

New gymnasium at SARC to be reconsidered at Budget

The construction of a new gymnasium at the Stronach Aurora Recreation Complex (SARC) will be considered by Council once again during discussions over the Town's 2021 Budget.

Local lawmakers approved a motion from Councillor Michael Thompson last week which puts the potential construction of a new multipurpose gym at the Wellington Street East leisure facility back on the table after discussions in previous years saw the idea relegated to the backburner.

Councillor Thompson's motion called not only for the potential expansion to be added to the 2021 Budget discussion, but also for a multi-gym option be presented as well.

Through [previous discussions] it was mentioned that at one time when the SARC was being designed there was discussion around having a gymnasium, said Councillor Thompson last week. It was originally planned and then a decision was made not to include it. There were even drawings available that showed where the gymnasium would have been, had it gone forward.

Council did make a recommendation to refer it to Budget, have this conversation, and, as we know, as it unfolded, the conversations got larger and larger with respect to [the potential acquisition of] Bloomington lands [and] we also threw Hallmark lands within that, as well as the expansion of SARC and the creation of an aquatics facility at the SARC.

While I still want Council to focus on [whether or not to proceed with the aquatics centre], I want to put this back on the table for discussion at Budget time. In the event that Council doesn't decide to move forward with the aquatics facility I still believe strongly there is a need to add a gymnasium to the SARC to complete that facility.

Considering a new gym once again would provide more opportunities for sports tourism, including tournaments, the Councillor contended.

The aquatics facility does not include the construction of a gym, so Council may decide if the future of the SARC is to do both [but] I just want to put this back on the table for conversation so, at the end of the day, this is one thing we want to make a decision on: whether to move forward or not. For me, it is a holdover from the last term that needs to be resolved one way or another.

While Council approved the motion to bring discussion forward, they largely held their opinions on whether this was a worthy project close to their chests.

I am fine with moving the discussion to budget, said Councillor Harold Kim. It is all the motion is requesting, so I am happy to oblige.

Councillor Wendy Gaertner expressed a similar viewpoint, adding that although she was fine with bringing it forward for discussion, there were some logistical issues to consider.

I was in the Council Chamber when the decision was made to not do the gymnasium, she said, referring to earlier talks leading up to the eventual construction of the SARC. That gymnasium was actually going to be a youth centre and there would be little parking involved. When this came to us recently, we had an idea of how we could get some more parking [but] that wasn't successful.

I don't know how we could add onto this facility without having extra parking, so it could go to Budget. I am fine with that, but parking is the big issue.

By Brock Weir Editor Local Journalism Initiative Reporter