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Town of Aurora

General Committee Report

No. CMS22-006

Subject: SARC Gymnasium Addition – Project Update

Prepared by: Lisa Warth, Manager, Recreation Services and Andrea Vento, Program Manager, Facility Capital Projects

Department: Community Services

Date: February 1, 2022

Recommendation

1. That Report No. CMS22-006 be received; and
2. That staff be directed to proceed with Option 1, a single gymnasium, multipurpose space and renovated customer service and administration space; and
3. That staff report back to Council with a final design and updated cost estimate prior to tender issuance.

Executive Summary

This report summarizes the work done to date on the SARC gymnasium addition project and seeks Council direction to proceed with Option 1, a single gymnasium, multipurpose space and renovated customer service and administration space.

- Through a competitive bid process in accordance with the Procurement Bylaw, the consulting firm CS&P Architects Inc. were awarded the contract as the design consultant for this project.
- Community consultations revealed the desire for a double gymnasium to better meet needs.
- Design options include a single gymnasium (Option 1) or a double gymnasium (Option 2). Both designs include additional multipurpose space, change rooms, and renovated administration and customer service functions.
- Site fit challenges include grading and close proximity to environmentally sensitive wetlands, as well as potential parking/traffic considerations.

Background

The Parks and Recreation Master Plan (January 2016) recommended the construction of an additional gymnasium for community use. Current gymnasium space at Aurora Family Leisure Complex (AFLC) is well used and offers programs for all ages and abilities. Pre-covid, there were waitlists or rentals that were turned away due to a lack of availability.

School gymnasiums are also available for community use but there are challenges with these rentals as groups (including the Town), can get cancelled at the last minute due to school use of the space or other issues, and a general lack of availability/suitability. Also, the rental rates have been increasing steadily over the past few years and use is becoming increasingly unaffordable for community use.

A new gymnasium will allow for the expansion of program offerings to the community. It will service all areas of general programming such as fitness classes, children's programs, preschool programs, summer day camp, sports programs and leagues, special events such as fairs and trade shows, along with sport community use for game play, practice, small tournaments, dryland training and more.

The existing gymnasium at the AFLC is well utilized especially during peak times (early morning, after school, evenings and weekends), and potential users have had to be turned away. Additionally, the AFLC gymnasium is not suitable for any kind of formal competitive game play due to the size, lack of ceiling height, the barrier created by the walking track and the lack of spectator seating.

The SARC gymnasium addition will address the lack of gymnasium space and multipurpose space for recreation, sport, training and other uses in the community. This project also addresses the lack of administration and customer service space and functionality in the facility.

This project was tabled during the 2021 capital project deliberations and included options for a single gymnasium and a double gymnasium. A budget of 8.2 M was approved at that time for the project which included a single gymnasium, new multipurpose space, and administration space. Staff also received direction to ensure consultation with community groups and potential user groups was completed and to consider the various uses of the gymnasium including competition. As a result of the approval, staff commenced the design phase of the project by securing an architectural firm to generate the design.

Analysis

Through a competitive bid process in accordance with the Procurement Bylaw, the consulting firm CS&P Architects Inc. were awarded the contract as the design consultants for this project

In October 2021, the Town awarded a contract to CS&P Architects Inc. and kicked off the project shortly after. Since then, the team have challenged the site by exploring multiple layouts and meeting with external community/sports groups, internal users and began exploring options with the Lake Simcoe Regional Conservation Authority. Multiple studies are also underway such as an environmental site assessment, site surveys and geotechnical investigation. Following a review of all options and various iterations presented, the project team narrowed down the preferred layouts with option 1 (single gymnasium) and option 2 (double gymnasium).

Community consultations revealed the desire for a double gymnasium to better meet needs

Throughout the initial stages of design, the Town along with design consultants CS&P Architects met with internal and external user groups to discuss end user requirements, programming of the space, special constraints and to provide a general understanding of the gymnasium design and intent. Through discussion, it was revealed there was a strong desire from external groups that a double gymnasium was preferred.

The double gymnasium would allow for more practice play, competitive play and access for the community. A double gymnasium would also be well utilized for Town programming, where multiple activities could be going on at the same time in the space. A double gymnasium would enable a tournament, where one team would be warming up on one court, while a game is being played on the other. Additionally, it would allow for more participants to take part in practice play and for full court drills to be part of practice. User groups shared that a single gymnasium could not be used for tournaments but that a double gymnasium could. All groups said a single gymnasium would be beneficial for practice and training purposes (possibly individual games).

There were a total of four consultation sessions and attendees included representatives from:

- Internal staff
- Sport Aurora
- Volleyball
- Basketball

- Karate
- Baton
- Aurora Black Community
- Newmarket Welcome Centre

Written surveys were also sent to community groups who could not attend the consultation meetings and feedback was received from Aurora Diggers Softball, Ducks Swimming Club, and York Artistic swimming.

Topics discussed at these meetings and through the survey's included:

- The size of the gymnasium
- The uses (competition, practice, dryland training, fitness etc.)
- Ceiling height requirements
- Windows/glazing
- Various court sizes, runoffs
- Lighting
- Spectator seating
- Change rooms/washrooms
- Storage
- Sports Hall of Fame relocation
- Acoustics

Additionally, staff will be presenting to the Accessibility Advisory Committee, and the Community Advisory Committee during the month of February. This engagement will be seeking input on design features, amenities, and programming.

Design options include a single gymnasium (Option 1) or a double gymnasium (Option 2). Both designs include additional multipurpose space, change rooms and renovated administration and customer service functions

The uses, goals, site and existing building were all taken into consideration when developing the design options along with the future growth of the community and the potential for a future multi-use community centre within Town.

Option 1 includes a single gymnasium with a 24' ceiling clearance, change rooms, storage, bleachers, a small multipurpose space and renovated administration and customer service space. This option is a fit for the designated space, and only encroaches minimally on the surrounding wetlands and environmentally sensitive lands. A single gymnasium would meet the needs of the community in the areas of general programming, camps, sports programming and also meet the growing internal needs of

the community services recreation team by providing them with a functional usable workspace. The single gymnasium design has incorporated the feedback from the sports groups that would make the space functional for training and individual games, but it would not be suitable for tournament play. The single gymnasium has also met the regulation area of the Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority with the floodplain and floodplain setback requirements. The single gymnasium would not pose any significant occupancy changes therefore, resulting in no further parking/traffic studies or major occupancy changes within the building. This option includes 15,000 sq ft. of new construction and 4320 sq. ft. of renovated space. A very high-level construction cost estimate for this option is approximately 8.4 M (original budget estimated 6.1 M in construction costs) which would bring the total costs from the original approved estimate of 8.2 M to a revised amount of closer to 11.3 M.

Option 2 includes a double gymnasium with a 30' ceiling clearance, change rooms, storage, bleachers, dividing curtain, a small multipurpose space and renovated administration and customer service space. This option does have significant impacts to the floodplain and floodplain setbacks and would require a parking study potentially resulting in the need for additional parking and land acquisition at the site. However, the double gymnasium comes with significant benefits for use and would be an important asset for the community. This option includes 26,000 sq. ft. of new construction and 4320 sq. ft. of renovated space. A very high-level construction cost estimate for this option is approximately 13.9 M which results in approximately 18.8 M total cost.

Both options require a separate corridor for access from the main lobby. This ensures minimal disruption to the use of the building during construction. Using the existing corridor was eliminated from the options as it is an exterior wall that is load bearing and would require demolition during the construction resulting in the lengthy closure of other parts of the building.

As noted in the original scope of work, both options also include renovations to the existing customer service and administration areas. This work has numerous benefits including:

- Enhanced security addressing some items in the security audit related to cash handling and security for staff
- Provides a welcoming experience and enables customers more immediate and easy access to customer service
- Allows for proper workspaces for staff. The current customer and administration areas were not designed for the volume of staff now working in those spaces. The building is heavily used and requires a full staff compliment at most times during operating hours. Some staff are currently working in spaces that are

makeshift or sharing spaces that were meant for one staff and are not suitable as there are numerous distractions due to noise, foot traffic etc.

- Although this specific project will not result in the need for additional full time administration or customer service staff, the space should be re-designed to include space for future staffing related to growth. A lack of proper workspace has been an issue at the SARC for several years and this project presents an opportunity to address the current issues and plan for the future.

Also noted in the original scope of work, both options include a small multipurpose room as an addition to the existing preschool space. The existing preschool space would require minor renovations such as a divider wall, that would make the space more suitable for multipurpose uses. This space is needed to accommodate the demand internally and externally for multipurpose space for activities, meetings etc. This space would also accommodate the uses of some multipurpose space that will be lost because of the customer service space renovation.

Consistent with the consultation that the Town completed for the Sport Tourism Strategy, the double gymnasium would meet the needs for a tournament site. Also, during this consultation, sport organizations said they were hosting tournaments and events in other communities due to a lack of suitable facilities in Aurora, or they were unable to host events at all.

The double gymnasium, although desired by external community/sports groups, appears to pose some greater challenges with the encroachment on the significant wetlands and floodplain setbacks, increased parking/traffic needs along with the potential need to acquire additional land for parking expansion.

Site fit challenges include grading and close proximity to environmentally sensitive wetlands, as well as potential parking/traffic considerations

The single gymnasium site is within the regulation area of the Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority and consideration is required to meet setback requirements that address floodplain, watercourse and wetlands of the surrounding area. Initial discussion with the Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority indicates a single gymnasium would not pose any significant concerns however, a double gymnasium space increases the site challenges with the requirement of a 30m setback required to provincially significant wetland. If a 30m setback is encroached by new construction, then an environmental impact study is required to identify impacts and proposed mitigation.

Following a review of options presented by CS&P, the double gymnasium will pose the greatest site challenges. Although doable, the double gymnasium has significant

impacts to the environmental floodplain and 30m setback required to Provincially significant wetlands. As for parking, there are 324 existing parking spaces and 6 barrier-free that would also need to be challenged with a double gymnasium. Even though, preliminary review indicates that the east side of the parking lot is typically underutilized, it would be critical to confirm parking capacity needed to service the addition of a double gymnasium (tournament site). A Site Plan Approval Planner would be consulted as to any traffic requirements should the Town want to pursue the double gymnasium.

In addition, the double gymnasium has a possible 4.57m drop below the gym at the west side, 2.74m at the south side, due to sloping grades. The double gymnasium will also have a much taller and wider building volume from west side/ravine.

The most significant impact is budget and schedule as a double gymnasium is outside of original scope of work set out within the RFP and has significant budget constraints.

Advisory Committee Review

This project will be presented to the following committees:

Accessibility Advisory Committee – February 9

Community Advisory Committee – February 17

Legal Considerations

None.

Financial Implications

A total of \$8,200,000 in capital budget authority being fully funded from Parks & Recreation development charges has been approved for the design and construction of the SARC gymnasium addition.

Furthermore, Council has approved \$8,200,000 in debt authority in support of this project. In 2021 the Town was successful in acquiring an equivalent valued construction line of credit to be converted into a 20-year debenture upon substantial completion of the SARC gymnasium from Infrastructure Ontario.

Should any further capital budget authority be required in this instance, a funding source is not readily available and will need to be determined.

Communications Considerations

Further consultation with the general public is planned using the Bang the Table platform. A survey will be available asking residents what features they would like to see in the gymnasium and what type of programming they would like to see offered in the new space.

The Town will continue to update the community on this project as it progresses.

Climate Change Considerations

The recommendations from this report have undetermined impacts on greenhouse gas emissions and climate change adaptation. These issues can be addressed during the final design and subsequent construction of the space.

Link to Strategic Plan

This project supports Objective #4 – Encouraging an active and healthy lifestyle under the Goal: Supporting an exceptional quality of life for all.

Alternative(s) to the Recommendation

1. Council has the option of selecting Option 2 (double gymnasium)

Conclusions

Several options were considered and challenged during this initial phase of exploring design options for a gymnasium. There is a lack of gymnasium space in Aurora and a new space will be well utilized.

It is important to share the results of the consultation and initial design phase with Council to obtain direction before further detailed design is completed.

Although Option 2 (double gymnasium) allows for much greater use and contributes to the goals of sport tourism, Option 1 (single gymnasium) is being recommended as it more closely aligns to the initial budget and is a better fit within the designated space.

Attachments

None

Previous Reports

Pre-submission Review

Agenda Management Team review via email.

Approvals

Approved by Robin McDougall, Director, Community Services

Approved by Doug Nadorozny, Chief Administrative Officer