

How does Aurora Council Make Decisions?

An idea was brought before Council to name a park after the Queen's Diamond Jubilee year. Staff provided a suggestion and council added names to the list.

I suggested Civic Square Park, as it was in close proximity to Town Hall with no real importance to its name. Council agreed, with direction to add a plaque identifying the names of Aurora Diamond Jubilee Medalists.

All's well until a notice of motion came forward by Councillor Pirri to re-design the park. Council agreed to have staff come up with a preliminary design and cost analysis of this new idea. Council agreed to include the Parks and Recreation committee, and the Accessibility Advisory Committee in the discussion; I added that if any re-design happens, the neighbourhood would also have to be part of the discussion through a public process.

This was to be done all internally at no material cost to the town (staff time would be required). I was only supportive in exploring the idea and it's consequences, if any, if done in collaboration with the committees and public, at no initial cost to the town.

Staff returned with a report identifying the need to hire a consultant at a cost of \$30,000.00 to design the park and manage the public meetings. In addition, the report indicated that the park would cost an additional \$150,000.00 to build.

Let's break down the details. The current park was built about eight years ago after a lengthy battle to build a park on a barren piece of land that was stagnating for many years. The neighbourhood ratepayers (to which I belonged) lobbied Home Depot as a condition of development to donate \$35,000.00 towards the development of the park.

The town built the park with a budget of \$280,000.00.

Much thought went into the current design. It was clear to us, as staff had repeated many times, we are in desperate need for soccer fields, so the soccer field was an integral part of the design. We were also aware a large kids playground was located about a four minute walk up the street. As such, a playground was not requested.

Interestingly enough, these are the very two items that the new proposal will be reversing. The new park will include an accessible playground and, because of space limitations, in doing so, remove the soccer field and (maybe, if space permits) have a mini field.

We are re-building a park that is eight years old and cost \$180,000.00 (minus Home Depot contribution and in-house work). We are spending an additional \$30,000 for a new design, plus \$150,000 to build it.

We are adding a playground in a community that already has one in close proximity (unprecedented in any other neighbourhood in the town) and removing a soccer field when we have been repeatedly told the need is very high.

It is also worth mentioning that there was no capital plan to replace the park, staff have never indicated that another playground was needed in this area, and most importantly, we did not budget for this expenditure.

After all is said and done, this park will cost over \$330,000.00 of your money.

Yet, Mayor Dawe, Councillors Pirri, Humfryes, Thompson, Abel and Buck gave staff the green light last week to go ahead with the design.

Unfortunately, \$30,000.00 will be spent on the design of the park, short of a reconsideration motion (I would not bet on that) unless the community, and I mean the entire community, makes it known that you want answers to why your representatives are making these decisions.

Email us at allcouncillors@aurora.ca.

I live in the area. I have small kids that could benefit from a new playground close to home. You should ask yourself, ?why is he so opposed to this?? Because I believe that in both my roles as a resident of Aurora and as a Councillor, I have to be focused on what is in the best interest of the entire community. For the reasons I have given, this project is wrong on many levels.

Councillor John Gallo

Aurora