



WHISTLER

MINUTES

**REGULAR MEETING OF THE RECREATION LEISURE
ADVISORY COMMITTEE
THURSDAY JANUARY 11, 2018, STARTING AT 4:00 PM.
Municipal Hall, Flute Room
4325 Blackcomb Way, Whistler, BC V0N 1B4**

PRESENT:

Bob Calladine, Member at Large
Chris Kaipio, Member at Large
Colin Pitt-Taylor, Member at Large
Dave Clark, Member at Large
Eric Wight, Member at Large
Jan Jansen, General Manager Resort Experience, RMOW
John Konig, Member at Large
Josie Chuback, Member at Large
Martin Pardoe, Manager, Resort Parks Planning, RMOW
Meredith Kunza, Tourism Whistler representative
Murray Lunn, Chair
Roger Soane, Member at Large
Roger Weetman, Recreation Manager, RMOW
Stephanie Sloan, Member at Large
Shannon Perry, Recording Secretary, RMOW
Councillor, Jen Ford

REGRETS:

Ian Currie, Howe Sound School District 48 representative

ADOPTION OF AGENDA

Included new business: Committee recommendation for Whistler Sport Legacy to join the Recreation Leisure Advisory Committee

Removed from the Agenda; None

Moved by Roger Soane
Seconded by Bob Calladine

That Recreation Leisure Advisory Committee adopt the regular Recreation Leisure Advisory Committee agenda of Thursday January 11, 2018

CARRIED

ADOPTION OF MINUTES

Moved by Bob Calladine

Seconded by Josie Chuback

That Recreation Leisure Advisory Committee adopt the regular Recreation Leisure Advisory Committee regular minutes of November 9, 2017

CARRIED

PRESENTATIONS/DELEGATIONS

Future of indoor tennis

A discussion regarding the future of indoor tennis in Whistler. Recreation Leisure Advisory Committee members were presented with Appendix A – Johns email.

Questions / Discussion:

Whistler Tennis Club has been in the Whistler community for over 25 years. The facility had 16,000 players on the courts in 2016. At the moment the club is also facilitating programs such as the youth soccer programs 1-2 days a week & Thai chi. Squash members are also interested in working with the Tennis Club.

The Tennis Club is very busy and successful with their junior program. It was noted that tennis players are not currently getting all the court time they want. Tennis thrives best in an organized format or centre which includes public access.

Staff suggest it would be beneficial to revisit what facilities Whistler has for a community of 12,000 and to determine what population of Whistler residents play tennis.

Recent Tourism Whistler studies demonstrate that less than 1% of visitors come to Whistler to play tennis. It is felt that tennis is an added activity and not a visitation driver. That said, Tennis Club 2016 statistics indicate that 50% of facility attendees are visitors.

In terms of compatibility between different sports (ie youth soccer and tennis) both sports are obviously very different but having the centre as a multipurpose court has been beneficial for the organisation and the community - it works well.

If a large rezoning application were to come forward a discussion involving the community would need to occur to determine community needs. The parcel of land that the club currently resides is one of the biggest undeveloped land parcels in Whistler.

That Recreation Leisure Advisory Committee support the future of organized tennis in Whistler and the continued existence of an indoor/outdoor tennis centre that is multi-functional, for other recreation and leisure activities.

Moved by John Konig
Second by Roger Soane

Opposed by one

CARRIED

Community planning/visioning in advance of potential rezoning's

A discussion regarding a range of possible community amenities that could be secured through potential future rezoning's including the Holborn (now Beattie) site and other potential rezonings.

Community amenity suggestions from the Committee;

- An indoor multi-purpose recreation facility not unlike a smaller version of Richmond's Olympic Oval, or the range of facilities explored in the 2015 Whistler Multi-Use Recreation Facility Investigative Study
- Valuable land, preferably lakeshore.
- Athletic running track.
- Meadow Park Sports Centre expansion.

Bike traffic from day lots to village

A discussion regarding potential improvements that would reduce car/pedestrian conflicts. Recreation Leisure Advisory Committee member suggested there is a desire to have bikes off the road and off the Valley Trail along Blackcomb Way due to congestion and conflicts.

Members suggestions:

- Make permanent the temporary Ironman and Grand Fondo Blackcomb Way pedestrian overpass between Whistler Olympic Plaza and Lot 4
- Relocate the two existing yellow maze gates along the Blackcomb Way Valley Trail on top of the dyke..
- Widen Blackcomb Way to permit dedicated bike lanes on both sides.

Roger Soane left the meeting due to conflict of interest 5:15 p.m.

OTHER BUSINESS

Whistler Sport Legacy as Recreation Leisure Advisory Committee Representative

Recreation Leisure Advisory Committee member suggested the Whistler Sports Legacy is a valuable organisation in the Whistler community, is constructive on the Committee, and should be considered for partner membership similar to that of Tourism Whistler and School District 48.

Questions / Discussion:

Does this open the door to Whistler Blackcomb joining the Committee as a community group, or other significant community groups like WORCA? Whistler Blackcomb is a for-profit organisation and would therefore not be permitted. WORCA is represented on the municipal Forest and Wildland Advisory Group and is a member of the municipal Trail Planning Working Group (TPWG). TPWG notes and discussions are shared with RLAC.

The Committee discussed and agreed there is value having Whistler Sport Legacy as a partner representative on the Committee. Whistler Sport Legacy are not on other RMOW Committees of Council.

That Recreation Leisure Advisory Committee recommend that the Terms of reference be amended to include Whistler Sport Legacy as a partner member of the Recreation Leisure Advisory Committee.

Moved by Josie Chuback
Second Stephanie Sloan

CARRIED

Roger Soane entered the meeting 5:40 p.m.

Member Comment Meadow Park Sports Centre communication and public relations going great.

Whistler Olympic Plaza Recreation Leisure Advisory Committee member suggested that there need to be more urgency with the spring opening of the lawn at Whistler Olympic Plaza.

There was a brief discussion. The snow play mound does not adversely affect the lawn opening date. Extra efforts are undertaken to expedite opening, efforts that are not utilized on other municipal lawn areas. The lawn is a critical piece of summer programming for the resort where the intensity of use is significantly greater than a golf course. If not satisfactorily ready, then there is a risk to all summer resort programming.

NEXT MEETING

Tentative February 8, 2018 at 4 pm

ADJOURNMENT

Moved by Stephanie Sloan

That Recreation Leisure Advisory Committee adjourn the January 11, 2018 Recreation Leisure Advisory Committee meeting at 5:55 pm

CARRIED

CHAIR: Murray Lunn

Organized tennis in Whistler has been an important asset to the community for at least 38 years.

In 1979, the Whistler Valley Tennis Club was established on the shores of Nita Lake, on privately held land, owned by John Taylor. Where the Nita Lake lodge is now located. It consisted of 5 courts, 1 of which was covered with a bubble in the winter months. It was established as a non profit club and run by a volunteer board of directors.

It was a very active club, with a paid tennis professional, court booking, round robins, tournaments and social events. In 1990 there were 250 members.

In the mid 1990's the land was up for sale and unfortunately the municipality did not make a deal with the owner and the community lost the club.

In 1988, under Official Community Plan guidelines, Whistler's municipal council decided that for the community to become a successful international destination, it needed to develop into a four season resort. A proposal call was put forward offering bed units (development rights) in exchange for amenities.

Three proponents were successful. The Fairmont Hotel Group could develop the Chateau Whistler if they built the Robert Trent Jones golf course.

Kaleb Chan and Golf BC could develop the Nicklaus North neighbourhood if they delivered the championship course designed by "The Bear" Jack Nicklaus.

And Park Georgia was granted 1200 bed units, to develop a 500 room, five star hotel and townhouse complex, provided they:

deliver a world-class indoor tennis facility,

an 18,000 square foot destination spa, and a golf teaching academy.

Park Georgia's presentations showed an internationally acclaimed Bjorn Borg Tennis Centre, with the capacity to host televised professional tournaments.

There was a stadium court, four indoor courts and twelve outdoor courts. The architectural drawings detailed an impressive facility.

These amenities would have greatly enhanced the Whistler four season resort experience, which was the community's objective.

The tennis club we are in today was only meant to be a temporary facility used until the new hotel and tennis center was completed. It opened its doors in 1991 as the Whistler Racquet and Golf Club. In the mean time, Park Georgia built the Montebello Townhouses, phases 1 & 2, which sold very quickly and profitably. After selling the 125 townhomes, Park Georgia then sold the remaining undeveloped land, including this tennis club, and left town, leaving the community with barely a shadow of what was promised. A temporary tennis facility requiring lots of maintenance.

The new owners, the Holborn group, were aware that with the purchase of the property came an existing commitment to the resort and community, but they later argued that the obligation had already been met and that it had not been properly documented in the original agreement.

Perhaps the municipality did not properly document the agreement, but the intent was clear and several prominent politicians of the day will testify to that fact.

The Holborn Group later decided that the hotel project was not viable because of low occupancy rates and an oversupply of hotel rooms in the resort.

In May 2005, they applied to rezone the property, to change it from a phase 2 hotel designation to a phase 1 mix of townhouses and condominiums.

In 2008, after three years of difficult negotiations, which the tennis association was actively involved in, the application to rezone passed third reading. Two major points were agreed upon: the configuration of the facility and the ownership.

Holborn agreed to build a permanent structure which included 5 indoor courts, and 7 outdoor courts. The courts would be built to tournament specifications with options for stadium seating. The facility had a large fitness area, viewing lounge, reception/pro shop, restaurant with patio, swimming pool, space for squash

courts and underground parking. The developer had also agreed to turn over the ownership of the facility to the municipality. The value of this amenity was estimated to be between 18 to 20 million dollars.

Another major issue was the time frame for delivering the amenity. The community had already waited over 17 years for an amenity that was promised when the original 1200 bed units were granted.

The tennis association pushed hard for a deal that would guarantee the amenity would be delivered in a reasonable time frame and that the developer would adequately maintain the current facility and staff, so that there would be an ongoing business to hand over.

The timing that was agreed to in the bylaw, was that the developer must deliver the indoor racquet and fitness facility within 6 years of the bylaw passing the 4th reading, and deliver the remaining outdoor courts, swimming pool, terraces, landscaping within 8 years of the by-law passing.

The Holborn Group did not proceed to the 4th reading because they did not want the clock to start ticking. They continued to hold the property and spent very little money maintaining the facility. They listed the property for sale couple of years ago and it sold to the Beedie Group. They are a Vancouver based, multi-generational development company that takes pride in being a good corporate citizen, that listens to the needs and concerns of the communities where they build. We believe that a substantial amenity, a tennis center, is still owed to the for community for the development rights that were originally granted.

Current Situation

Currently there is a three indoor/four outdoor court facility in Whistler just north of Marketplace. It has successfully operated in this location for twenty years without the help of municipal funding or Tourism Whistler marketing. The manager, Kirk Paterson, has dramatically increased business since the facility was shut down for several months to provide an operational centre for Olympic volunteers. Organized tennis has a long, successful history in Whistler. The Whistler Valley Tennis club on the shores of Nita Lake opened in 1979.

Tennis should be part of the discussion for a bad weather strategy. The sport is showing phenomenal growth worldwide. A 2014 national research study on the health of the sport of tennis in Canada. The study shows that in the past 12 months, more than 6.5 million Canadians played tennis at least once. This is a 32% increase over 2012 when the last participation numbers were tracked. Popularity of the sport is also on the rise with 51% of Canadians saying they are either somewhat or very interested in the sport, up from 38% in 2012, with BC/Lower Mainland showing the highest numbers. The popularity of the game is expected to gain momentum with the young Canadian, Denis Shapovalov's recent success at the US Open and Rogers Cup. Milos Raonic and Eugenie Bouchard, reached a top ten ranking in the world. The latest USA statistics for tennis participation show annual increases between 9.6% and 12.5% while other traditional sports have shown a decline. China has over 30 million tennis players that play regularly. The Chinese government's goal is to increase these numbers by 15% annually. Tennis is the third most popular organized physical activity in Australia.

Indoor racquet sports are a critical component (bad weather strategy) to diversify the recreational activities offered in the resort. Tennis is a great complimentary activity to skiing. There is a strong statistical correlation that many skiers are also tennis players, and therefore vacation in resorts which offer both activities. A significant number of weekenders and guests from the lower mainland are tennis players. Not including private clubs, there are eleven indoor facilities in the lower mainland. Tennis players often come from a social economic background that have a higher disposable income to spend on travel. Tennis is a multi-generational activity with many different age groups playing together. As many women play tennis as men.

Recent surveys show that one of the top things that people like about traveling is meeting locals. Tennis provides a unique opportunity for tourist and locals to play and socialize together. Programming at the Whistler Racquet club includes clinics, drill sessions, tournaments, competitive leagues, and drop-in socials, and for all age groups. These programs foster interaction between locals, seasonal residents, weekenders, and destination visitors.

Tennis only thrives in a club environment. Scattered public courts with no programming don't provide the recreational value that a well run club can offer to the community. For the past 15 years the Whistler Racquet Club (WRC) has provided an in-school program for children from kindergarten to grade seven. Many children have followed up with additional subsidized lessons and some have developed into elite young players, winning international tournaments, and obtaining university scholarships. Tennis teaches children sportsmanship and fair play. You are your own referee. Also, the soccer league is now regularly using the indoor courts. A new, larger facility will benefit other user groups such as; squash, indoor exhibitions, trade shows, etc.

Tennis BC is a key partner with the WRC. They are encouraging the club to run increasingly more tournaments because of our successful track record. These events are already putting heads in beds. Tennis BC and Tennis Canada have expressed strong interest in hosting regular sanctioned tournaments in Whistler. But unfortunately the current facility, which is privately owned, is in a state of disrepair and will require substantial expenditure in the near to medium term.

The original draft document produced for the Recreation and Leisure Master Plan stated that "The property owner has an outstanding commitment to deliver a world class facility as per the 1988 development agreement. The RMOW should ensure this commitment is fulfilled." Whistler's tennis players fully support that statement but this line was dropped from the final document. Two issues are critical to the future of tennis in Whistler; that when the tennis lands development proceeds the agreed upon recreational amenity is delivered to the community in a timely fashion. Until that time the RMOW should, in the strongest possible terms, emphasize to the developer the importance of properly maintaining the current facility with reasonable opening hours.