



Maple Ridge and Pitt Meadows Parks & Leisure Services Commission Report

SUBJECT: Pitt Meadows Soccer request for an Artificial Turf Field to be built at PMSS

EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:

The Commission members will recall an earlier memorandum on this subject in which it was reported that Pitt Meadows Council referred the request to the Commission for a needs assessment and recommendation. The attached 2006 02 28 report identified the information to be considered in the needs assessment. The results of the staff research are covered in the background section of this report. In summary the evidence suggests:

- a.) the same level of participation is likely to continue for many years and may expand slightly and
- b.) a third field is required to provide the increased amount of time desired for player skill development

RECOMMENDATION:

That a recommendation be forwarded to Pitt Meadows Council to give consideration during the next long term capital review to an appropriate means of funding the Municipality's portion of the cost of constructing an artificial turf field, noting that the analysis has demonstrated such a facility would be an asset in the community and provide a competitive level of practice time equal to or greater than most other communities in the GVRD; and further, once the funding priority has been established,

that a public consultation process be undertaken with respect to the proposal to construct an artificial turf field at the PMSS location.

DISCUSSION:

a) Background Context:

Registration Numbers -Trends

As noted in the attached October 2005 report (pg. 11) participant registrations increased by approximately 5% from 2004 to 2005. Although we don't have all of the registration numbers for 2001, 2002 or 2003 the number of divisional and adult level teams is available and increased by almost 30% in a four year period from 122 teams in 2001 to 160 teams in 2005.

Unfortunately we have been unable to obtain registration data from other lower mainland communities although we anticipate similar increases are likely given the number of municipalities advising they have constructed or will be constructing more artificial turf fields over the next two years. Seven new artificial turf fields are either under construction or anticipated to be built over the next year.

Population Projections

A demographic analysis and population and housing projection was completed for Maple Ridge in 2004 by the Sheltair Group and Kelly and Associates. That analysis projected an overall growth in population in Maple Ridge to between 94,000 and 105,000 by 2021. The Pitt Meadows population is anticipated to reach 20,000 by 2021. The overall population projection for Maple Ridge and Pitt Meadows combined for 2021 is expected to reach between 114,000 and 125,000.

As of the date of publishing this report we don't have the age breakdown projections for Pitt Meadows, however we don't anticipate they would be that dissimilar from Maple Ridge. The average age of the Maple Ridge population is expected to rise significantly by 2031 with the % of the total population under 45 years of age dropping from 68% in 2001 to 50 % of the total in 2031(pg. 36 The Sheltair Group).

Despite this the proportion of the total population under age 45 will still be relatively high in relation to other lower mainland communities. The significance of these projections is important since it is anticipated that the level of adult involvement in winter field sports for those up to age 45 will continue to rise over time, particularly in activities like soccer which is not a full contact sport.

According to the Sheltair report the total Maple Ridge population under age 35 will increase in real numbers by only 150 between 2001 and 2031. Although the increase is almost non existent when compared to the total projected population increase it suggests there will be at least a similar number of winter sport field users in the foreseeable future to what is in place today (if not a slightly larger number given greater involvement by adult residents), barring any significant change in activity patterns.

The question then becomes what opportunities for field sport skill development can we currently support and what level should we be striving for.

Practice Time – Elsewhere in the GVRD

During the course of conducting this review staff attempted to determine the level of practice time available in each of the GVRD communities to compare those times to the levels available here. Obtaining the names of the people in each community who have the information was problematic and contacting them was even more difficult. Generally we were trying to contact field schedulers for the larger clubs in each community. Staff will continue to follow up in the hope of obtaining better information in advance of Council considering this recommendation.

Despite this lack of direct information we have been able to obtain at least one general indicator as to the availability of practice time in other communities. That is the artificial turf field per population ratio.

There are twenty eight artificial turf fields currently in play and seven new fields either under construction or about to be constructed in the seventeen GVRD communities we surveyed. Vancouver anticipates building several more but did not provide a specific number or time frame. Most also use lighted rock dust fields for practice time for those sports for which rock dust is acceptable (but not preferred).

The field per population ratio this represents is about one artificial turf field for 60,000 people although many communities have achieved a much higher ratio with the standard being in the area of one field for 40,000 people. Port Moody and West Vancouver have higher ratios of 1/14,000 and 1/22,000 respectively. Burnaby, Coquitlam and Richmond are all in the 1/40,000 range.

What this doesn't take into consideration is the variation in the age make up of the various municipalities. Maple Ridge and Pitt Meadows are considered to have a relatively youthful population by comparison to many other GVRD communities. To the extent that proves to be true a higher ratio of fields to population may be required.

The Commission's direction to base the indication of need on achieving a level of practice time which is equal to or better than elsewhere is also significant. With this the case choosing an artificial turf field to population ratio of 1/35,000 would seem to be a reasonable goal. When the Westview field is opened we will achieve a ratio of 1/45,000. A third artificial turf field can be justified now if we consider having already passed the total population of 90,000 with the likelihood of reaching 105,000 (3 X 35,000) by 2012 to 2015.

Current Practice Times vs Times With the Addition of New Fields

Based on the October 2005 analysis there are currently 4,516 registered participants of Fall and Winter field sports involved in 298 teams. The total practice time currently available on all lighted rock dust fields and the Rotary Field combined is 375 hrs. per week (approximately one hour and fifteen minutes per team per week). Please note this represents up to four teams practicing on one large field at a time (64 players). Although it is not ideal we have had up to six teams (96 players) on a large field at one time.

Providing the number of teams doesn't change the addition of the Westview field will increase the practice time per team to one hour and thirty five minutes. A third field at Pitt Meadows Secondary would increase the practice time per team to almost two hours. How that compares to other communities isn't known at this time and won't be until staff receive detailed responses from league field schedulers from other communities.

We have been advised previously that the norm in some municipalities is one to one and a half hours of practice time per week for all but the elite soccer teams who receive more time. Since the Commission wishes to provide a higher level of service a target of two hours seems reasonable.

Of course the amount of practice time varies depending upon the sport, age groups and level of play but the analysis provides at least some indication of what can be achieved with the addition of a third field.

It should be noted that additional practice time could be accommodated on a new lighted rock dust field in Pitt Meadows, however, the surface is certainly not preferred and it cannot be used for some sports (rugby, football, field hockey) or for games. It would not be suitable adjacent to the Secondary School.

The addition of a third artificial turf field will also allow for some of our grass game fields to be cycled out of play for sufficient time to permit field renovations. Given the time it takes to grow

grass in a sand medium this can take up to two full seasons to accomplish. This is something we have not been able to accommodate to date since every available grass field has been required to accommodate game schedules of the various leagues.

Site Review

A preliminary review of the location indicates a full size field comparable to the Westview installation (or alternatively including a smaller field and an eight lane running track) can be accommodated at PMSS. The track may not be able to be replaced around the field immediately since to do so would be a significant additional expense. Nonetheless it can be accommodated at the site.

The Commission should also be aware that some analysis will be required with respect to minimizing the impacts on adjacent residents. The attached sketch provides a preliminary indication of one potential layout. It will be noted that there is a considerable distance and some buffer between the proposed field and most residences (School to the north, embankment and Pitt Meadows Rinks to the south and a parking area and field to the west) but not on the east side of the property where the distance between the field and adjacent residences is relatively short.

b) Desired Outcome:

The primary desired outcome is additional practice time for winter field users with a secondary benefit being additional game time to allow for natural turf fields to be renovated as resources permit. The level of practice time would increase from one and one quarter hours to almost two hours with the addition of an artificial turf field at PMSS. The secondary school field at this location would also be replaced which is a current requirement given its present condition.

c) Strategic Alignment:

The provision of facilities to encourage active living aligns well with the Commission and Council's direction to encourage an increase of 20% in the number of citizens involved in sufficiently active lifestyles to achieve a health benefit.

d) Citizen/Customer Implications:

Citizens who are involved in winter field sports would have access to more playing and practice time. Citizen's who live next door to the site may have concerns about increased levels of activity (including traffic) and light pollution related to the field. These are all issues Commission members are very familiar with from discussions with other neighbourhoods adjacent to the Westview Secondary and Samuel Robertson Secondary School sites. As in those other neighbourhoods lighting mitigation can be achieved through the use of shielding. In addition lights would be turned off at 10:30 p.m. The matter of traffic and parking requires more analysis particularly at times when other School events are on in the evening and such a field would be in use.

e) Interdepartmental Implications: N/A

f) Business Plan/Financial Implications:

The cost to construct the field isn't known at this time given the lack of detailed planning although a rough guess would be in the order of \$1.7M to \$2M. We will be receiving the tenders for the Westview field shortly which will provide a much better idea of the most recent costing. This estimate does not include the track which could cost from \$500,000 to \$1M more.

Earlier presentations by the Track and Field club suggested the need for an eight lane track somewhere in Maple Ridge and Pitt Meadows. Staff are currently evaluating the possibility of expanding the MRSS track to eight lanes concurrent with a resurfacing anticipated to be proposed for 2007 in advance of the Games for the Physically Disabled.

Funding for such a field could be provided partially by the School District who have offered up to \$300,000 in funding. The Pitt Meadows Soccer Club have also offered to raise funds for such a project and feel they could contribute in the order of \$300,000. That leaves \$1.1M to \$1.4M for the municipality to fund.

Municipal funds for this purpose have not been designated at this time. Potential sources include funds held in a capital works reserve derived from the sale of surplus municipal land to borrowing approved by referendum. These would have to be discussed by Council in the context of considering all other municipal priorities. Since the funding available from the School District may not be available until 2008 (2007 School District funds may need to be directed to the track or elsewhere) that is likely the most appropriate time to consider the municipal expenditure.

Operating costs of up to \$30,000 per year will also need to be set aside and a further discussion held with the user groups on their contribution to the turf replacement fund.

g) Policy Implications: N/A

h) Alternatives:

The alternative to providing an artificial turf field is a less expensive rock dust field. Although we haven't constructed such a facility recently the cost of a lighted rock dust field would be in the order of \$300,000 to \$400,000 depending upon the site. Although it can accommodate an equivalent number of practice hours this alternative does have the following limitations:

- a.) it would not be suitable adjacent to the secondary school (so another site would need to be found),
- b.) it cannot accommodate some sports like football and rugby
- c.) it is not suitable for games
- d.) it is not a preferred surface by players of any sport given the greater potential for injury

CONCLUSIONS:

The provision of a third artificial turf sport field can be justified in light of community growth, the need to replace the existing field adjacent to PMSS and the Commission's desire to enhance practice times for the over 4500 winter sport field users in Maple Ridge and Pitt Meadows.

Moreover, partners like the School District and Pitt Meadows Soccer have indicated their willingness to contribute in the order of one third of the project cost at an appropriate time (likely 2008).

Pitt Meadows Council will need to consider the relative priority of meeting this need concurrent with meeting other community needs during their next long term capital review.

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