toward sustainable use of energy and materials.	Proposed site is a brownfield site. An artificial turf field does not require potable water for irrigation. Artificial turf products are recyclable.
Resident Affordability	Diverse and affordable opportunities for recreation, leisure, arts and culture exist.	Organized soccer is relatively affordable when compared to many other Whistler programs.
Water	All potable water is used sparingly and only used to meet appropriate needs.	An artificial turf field does not require potable water for irrigation.

W2020 Strategy	AWAY FROM Descriptions of success that resolution moves away from	Mitigation Strategies and Comments
Built Environment	Visitors and residents can readily immerse themselves in nature, free from noise and light pollution.	Sport field illumination will be directed at field and away from neighbouring buildings. Illumination levels will be less than Spruce Grove ball diamonds. Sport field use will end at 10pm as per current municipal noise bylaw.
Built Environment	Landscaped areas consist of native plant species that eliminate the need for watering and chemical use.	An artificial turf field does not require potable water for irrigation or chemical fertilizer for grass growth and health.
Materials and Solid Waste	Whistler is using durable materials that are less environmentally harmful, preferring recycled natural and sustainably harvested materials and plentiful metals.	The artificial turf products is essentially plastic. The turf is recyclable and staff are monitoring contemplated adaptive reuse in other jurisdictions. The crumb rubber infill, if used, is reusable. Other infill products have various considerations that will be presented in a future Council report.

OTHER POLICY CONSIDERATIONS

One of the Key Findings of the 2015 Recreation and Leisure Master Plan (RLMP) is that *“Municipal assets play a strong role in providing easy access to recreation and sport, fostering lifelong activity participation, as well as developing athletes and sport. These are components of Whistler’s identity.”*

Pursuit of an artificial turf field is consistent with recommendations from the RLMP. Specifically, Key Strategy 3.3 of the RLMP states: *“Develop an additional grass or artificial turf rectangular field to reduce unsustainable wear on existing fields and meet growing demand”* as an immediate priority. The RLMP also includes recommendation to continue to facilitate third-party sport training programs and lessons.

BUDGET CONSIDERATIONS

The 2017 – 2021 Five Year Financial Plan includes a budget amount of \$4,153,000 which is an average of the seven different scenarios identified within this report.

Staff recommend that the draft 2018 – 2022 Five Year Financial Plan include a revised budget amount of \$2,715,000 funded via the General Capital Reserves. As stated above, this amount includes the field, fencing, illumination, alternative field infill product, provision of potable water service, landscaping, contingency, and professional fees.

Funds expended in 2015 (\$16,300) provided a preliminary geotechnical investigation of one site and the *Whistler Multi-Use Recreation Facility Investigative Study* report, the latter of which was presented at Committee of the Whole on December 1, 2015.

The 2016 budget for this project was \$150,000 however only \$48,000 was expended. The 2016 expenditures provided topographical survey information, needs assessment and conceptual site planning and costing services.

The 2017 budget for this project was \$160,000 however to date only \$75,000 has been expended. Work has included Bayly Park test hole excavation, additional topographical survey work, and professional fees for geotechnical engineering and preliminary field design.

COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT AND CONSULTATION

The roots of this project originate in 2008 with the original Bayly Park Master Plan. During the creation of that Plan field user groups were engaged and reported increasing community demand and unsustainable wear upon the existing fields in the community. Resultantly, two grass soccer fields were included in the 2008 Plan.

For budget, global economy slow down, and landfill geotechnical concerns these two fields were not developed. Instead, in 2012, a single lesser cost and lesser quality gravel soccer field was constructed while the second field space was parked and identified for future uses. The second field space has since become the site of the BMX track.

Existing soccer field conditions and demand for additional field capacity particularly in early and late season was next voiced during the extensive community engagement phase of the Recreation and Leisure Master Plan (RLMP) process (2013-2015). Consequently additional field space is identified as an immediate priority in the RLMP.

Over the course of the planning phases of the artificial turf field project starting in 2015, stakeholders have been engaged through focus group sessions and ongoing dialogue. This primarily includes rectangular-shaped field users (soccer, football, rugby) and to a lesser degree diamond-shaped field users (baseball, slow pitch, and softball).

Municipal staff have discussed this project in the context of regional implications with soccer and municipal representatives in Pemberton and Squamish. Similar higher level conversations have occurred with representatives from School District 48, Whistler Sport Legacies and the Whistler Blackcomb Foundation.

Five letters advocating for an artificial turf field in Whistler have been received from Whistler Secondary Community School students.

This project is a frequent topic at the Recreation and Leisure Advisory Committee. Specific resolutions from 2014 through to November 2017 have identified an artificial turf field as a top priority.

The project was first presented to Committee of the Whole on December 1, 2015. A number of members of the public attended that Meeting. The project returned to Committee of the Whole on December 6, 2016. A comprehensive project update was provided to Council on March 7, 2017.

The RMOW website's artificial turf field project webpage contains extensive project information and reports.

SUMMARY

This Report serves to confirm the feasibility of the Bayly Park site with regard to development of a full sized artificial turf field with illumination. A revised capital budget estimate is provided that is less than previous estimates.

Respectfully submitted,

Martin Pardoe
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for
Jan Jansen
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