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Town of Aurora

## General Committee Report

No. CMS20-028

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**Subject:** Sports Field Development Strategy Update

**Prepared by:** John Firman, Manager of Business Support

**Department:** Community Services

**Date:** November 17, 2020

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### Recommendation

1. That Report No. CMS20-028 be received for information; and
2. That the Director of Community Services be authorized to enter into agreements with local Schools and School Boards for the shared use of sports fields, including any ancillary agreements required for same.

### Executive Summary

This report is intended to provide Council with an update related to actions arising from the Sport Field Development Strategy that was received by Council in January, 2020.

- The Sports Field Development Strategy provided recommendations for field development over the next 10 years to support existing and future sports field needs
- The Stronach Group has extended access to the fields previously known as the “Magna Fields” through 2025
- Development of two senior softball diamonds on the Hallmark lands will address the immediate need for ball diamonds
- Additional research from sport field user groups has not been possible during the current pandemic/pandemic recovery environment
- The Town is proceeding with non-capital works to increase the inventory of smaller rectangular sports fields
- Staff continue to review and implement opportunities for field development on Town land or re-purposing existing fields

- Town staff are engaging local schools and school boards in discussions related to partnership projects to develop additional full-size rectangular sports fields.

## **Background**

### **The Sports Field Development Strategy provided recommendations for field development over the next 10 years to support existing and future sports field needs**

On January 20, 2020 staff presented a comprehensive Sports Field Development Strategy (SFDS) developed by Monteith Brown Planning Consultants. This SFDS is needed to help ensure that the Town is properly positioned to meet the existing and future outdoor sports field needs for the community. This will help maximize opportunities with existing assets and provide informed recommendations for the acquisition/development of new assets.

The most urgent need identified in the SFDS was the need to replace the fields known as the Magna Fields, as it was anticipated that those fields would only be available for use for another two or three years.

## **Analysis**

### **The Stronach Group has extended access to the fields previously known as the “Magna Fields” through 2025**

Staff have recently received confirmation from a representative of The Stronach Group, owners of the soccer fields on Wellington (formerly referred to as the “Magna Fields”) that there are no plans to develop the property for the next five years and as such have confirmed the availability of the Stronach Fields to be used as they are currently, in support of the Aurora Youth Soccer Club through the Town.

Staff will be working with the Stronach Group to facilitate a name change for this location, to ensure the fields are now referred to as the Stronach Fields, to accurately represent the ownership of the property and to acknowledge the donation of field usage by The Stronach Group.

**Development of two senior softball diamonds on the Hallmark lands will address the immediate need for ball diamonds**

The SFDS identified the immediate need for two additional ball diamonds and recommended that the Town proceed with the existing plans to build two senior softball diamonds on the Hallmark Lands. On June 23, 2020 Council approved report CMS20-14 and directed staff to commence the tendering process for this project.

**Additional research from sport field user groups has not been possible during the current pandemic/pandemic recovery environment**

Following presentation of the SFDS to Council, staff began to undertake further research to clarify and support the needs for additional specific sports fields. Shortly thereafter, the impacts of the COVID-19 pandemic were realized, and staff have since been unable to continue to additional research.

Staff also began to engage sport field user groups to acquire more supporting data from them related to their current and future sports field needs. Given that all of these user groups are either completely or mostly volunteer-run, they have limited capacity to engage in detailed research projects of this nature. Also, impacted by the effects of the pandemic, Town staff have suspended any requests for further research from the user groups.

Staff plan to re-engage user groups in the future, in order to obtain additional data to support future field development recommendations.

**The Town is proceeding with non-capital works to increase the inventory of smaller rectangular sports fields**

Operational Services, Parks Operations has included plans for the development of lands within existing park spaces for future junior sized (3v3 and 5v5) rectangular fields. As this work does not include any major construction or the installation of permanent equipment such as goal posts, all work will be completed within normal operations and within the 2021 Operating Budget. This includes:

- Edward Coltham Park: two 5v5 fields
- Trent Park: two 5v5 fields
- Chapman Park: one 3v3 field (already used in previous years – no new work required)

**Staff continue to review and implement opportunities for field development on Town land or re-purposing existing fields**

Following the construction of the accessible playground at Queens Diamond Jubilee Park, the existing 7v7 field was reduced in size, and while it meets the minimum requirements of 7v7 field dimensions it is the smallest 7v7 field in the Towns inventory and not well utilized by user groups for that reason. This field can remain as is and still be available for training purposes, but can also be re-purposed for use as two 3v3 fields in future.

Staff have also received a verbal commitment from the York Region District School Board to enter into an agreement for use of the 7v7 field behind the former George Street Public School. This property adjoins Lions Park and the field exists almost exclusively on School Board land, with a small portion encroaching on Town land. Staff will work with Legal Services to enter into a formal agreement with the school board.

**Town staff are engaging local schools and school boards in discussions related to partnership projects to develop additional full-size rectangular sports fields**

Staff had initial discussions with the York Region District School Board, York Catholic District School Board and St. Andrew's College during the development of the SFDS and are now re-engaging both boards to further investigate partnership opportunities.

Staff are attempting to meet with the York Region District School Board to discuss opportunities at:

- The Dr. G.W. Williams Secondary School
- Aurora High School
- The new secondary school planned for 2024 opening on Bayview Ave.

Staff have met twice with the York Catholic District School Board to discuss opportunities at Cardinal Carter Catholic High School and various Catholic elementary schools.

The SFDS identified the sport field at Aurora Montessori School as a potential partnership opportunity, however, upon discussion with the school it was learned that future development plans for the school include removing the sport field for expansion of the school building.

Staff will also be engaging the French Catholic School Board, St. Andrew's College and St. Anne's School to further discuss potential partnership opportunities.

## Advisory Committee Review

The Community Advisory Committee (CAC) was provided with an overview of the SFDS during the development of the strategy, including an overview of how the study was being approached, research being completed and the objectives. The CAC will be updated on the progress to date at the CAC meeting scheduled for November 19, 2020, and will continue to be engaged on an ongoing basis.

## Legal Considerations

The Town will enter into an agreement with the York Region District School Board to obtain an exclusive licence to access and provide permits for the soccer fields from April to October of each year. The Town will be responsible for maintaining the fields, which includes mowing, lining, and fertilizing. The agreement will also include insurance and indemnification provisions. Any further agreements with other school boards will contain similar provisions.

## Financial Implications

As funding is limited in this regard, a clear funding strategy is required in support of all initiatives arising from Town's Outdoor Field Development Study. A funding strategy will be presented to Council as part of future Sports Field capital considerations.

The additional field maintenance work for Lions Park can be accommodated within the current Parks Operations operating budget.

## Communications Considerations

The Town will use "inform" as the level of engagement for this initiative, under the Town's engagement policy. Communications will be issued through the Town's website and social media accounts, as needed, based on next steps.

## Link to Strategic Plan

An Outdoor Field Development Strategy supports the Strategic Plan goal of **Supporting an exceptional quality of life for all** in its accomplishment in satisfying requirements in the following key objective within this goal statement:

**Objective 4: Encouraging an active and healthy lifestyle**

## **Alternative(s) to the Recommendation**

1. Council may provide further direction.

## **Conclusions**

That the Director of Community Services be authorized to enter into an agreement with the York Region District School Board for the shared use of sports fields.

## **Attachments**

None

## **Previous Reports**

CMS20-001 Outdoor Field Development Strategy, January 14, 2020

CMS20-014 Hallmark Lands: Request for Information and User Group Survey Results

## **Pre-submission Review**

Agenda Management Team review on October 29, 2020

## **Approvals**

**Approved by Robin McDougall, Director, Community Services Department**

**Approved by Doug Nadorozny, Chief Administrative Officer**