

New Sports Hall of Fame will transform the SARC ? but at a cost

By Brock Weir

With four new members in the class of 2016, the Aurora Sport Hall of Fame is on the move to bigger digs and, if all goes according to plan, it will dramatically transform what you see when you walk into the Stronach Aurora Recreation Complex.

The Aurora Sports Hall of Fame (ASHOF) is marching ahead with plans to move out of their current home on the third floor of Aurora Town Hall to the Complex (SARC), but their plans come with a price tag of over \$77,000.

Councillors this week will consider a potential grant of \$58,850 to the Aurora Sport Hall of Fame for their complete plans. The entire budget for the relocation is set at \$77,050. According to a report before this week's General Committee meeting, the ASHOF has already identified a contribution from themselves of \$18,200 and are requesting the balance from the Town of Aurora.

Four options are presented to Council including full funding of the request to come from the Town's Facilities Repair and Replacement Reserve Funds, funding from the balance in Aurora's Sports Plan Reserve Fund to a tune of nearly \$44,000 with the balance coming from Repair and Replacement, deferring the item to the 2017 Budget Process, or coming up with another number altogether.

The largest chunk of the proposed budget is \$20,000 for designs, followed by \$12,000 for new display cases. Further cost items include a new inductee wall, interactive exhibitions, signage, and staff and administration costs.

“The Aurora Sports Hall of Fame has had a very positive impact on elevating the profile and significance of sports in the community,” said Al Downey, Aurora's Director of Parks and Recreation, in the report. “The proposed improvements identified by the ASHOF Committee further increase the profile of the Hall and have lasting benefits to the legacy of sport and the individuals who have been recognized for their contributions.”

This week's report comes on the heels of a presentation made to Council earlier this month by members of ASHOF on just what could be in store for the SARC and what the goals with the move they hope to accomplish by October 1. While Council members said they were pleased with the vision, they requested the hard numbers before discussing further ? and here they are.

“Working together with a local design firm, we have created a vision for what might be possible in this space,” said Michelle Johnson, the new curator for the ASHOF, fresh off her co-curation of the current exhibit at the Aurora Museum and Archives shining a light on the Town's Cultural Precinct. “We would like the presence of the Hall to be apparent the moment you walk into the Complex. Visitors' eyes are drawn down the hallway to the western end where a hanging sign will indicate the presence of the hall.”

Additionally, motion-activated projections, digital displays and other interactive components will keep the attention of visitors and, it is hoped, engage youth.

Interactive walls will be a teaser of what will be in store just beyond them and that is the more formal part of the Hall of Fame.

Existing display cases at the SARC will be refurbished to house a mixture of historical elements from the Aurora Museum and Archives, as well as artefacts on loan from inducted members of the Hall of Fame.

“I am proud and excited to be working on this important step in celebrating Aurora's sport history,” said Ms. Johnson.

Ms. Johnson was joined at the podium by Nancy Black, Executive Director of the ASHOF, who said they seek input from Council members on their vision. The SARC, she said, is an ideal location for the Hall from a sports tourism standpoint because it is the first municipal and recreational facility in Aurora people encounter after coming off the 404.

“As a multiuse facility, the SARC hosts people from various locations and sporting backgrounds,” said Ms. Black. “We want the Hall of Fame and, thusly, the SARC, to celebrate Aurora's sports heritage, inspire locals and visitors, and ensure that this new location becomes a popular sport tourism destination.

“The goal of our grand reopening is to create a space that inspires people to engage with sport and celebrate Aurora's sport heritage. This new home has the potential to become a significant Regional sport tourism destination. It is very important that the final product be something that the whole Town can take pride in.”

“This has been a pretty underutilized space and perhaps a wasted space,” said Councillor Wendy Gaertner. “I think you have done a fantastic job reconfiguring it and bringing people back.”

Added Councillor Michael Thompson: “I certainly like the concept. We always talk about a bit of a wow factor and I can see the residents really being amazed by what you presented.”