

Municipality of Chatham-Kent
Infrastructure and Engineering Services
Parks, Recreation and Cemeteries

To: Mayor and Members of Council
From: Scott Mailing
Acting Director, Parks, Recreation and Cemeteries
Date: June 15, 2021
Subject: Options for Assisting the Re-Launching of Youth Sport Field Activities

Recommendation

It is recommended that:

1. The options listed in this report to assist and promote youth sports and extra curricular activities be approved.
2. The sport field minor fee of \$10.65 (before HST) per registrant be waived for 2021 and 2022 at a cost of approximately \$33,367 annually.
3. The 2021 loss of revenue be covered by the 2021 Safe Restart Funding. The 2022 loss of revenue will be referred to the 2022 budget process for supplementary funding by Council.

Background

The following Motion was approved by Chatham-Kent Council at the May 10, 2021 meeting:

- a) That staff develop a report with options to assist and promote re-launching youth sports and extra-curricular activities in our community coinciding with the end of the Provincial COVID lockdown. Including options and costs to temporarily waive the youth per participant fee for the next two years.
- b) That staff work with all sports groups using Lark Park to come and identify the requested level of service for the field maintenance program respecting safety and liability standards, league needs, and long term league and park viability. This could include but is not limited to updating timing of standard maintenance from an approved vendor, and new field lining technique. The outcome of this process, including league and municipal commitments as well as any pertinent updates be reported back to Council.

This report will specifically deal with item a.

Comments

Since the spring of 2020, numerous sport field user groups have halted operation or had participation in their activities reduced due to lockdowns and restrictions related to the COVID-19 pandemic.

The sport field user groups were contacted to provide ideas and comments on the following:

1. Promoting the re-launch of youth sports
2. How any fee reductions would be passed on to users
3. Any other suggestions on improvements

Responses were received from 13 sport field user groups (Appendix A.) A summary of their comments include:

- Waiving of the municipal fee per registrant would allow groups to reduce or maintain current registration fees and assist them with operating costs
- Assistance from the municipality to advertise and promote their programs
- Extending the season for users
- Extend youth activity funding to assist families who are struggling
- Partner with Chatham-Kent to run day camps

Options to Consider

As the Province of Ontario implements the stages of its reopening plan, the following options have been identified to be offered to the various sport field groups to assist them in re-launching their activities:

1. Promotion of registrations for these groups on available indoor and outdoor electronic signs.
2. List registration contact information for the minor sport field groups on the municipal web site.
3. Notifications on social media notifying the public when they are taking registrations.
4. Waiving the minor fee for sport field activity registrants.

It is anticipated that assisting the sport field groups in promoting their programs will increase public awareness of the activities that are available, resulting in increased participation and active lifestyles for youth in Chatham-Kent communities.

Waiving the minor fee for sport field registrants will aid the groups in managing costs associated with COVID-19 protocols and allow the groups the opportunity to reduce their registration fees. It is expected that reduced registration fees will encourage families to register their children in these programs.

Areas of Strategic Focus and Critical Success Factors

The recommendation in this report supports the following areas of strategic focus:

Economic Prosperity:

Chatham-Kent is an innovative and thriving community with a diversified economy

A Healthy and Safe Community:

Chatham-Kent is a healthy and safe community with sustainable population growth

People and Culture:

Chatham-Kent is recognized as a culturally vibrant, dynamic, and creative community

Environmental Sustainability:

Chatham-Kent is a community that is environmentally sustainable and promotes stewardship of our natural resources

The recommendation in this report support the following critical success factors:

Financial Sustainability:

The Corporation of the Municipality of Chatham-Kent is financially sustainable

Open, Transparent and Effective Governance:

The Corporation of the Municipality of Chatham-Kent is open, transparent and effectively governed with efficient and bold, visionary leadership

Has the potential to support all areas of strategic focus & critical success factors

Neutral issues (does not support negatively or positively)

Consultation

The sport field user groups were consulted for their ideas and comments related to options for assisting them to re-launch their activities.

Financial Implications

Waiving the minor sport field fee per registrant will result in an estimated loss in revenue of \$33,367 in both 2021 and 2022 annually, for a net budget impact of \$66,732, based on registration data from 2019. The 2021 loss of revenue will be covered by 2021 Safe Restart Funding. The 2022 loss of revenue will be referred to the 2022 Budget Process for supplementary funding by Council.

Prepared by:

Reviewed by:

Scott Mailing
Acting Director
Parks, Recreation and Cemeteries

Thomas Kelly, P.Eng., MBA
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Infrastructure and Engineering Services

Attachment: Appendix A – Sport Field User Group Comments

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Appendix A – Sport Field User Group Comments

Organization Name	Questions	Comments
Blenheim Soccer Dogs	Your ideas on promoting the relaunch of youth sports.	Just getting the word out there – Facebook, papers, flyers, etc. I think kids and parents want to get back out there to get back to “normal”.
	How will any fee reductions be passed on to users?	Any fees waived would be passed on to the participants so they would only have to pay for their shirt and any other donation they would like to give to the Chatham Hospice and Ronald McDonald House in London.
	Any other suggestions on improvements is appreciated.	
Blenheim Community Soccer	Your ideas on promoting the relaunch of youth sports.	Relaunching and advertising through radio advertisements and local paper ads would be helpful. Facebook and Twitter messages would also work. We have our own website and Facebook page to keep our parents and players aware of the pending progress.
	How will any fee reductions be passed on to users?	A reduction in fees would help us pay insurance coverage for the coming season should we get to have one. It will also help with any additional equipment such as signs, sanitation wipes and hand sanitizer to keep the players safe.
	Any other suggestions on improvements is appreciated.	Keep us informed on any changes or anticipated changes will help us in planning. Emailing us like you have been so that we can take the steps needed to be ready is greatly appreciated.
Blenheim Minor Baseball	Your ideas on promoting the relaunch of youth sports.	
	How will any fee reductions be passed on to users?	If the fees are waived for the next two seasons, we – at Blenheim & District Minor Baseball Association – would be most appreciative. I think this fee being waived would ensure that we would be able to maintain our current registration fees for the next two years as well (i.e. without raising fees; barring any other significant expenditure to BDMBA – which I don’t foresee)
	Any other suggestions on improvements is appreciated.	

Organization Name	Questions	Comments
Chatham Minor Girls Softball	Your ideas on promoting the relaunch of youth sports.	Social media outlets along with local digital media platforms
	How will any fee reductions be passed on to users?	No increase in registration. Lack of sponsors due to COVID requires use of funds for uniforms, etc.
	Any other suggestions on improvements is appreciated.	Extended youth activity funding as many families are struggling financially. All for kids promotion maybe?
Chatham Minor Baseball	Your ideas on promoting the relaunch of youth sports.	Have already completed registration. Ready to start once the green light is given. Plan to send out a mass communication email to groups to let them know when they are starting.
	How will any fee reductions be passed on to users?	Any reduction in fees charged by the municipality will be relayed onto registrants by way of a reduced baseball registration fee.
	Any other suggestions on improvements is appreciated.	
Chatham Flag Football	Your ideas on promoting the relaunch of youth sports.	No response – did not reply or provide answers by deadline.
	How will any fee reductions be passed on to users?	
	Any other suggestions on improvements is appreciated.	
Chatham Soccer Association	Your ideas on promoting the relaunch of youth sports.	Promotion should not be a problem, since most individuals are anxious to get the call to start participating
	How will any fee reductions be passed on to users?	A fee reduction will be considered, as well as loss of the COVID-19 related operating budget, forcing downsizing of operations.
	Any other suggestions on improvements is appreciated.	Clubs serving the community should be respected and assisted rather than assessed fees to help promote the municipality's attractiveness.
Chatham Tennis Association	Your ideas on promoting the relaunch of youth sports.	Completed new online registration system to make us visible and easy to sign up for any of our Junior Programs. Introducing Junior House Leagues for ages 5-17. Integrating more experienced Juniors into our Adult house leagues. Developing program for Parents and Children. Develop more advanced programs for rising tennis starts with coordination with the Ontario Tennis Association. Work with local schools to develop an Intramural Tennis Program.

Organization Name	Questions	Comments
<p>Chatham Tennis Association</p>	<p>How will any fee reductions be passed on to users?</p>	<p>Interested in subsidizing children that are less privileged by partnering with a local Community group. We also will provide a tennis training scholarship to students that have an interest in Tennis Certification for Coaching. Use funds to purchase equipment specific for Junior Programs. i.e., racquets, special balls, special nets, ball machine. Offer fun family days in conjunction with Tennis Ontario. Provide subsidized tickets for Tennis events, i.e. Rogers Cup. Host OTA sanctioned tournaments.</p>
	<p>Any other suggestions on improvements is appreciated.</p>	<p>Provide more picnic tables for Tennis Club. Make sure that courts and property are well maintained to attract new members. Chatham Tennis Club to have control of the Tecumseh courts of the majority of the hours in a day (while still providing the Board of Education priority) so that we could commit to running various programs efficiently and effectively for the Town of Chatham. i.e., run Parks and Recreation Day camps (half and full days) for the city. It would give us the opportunity to have an online court booking system that would maximize the use of the courts. This model is used in several other small municipalities (Georgetown, Sarnia, Milton, Kingsville) as well as larger centres like Toronto and Mississauga. With the rise in popularity of Tennis and Pickleball, it would be advantageous that we plan for expansion and possibly indoor facilities year round. Would love to have a meeting to discuss further!</p>
<p>Southwest United FC</p>	<p>Your ideas on promoting the relaunch of youth sports.</p>	<p>To relaunch youth sports, I think the biggest thing would be trying to extend the usage of the fields to later in the year so that kids can make up for lost time and get to play more. I think a more flexible policy that would allow extended field use if weather and field conditions permit would be a good way to extend playing seasons and get more use from the fields. The City could implement a simple Red or Green code and issue users when they didn't want fields used if fields were too wet</p>

Organization Name	Questions	Comments
Southwest United FC	How will any fee reductions be passed on to users?	I think it might be an idea to look at a different fee structure based on time and size of fields used by groups and look at implementing the same allocation and use policy that we have for arenas. Paying a per field per hour fee would encourage groups to only reserve and ask to use what they actually need and might open extra time and space to launch new sports.
	Any other suggestions on improvements is appreciated.	I also think it might be a good time to look at how we can as a city/region promote new sports in our area; how we help new sports, to create programs for kids. Thinking possibly lacrosse, ultimate Frisbee, kids boot camps, rugby could we create some grant or something to help people start these sports and provide them to the community. I think creating more space and opportunity for groups is more important than waiving fees in my opinion.
Dresden Minor Baseball	Your ideas on promoting the relaunch of youth sports.	It will be tough, baseball is not as popular like say hockey and will be hard to promote the game to get kids active.
	How will any fee reductions be passed on to users?	If fees were waived, we would take it off registration fees.
	Any other suggestions on improvements is appreciated.	
Wallaceburg Minor Baseball	Your ideas on promoting the relaunch of youth sports.	They have reduced registration fee down 50-70% to get the kids out and playing.
	How will any fee reductions be passed on to users?	If fees are lowered by municipality they would look at reducing rates next year for participants as well.
	Any other suggestions on improvements is appreciated.	
Wallaceburg Minor Lacrosse	Your ideas on promoting the relaunch of youth sports.	WMLA has been active in planning on how we can keep providing healthy options to our area youth in the sport of lacrosse. After this amount of time of non-normal, it is not like we are just going to get to revert back to 2019 ways like the flip of a switch. Most importantly very few families would expect that given the rise of more family centric activity like boating etc. A well-paced and fun introduction is what is needed. Having a schedule that will accommodate giving family weekend time is important to ease back in. Also from a mental and physical healthy perspective, some kids may not have picked up any gear other

Organization Name	Questions	Comments
Wallaceburg Minor Lacrosse		<p>than the Xbox controller in the last 15 month so managing that gap in ability and expectation will be more important than ever. Also families may have had lost income and being able to provide reasonable programming at a low enough price is going to be very important.</p> <p>Also we plan on taking our game outside more, from a COVID safety perspective and although the Box lacrosse community loves the intensity of the inside game, we've all been lots over the last 15 months and that return to intensity will take time. Realizing it might be tough to provide all differing scenarios it is a goal to be able to provide our membership meaningful, well paced reintroduced programming that recognizes the changes over the last 15 months.</p> <p>That being said, our membership at last poll in March of this year, was close to 50% based on pre shutdown 2020 registration. We are always interesting in getting safe try lacrosse (cost free) programming offered to all. This year that's more important than ever for us.</p>
	How will any fee reductions be passed on to users?	We already are a not for profit organization and keeping with the programming at a reasonable cost, as is practical, we'd most likely pass any field/facility savings to our membership.
	Any other suggestions on improvements is appreciated.	Transparency in facilities assignment and costing would be appreciated by all users. We are all clamouring to get back to activity. Having a process that is well understood will make our planning easier.
Wallaceburg Minor Soccer	Your ideas on promoting the relaunch of youth sports.	<p>Wallaceburg Minor Soccer is returning to the municipal fields this year after a long absence.</p> <p>In order to promote a return to play, we will continue to advertise our re-entry through our website as well as through social media. We also partner with our local radio station and media to provide the latest information to our users. Our focus this year slowly reintegrate our game and come at it full force next year. New ideas are being developed and drafted for next year.</p>

Organization Name	Questions	Comments
Wallaceburg Minor Soccer	How will any fee reductions be passed on to users?	Wallaceburg Minor Soccer creates and follows a budget each year. If user fees are being waived (thank you for that), we will reflect it through our fees next year. We held off on registration to this point so our fees for this year reflect not being charged user fees. We continue to pride ourselves on being one of the lowest cost sports in Chatham-Kent
	Any other suggestions on improvements is appreciated.	Wallaceburg Minor Soccer would suggest more interaction between organization and the municipality. We understand we are in an unprecedented time, but we feel our organization is somewhat behind on our move back to municipal fields (as this move was supposed to occur last year.) We still do not have our storage bin, equipment or goal nets at the new location; nor do we know when this move is taking place. Often, we feel like our grass is cut at wrong times to reflect the game schedule we provide as well. Constant communication or round table sessions would benefit all organizations, as we would be able to all be on the same page.
Wheatley Area Minor Soccer	Your ideas on promoting the relaunch of youth sports.	Start slow and need to enforce rules with players and spectators. I think spectators will be the harder of the two. This will also take up more volunteer power, which a lot of us struggle with.
	How will any fee reductions be passed on to users?	Eliminating the fee will help all organizations keep their cost to a minimal. Everyone has had a rough year in more ways than one. Let's keep our fees low. No extra costs, let's just get the kids out there.
	Any other suggestions on improvements is appreciated.	Let's keep cutting the grass and grooming the fields (baseball, soccer, etc.) They look good, we feel good and it will encourage players to come out. Let's show we care.