

Councillors, concerned citizens join forces to correct Complex

By Brock Weir

They filled Council Chambers with a growing list of concerns over the newly renovated Aurora Family Leisure Complex (AFLC), now these AFLC users will collaborate with three Councillors to try and rectify the situation.

Aurora Council approved a new liaison committee, bringing together Councillors John Abel, Sandra Humfries, and Michael Thompson, along with AFLC users, and appropriate members of municipal staff, as a solution to evaluating which of a growing list of shortcomings with the building to prioritize, along with developing a communications plan to users overall.

"This is obviously a huge concern tonight and there is a big, big list in front of us," said Councillor Humfries, who made the motion to establish the committee, addressing a lengthy list of deficiencies.

A smaller, focused group bringing together Council, but also those residents who have been more active in trying to have their concerns addressed would help prioritize issues.

"If we can narrow those down and focus strongly, I think we can get some quick wins," she said. "If there are some bigger projects that need to be done, some undertaking and some investment, we can make those decisions as we go along. The reason we changed this facility was to celebrate a youth centre and keep the facility running beautifully for [all users]. There are so many benefits we built, but they are being overshadowed by disappointment from our residents."

The establishment of a committee to help steer the AFLC through these rough waters won the overall support of Council, who have been inundated with residents' complaints, well beyond the 10 residents who reiterated their concerns at the podium that night.

"We have a facility that is almost ready, should be ready, but it is almost there," said Councillor Jeff Thom. "There are a couple of things we need to deal with, some of which has been [addressed] already. I think this [Committee] is great because it is solution-oriented. We can drop all the negativity and anger and work together with members of the community, Council and staff, and get this list dealt with. If there is anything else to go on this list, let's get that dealt with and move forward."

This last point was one shared by Councillor Michael Thompson, who said he didn't want the mandate of the new committee to be governed too strictly by the list of shortcomings before them.

"I see this as a continuous improvement plan," he said. "I think you can address the things on the list, but more important things may come up [as people use the facility]. I would like to see this as an ongoing process to not only address the issues before us tonight, but others that crop up. I want to get to a point where we're all satisfied with the status of the complex. Residents have come out tonight with an expectation these issues being brought forward are being actively worked on."

Councillor John Abel was also vocal in his support for a solution, suggesting some groups of residents weren't adequately consulted when plans for the Community Space for Youth got underway.

"We were building a youth centre and we forgot all about our members," said Councillor Abel. "I would like to bring it around to the standards they expect and to keep engaging with them so we can get this done properly and satisfactorily. There is a lot to celebrate that is there, but it is not too late to get this ship going and I think a lot of this can be addressed."