

Council takes first steps in securing Aurora Sports Dome

By Brock Weir

Council has taken the first steps in exploring a future purchase of the Aurora Sports Dome.

Council voted 7 to 2 in favour of looking at the feasibility and all possible options relating to a recommendation made in late February to purchase the Aurora Sports Dome from owner Terry Redvers for just over \$1 million and turning the operations over to the Aurora Youth Soccer Club.

According to Al Downey, Director of Parks and Recreation, the next steps will include preparing the terms and conditions of any possible agreement with the Aurora Youth Soccer Club.

Although Councillors were in favour overall of putting the wheels in motion, many said they did not have enough information before them to do any more than that.

"Four pages wasn't enough," said Councillor Michael Thompson "I still have questions about a town-owned and operated facility as opposed to an organization running it. I think we need all of that information to have a fulsome discussion."

Additional information requested by Councillors included a full cost analysis from Councillor John Gallo on the financial benefits of terminating the existing contract with the operators and not having to pay those taxes, versus sticking with the agreement as is. Continuing in a similar vein, Councillor Chris Ballard said he was also interested in costs, but also in the benefits and "recreational impacts" on "the Town, the Soccer Club, and the 4,000 children" belonging to the club.

Voting against going forward with these tentative steps were Councillors Evelyn Buck and Paul Pirri. Councillor Buck said it was a simple question to consider because paying taxes for the dome has been a "thorn in her side" for years. From her perspective, the simplest solution would be to just terminate the agreement and have the owner/operator come back to Council with an offer to pay the taxes or to change course.

The benefits of moving towards a purchase by the town, on the other hand, simply weren't there for Councillor Pirri. Crunching the numbers and looking at the future of the dome structure itself, the item that is really up for grabs, he said Aurora would be spending \$600,000 in taxes for the rest of the dome's lifespan, versus the \$1.1 million to purchase the dome outright at this point in time.

"To me, it is a no-brainer that we should wait out the remainder of the term, acquire this turf field at no expense to us other than the taxes we already pay, the taxes we will continue to pay," he said.