



Subject: *Shubenacadie River Park - Ballfield Usage Agreement*
To: Parks, Recreation and Culture Committee
Date Prepared: 6/13/2023
Related Motions: C22(396)
Prepared by: Evan MacDougall, Manager of Parks & Buildings
Approved by: Alana Tapper, Director of Parks, Recreation & Culture

Summary

Municipal staff were directed by Council Motion C22(396) to bring any management agreements related to the Shubenacadie River Park ballfield back to Council before executing any maintenance or use agreements. East Hants Minor Softball Association has requested to use the ballfield for practices and games for the remainder of the 2023 season.

Financial Impact Statement

PRC staff reviewed and do not believe there will be additional costs to the municipality by entering into this agreement.

Recommendation

That Council give the CAO direction to enter into a usage agreement with East Hants Minor Softball for the use of the ballfield at the Shubenacadie River Park.

Recommended Motion

Move that Parks, Recreation & Culture Committee recommend that Council give the CAO direction to enter into a usage agreement with East Hants Minor Softball for use of the ballfield at the Shubenacadie River Park.

Background

The Shubenacadie River Park Ballfield has historically been one of the fields used by East Hants Softball, however the field was no longer used when player numbers decreased and the condition of the field became substandard. The society that previously owned and maintained the park completed a number of upgrades to improve drainage and the municipality replaced the outfield fence last year, making the field playable again.

Discussion

East Hants Minor Softball has approximately 150 players and has a strong volunteer base that coach and manage teams, as well as provide field maintenance. They work with other local softball and baseball groups to share the available fields. With more minor softball games and practices taking place at the Shubenacadie field, this will provide opportunities at other fields for other baseball and softball groups.

Staff also believe that having teams playing in the evenings at this location and the softball association having a presence in the Shubenacadie River Park could help with vandalism issues the park has been facing.

There are a number of groups that have historically used the Shubenacadie field for different events on an annual basis. This includes softball tournaments hosted by the Sipe'kna'tik, the Freedom March and Hay Days. The agreement with East Hants Minor Softball would allow for these events to continue at the field.

Municipal staff would continue mowing this field once a week, but all softball equipment, lining, dragging and basic garbage collection on the field will be taken care of by the softball association. Currently there are no field lines and the infield is not being dragged on a regular basis. If the softball use at the field is overwhelming for the port-a-pottie currently at the park, the softball association will be required to put another one onsite. Currently, the field lights are not connected due to the removal of the stage/washroom building. If the softball association chooses to use the lights once connected and the cost is in excess of \$200 per year, they will be required to pay the additional costs.

At the end of the 2023 softball season staff would review the season with the softball association, identify any issues and enter into an agreement for 2024 with additional clauses to address any issues.

STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT

Making this field available to the softball association aligns with the “Strong Community” of the Strategic Plan by providing facilities for the public to use.

Alternatives

1. Maintain the current status for the ballfield.
 2. Complete an Expressions of Interest process to determine if there are other associations interested in maintaining the ballfield.
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