

?Staff sharing? keeps community programs in place

Community service programs such as at the aquatics facility and fitness center have faced staff shortages, resulting in the Town implementing ?staff sharing? to keep programs running.

The staffing issue was brought to attention by Ward 3 Councillor Wendy Gaertner on January 9 at the first Budget Committee meeting of the year, who noted that due to staffing shortages several programs were canceled such as the gym closure and programming for summer swim lessons decreasing.

Gaertner asked whether there was a plan in place to ensure appropriate staffing was available this year, especially since this year's budget anticipated revenue increases as facility utilization and programs returned to pre-pandemic levels.

Director of Community Services Robin McDougall confirmed that staff shortages have been observed in many recreational departments, not just for aquatic facilities and the gym.

?It's no longer just aquatics where we're experiencing staff shortages. We've seen it last year in camp, we saw it in our fitness center Club Aurora,? she said.

Permanent full-time staff have stepped in to ensure programs continue to deliver, McDougall said, adding that the Town has also turned to various initiatives such as ?unique staff sharing? which would allow an employee from one aquatic facility to pick up a shift at another location.

?As long as they're certified and [have the] appropriate certification.?

In addition, the Town has taken extra efforts to promote job openings essential to winter activities such as monitoring public skating.

?It's staying up on top of it and not waiting till there's a vacancy. We're actually pre-promoting and recruiting for staff in order to try to stay on top of it,? McDougall said.

Ensuring that staff are compensated appropriately for their skill set and certification is another way to attract and retain employees. Human Resources have conducted wage reviews for part-time community services jobs, the area where McDougall said they have faced the most issues with staffing.

?If we're comparable to a local convenience store job, part time wages versus somebody looking for specialized instruction, we do want to make sure that they're remunerated effectively and appropriately for their skill set. So, we are reviewing that with HR hoping that that too might help bring back our use.?

The hope is that normal levels of facility utilization and program use will help offset increasing costs for facility repairs, maintenance, rentals, and operating materials.

This year's objectives include completing construction of Aurora Town Square and opening it to the public offering cultural experiences, the Aurora Sports Dome operating review, SARC gymnasium addition and operating plan, advancement of Sport Plan recommendations, and Parks & Recreation Master Plan update, to name a few.

More information on the community service proposed budget changes, past accomplishments and new objectives can be found online at calendar.aurora.ca/meetings.

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