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Town of Aurora

General Committee Report

No. OPS23-018

Subject: Approval of Capital Project No. 73217 - Summit Park Playground Replacement and Basketball Court/Walkway Improvements

Prepared by: Sara Tienkamp, Director of Operations

Department: Operational Services

Date: September 5, 2023

Recommendation

1. That Report No. OPS23-018 be received; and
2. That the condition on the approval of a total of \$300,000 in capital budget authority for Capital Project No. 73217 – Summit Park Playground Replacement and Basketball Court/Walkway Improvements be lifted, and the project proceed; and
3. That the scope of this project be expanded to include a fitness park, lighting and rubberized safety surfacing enhancements; and
4. That the total capital budget authority for Capital Project No. 73217 be increased to \$600,000, representing an increase of \$300,000 to be funded from the Cash-in-Lieu of Parkland reserve.

Executive Summary

This report seeks Council approval to proceed with Capital Project No. 73217 for the replacement of the playground and walkway/basketball court asphalt resurfacing in Summit Park. Additional upgrades of amenities within the park include lights for the basketball court, enhanced rubberized safety surfacing and a fitness park:

- Summit Park playground/basketball court/walkway replacement project subject to conditional approval pending additional park amenity inquiries by Council.
- Concept Plan for the park presented to both the Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) and Park and Recreation Advisory Committee (PRAC).
- Results of the community survey generated responses 38 responses with 50% of respondents strongly agreeing to the need for fitness equipment.

- Recently completed Parks and Recreation Master Plan (PRMP) update supports a Fitness Park and other recommendations from the Summit Park plan.
- Potential to generate revenue through fitness park classes.
- Increased budget required for the capital project with the inclusion of a fitness park, lit basketball court and desired rubberized surface to provide accessibility.

Background

Summit Park playground/basketball court/walkway replacement project subject to conditional approval pending additional park amenity inquiries by Council.

As part of the 2023 Capital Budget process, Project No. 73217 for the replacement of the playground and walkway/basketball court asphalt resurfacing in Summit Park was presented to Council for approval of funding.

During budget consultation, Council inquired if staff could investigate incorporating additional amenities within the park, including lights for the existing basketball court and a new fitness park. These amenities were not factored into the budget, nor was it clear if the park could facilitate the inclusions of these amenities from a space perspective, therefore staff required time to explore the proposed options.

As a result, the project was conditionally approved to allow staff the time to research the feasibility, explore design elements and prepare the additional budget requirements prior to returning to Council for final approval of the project.

Analysis

Concept Plan for the park presented to the Accessibility Advisory Committee (AAC) and Park and Recreation Advisory Committee (PRAC) for review and input.

The concept design plan which included the fitness park/lighting was submitted to ACC on June 7, 2023 and PRAC on June 15, 2023.

Most of the conversation from both meetings centered around accessibility including fully accessible rubberized surfacing in the playground and the fitness area (i.e., not wood chips) to allow ease and ability to manoeuvre around play equipment. Comments were also received about increasing the accessibility of pathways in the park and ensuring fitness signage included braille text.

PRAC had questions about the age-appropriateness of play equipment and if the neighbourhood demographics supported the new amenities. They asked if staff could prepare a neighbourhood resident's survey or hold a public information session. They also inquired about site furnishings (bike racks, park benches) and lighting for the playground.

Results of the community survey generated responses 38 responses with 50% of respondents strongly agreeing to the need for fitness equipment.

Staff prepared a survey, and it was launched through Engage Aurora with an active period between June 4 to August 14, 2023. In addition, approximately 500 notices were delivered to residents within a 400m radius of Summit Park and signage was posted in three (3) locations in the park.

The Town received a total of 38 responses to survey and responses supported the suggested improvements including the replacement of the playground, addition of a fitness park and lighting on the basketball court, with over 50% of respondents "strongly agreeing" with a fitness park. There were also many comments from the public requesting a rubberized safety surfacing be included in the playground and fitness park to promote accessibility and easy transition between amenities as they are to be co-located.

The survey generated 19 responses to questions regarding number and ages of children. Data indicates children living in the neighbourhood are in all age groups (18 month to five (5) years, six (6) to 11 years, 12 to 18 years) with slight majority in the six (6) to 11-year age group.

Other suggested features included pickleball (or pickleball lines on tennis court) and a splashpad. While staff recognize that there is a deficit of these amenities in the western portion of Aurora, the addition of these are currently not recommended within this Neighbourhood Park. Staff have identified Community Park locations west of Yonge for inclusion these amenities that are planned for redesign upgrades within the ten (10)-year capital plan.

Additional requests included a winter skating rink, running track, seating, trees, and shade structure.

Recently completed Parks and Recreation Master Plan (PRMP) update supports a Fitness Park and other recommendations from the Summit Park plan.

The new PRMP supports the installation of a fitness park in Recommendation # 28:

“Undertake a site evaluation process to establish a third fitness park outfitted with outdoor fitness equipment to improve access within western aurora. To create differentiated experience, consideration may be given to clustering the equipment around a playground site at a site with shade and washrooms. A fourth site may be considered longer term so that each quadrant of Town has an outdoor fitness park.”

Summit Park does not meet all the criteria as it does not have washrooms and while it does not have a dedicated shade structure that park has been established since 1982 and contains many mature trees within the vicinity of the playground and potential new fitness park. Due to the short-term nature of fitness (typically one (1) hr duration) and that tennis games have a similar timeline; staff feel washrooms are not a necessity. Washroom installations are typically only included in Community Parks as per our service levels.

Recommendation #18 speaks to piloting the install lights at an existing basketball court that can suitably accommodate extended play into the evening. Adding lights to Summit would achieve this goal.

In addition, Recommendation #25 speaks to playgrounds and providing more barrier free components and infrastructure for more inclusive play. This supports the replacement of the Town typical engineered wood mulch safety surfacing with a rubberized safety surface.

Potential to generate revenue through fitness park classes.

The fitness park could possibly generate revenue either through programs facilitated through the Town or by fitness trainers renting the space to host classes. The design of the fitness park lends to High Intensity Interval Training activities.

Recreation staff would need to explore the needs and feasibility of delivering programming at the site, but a future opportunity may exist.

Increased budget required for the capital project with the inclusion of a fitness park, lit basketball court and desired rubberized surface to provide accessibility.

The original budget for the capital project to replace the playground structure, resurfacing of basketball court including pathways paving was estimated at \$300,000. The following chart illustrates the funding required for the additional amenities as per Council inquires and public consultation:

Table 1
Summit Park – Playground/Basketball Court Replacement (Project # 73217)

Description	Total Budget
Playground replacement	\$175,000
Basketball Court/Pathway resurfacing	\$70,000
Fitness Park Equipment	\$65,000
Lighting for Basketball Court	\$25,000
Rubberized Tile safety surface for playground/fitness areas	\$265,000
Total Budget	\$600,000
Less: Conditionally Approved Budget	\$300,000
Variance	\$300,000

Significant costs are associated with adding a fully accessible rubber surfacing to both playground and fitness area. However, great benefits come from such an installation and enhanced service level. A rubberized surface has a lifespan equivalent to the playground at approximately 20+ years. If a rubber tiled surface is utilized rather than a poured in place rubber it is easily repaired when damage does occur and there are minimal ongoing maintenance and operational costs unlike engineered wood fibre. The wood fibre is prone to breaking down, as it is a natural product and requires top ups regularly to ensure safety surface remains at a consistent depth as per CSA Standards. As well, it displaces easily under high use components (slides/swings) and weeds are a common occurrence.

Costs for standard playground (mulch/granular base/drainage) is +/- \$50 per square metre. Cost for rubber surface is +/- \$330 per square metre.

Advisory Committee Review

The concept design plan which included the fitness park/lighting was submitted to AAC on June 7, 2023 and PRAC on June 15, 2023. Details of the discussion topic are detailed above in the Analysis section of this report.

Legal Considerations

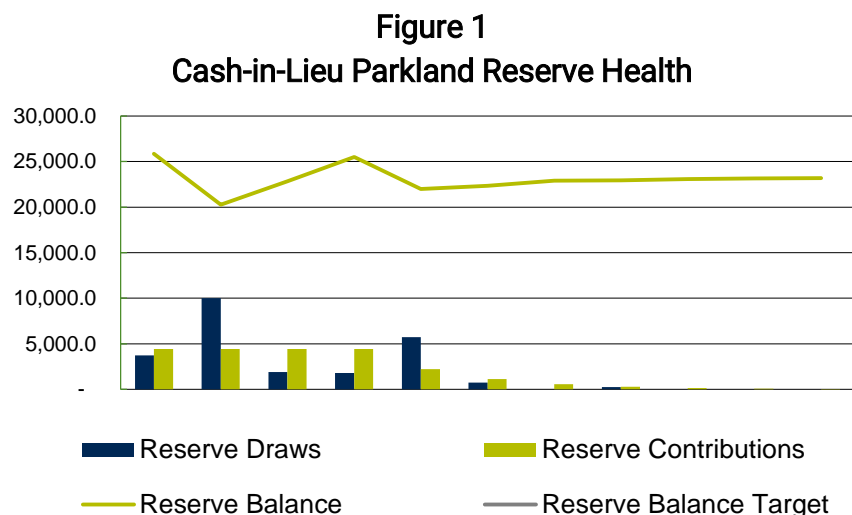
None.

Financial Implications

To date total capital budget authority of \$300,000 has been conditionally approved for Capital Project No. 73217 as part of the 2023 capital budget. This project is part of the Town's Parks asset management capital program which is funded from the Parks Asset Management reserve. Staff are requesting that Council lift the funding conditions.

Further, as per a request from Council during the 2023 budget process, staff are requesting Council approve an increase in scope for this project to include lighting for the basketball court, a fitness park and rubberized surfacing enhancements at an incremental cost of \$300,000. Should Council approve this proposed project scope increase, it is recommended that Council approve total budget authority for Capital Project No. 73217 of \$600,000.

Staff recommend that the proposed budget increase be funded from the Cash-in-Lieu of Parkland reserve. It is anticipated that this Reserve can accommodate this requirement with no adverse impact to any other known commitments. Figure 1 presents an illustration of this reserves projected health over the next ten years with this new requirement included.



Communications Considerations

The Town will inform the public of the information contained in this report by posting it to the Town's website.

Climate Change Considerations

The recommendations from this report do not immediately impact greenhouse gas emissions or impact climate change adaptation. However, when the project progresses to detailed design, green infrastructure for storm water, soft landscape, building design and green procurement will be considered as they all play an important roll mitigating the impacts of a changing climate, from air quality, stormwater management to counteracting the effects of the heat island.

Link to Strategic Plan

Park facilities support the Strategic Plan Goal of Supporting an Exceptional Quality of Life for All, by encouraging an active and healthy lifestyle.

Develop a long-term needs assessment for recreation programs, services, and operations to match the evolving needs of the growing and changing population.

Alternative(s) to the Recommendation

1. Council could choose to approve the original project scope for Capital Project No. 73217 - Summit Park Playground Replacement and Basketball Court/Walkway Improvements and funding request of \$300,000.
2. Council to provide further direction.

Conclusions

Staff recommend that the conditional approval be lifted and include the addition of a fitness park, lighting, and rubberized safety surface to the scope of the project for Summit Park. This recreational enhancement will provide users with more opportunity to engage actively within the neighborhood and improve accessibility. Consequently, it is recommended that the total capital budget authority for Capital Project No. 73217 be increased to \$600,000.

Attachments

Attachment #1 – Project No 73217 – Summit Park Playground Replacement and Basketball Court/Walkway Improvements Capital Detail Page

Attachment #2 –Summit Park Master Plan

Previous Reports

None

Pre-submission Review

Agenda Management Team review on August 17, 2023

Approvals

Approved by Sara Tienkamp, Director, Operational Services

Approved by Doug Nadorozny, Chief Administrative Officer