

Easier access in works for Aurora Family Leisure Complex

By Brock Weir

Making the Aurora Family Leisure Complex more accessible for users with mobility issues remains a top priority for Councillors and members of the public looking to iron out the issues and concerns surrounding the newly renovated Centre.

Quick fixes to make this a reality include increasing the number of accessible parking spaces from the initially installed four to nine, but Councillors and users would like to see more, including the re-installation of an entry point at the rear of the building.

Although this had already been identified as a key issue moving forward by the Complex's (AFLC) ad-hoc committee, Council approved a motion last week from Councillor Wendy Gaertner to draw attention to this problem.

‘We have a lot of people who use the Leisure Complex who do have disabilities and they have their stickers and there are some accessible parking spots, but we have some people who are just getting older, they are using our facilities to exercise and to keep themselves in shape, but I use the gym and I have seen people using the gym [who are recovering from] an operation, strokes, and heart attacks trying to rehabilitate in our facilities.’

The back door to the AFLC is currently locked and this poses a problem because the rear parking lot (on the north side of the site) also provides accessible parking spaces for the facility itself. But those accessible parking spaces were also in place when there was access from the rear door.

During the recent renovation project, efforts were made to connect all parts of the building from a central access point, a previously identified deficiency. Not only would such a change make all components easier to access, it would provide greater security with one entrance to monitor.

That decision, however, appears to be regretted.

‘The back door was always open and now it is closed,’ concluded Councillor Gaertner. ‘I understand that we have some security issues with that, but I am asking [staff] how we can possibly arrange entrance through that back door to accommodate all the people who really need to park in the back lot area.’

According to Aurora CAO Neil Garbe, a number of options and adjustments are being explored by the committee, with a number of fixes already taken place like improving the parking situation at the front of the building.

‘Our goal is to make sure we can have a central point of access,’ he said. ‘We’re also putting [a process] in place whereby people who need accommodation for a specific point in time we’re able to accommodate them. As opposed to setting up permanent rear access, which has all kinds of security issues for the balance of the users of the complex, we are attempting to accommodate the request through a number of different means that will actually have a better impact and a safer impact for the residents and the users of the AFLC.’

These issues will continue to be addressed in a ‘continuous dialogue’, Mr. Garbe added, with Councillor Michael Thompson noting the priorities that have been set by the committee so far.

‘I would ask that we (Council) allow the committee to continue to work on the issues that have been identified by the users and the committee to make progress,’ he said. ‘Council is getting all those reports and if they are not satisfactory, Council can step in and ask for something more, but it is something that is clearly a priority for the committee that has been identified as an issue.’