

Mayor, Council break ground on new SARC gymnasium



Construction is expected to begin this week on a new gymnasium at the Stronach Aurora Recreation Complex (SARC).

Mayor Tom Mrakas and members of Council gathered at the SARC last Wednesday afternoon to formally turn the sod on the new build, which will cover 8,000 square feet.

In addition to the gym space, which will be built to high school size standards, the project will include change rooms, a new customer service area, and a retrofit of the SARC's existing pre-school room.

Prior to the ground-breaking ceremony, Mayor Mrakas outlined the history of the project to a crowd that included lawmakers, municipal staff and representatives of local sport organizations, including the Aurora Sport Hall of Fame, whose space at the SARC will be enhanced as part of the construction.

?In 2016, the Parks and Recreation Master Plan recommended the construction of an additional gymnasium for community use,? said Mayor Mrakas. ?In 2017, Councillor (Michael) Thompson and myself, while I was still a Councillor, put forward a motion that the Parks and Rec Advisory Committee?investigate and move forward with a gymnasium. We understood how important it was for our community to have a gymnasium. It is one of those projects similar to Town Square that was on our radar and it was long overdue. We're thrilled that not only did we continue to move forward but the project was tabled during the 2021 Capital Project deliberations and a budget was allocated to move the project forward in June of 2023.

?Staff held public engagement opportunities to consult with the community and user groups to ensure all opinions were heard on what users wanted and needed for this new space. I am pleased to see today that we are now making the vision a reality and progressively making a positive change in Aurora. A new gymnasium will allow for the expansion of program offerings to the community and external support groups. The project scope includes the addition of a standard single high school-sized gymnasium at 8,000 square feet, attached to the existing pool corridor.?

Recognizing the architects and project leads who are coming together to make the vision a reality, Mayor Mrakas noted the build has a targeted completion date of January 2025.

?I am not sure what that means when we talk in the public sector, but hopefully it is January 2025 because I know the community is excited to see this completed. I know I can't wait to see more of our community members and sports groups come out to use these new facilities and the expanded opportunities to host tournaments, hold training sessions, special events, increase programming opportunities and so much more.

?As I mentioned, this was a project that was on our radar for a long time. It is long overdue and we're thrilled to be at this point. I am excited that Council has moved forward in this direction to add another extension to the many opportunities and facilities that we have in our community for all of our residents to partake.?

The new SARC gym was initially planned to be complete by March of 2024 when the project was first approved by Council in June of 2022.

The approved budget stood at \$11.125 million before Council this past spring approved an increase of \$2.83 million.

By Brock WeirEditorLocal Journalism Initiative Reporter