

Nixed Indoor Tennis facility is a burst bubble of Council term: Councillor

By Brock Weir

Aurora's tennis enthusiasts will likely have to wait for another Council term to find an indoor locale for their passion when the winter months hit.

Council formally nixed the potential of an all-season tennis facility after rejecting a \$200,000 proposal last week to hire a consultant to chart the way forward on a new multipurpose facility at Stewart Burnett Park, near the northwest corner of Leslie Street and Wellington Street West.

It was the turn in a twisted road, which last year saw Councillors ultimately vote down a proposal to contract a third party to erect an all-season tennis bubble at the park in a private enterprise which would have seen revenue coming back into municipal coffers through the deal.

This plan was rejected by Council in favour of exploring the possibility of a 'rigid structure' that would be an alternative to a bubble structure. But, ultimately, this plan fizzled last week.

For Councillor Paul Pirri, not proceeding with the initially proposed tennis bubble was a major missed opportunity of the last four years of Council.

'If people ask me what my greatest disappointment is from this term of Council, we have it right here,' said Councillor Pirri. 'We have an opportunity to build a tennis facility at no cost to the Town, it would serve as a revenue source for the municipality and we said no. One of the reasons that comes to mind from that evening was it wouldn't meet the aesthetics of the other buildings around it and I think personally that is a bit absurd.'

'When we have the opportunity to do something at no cost to the municipality, only to the benefit of the residents within the municipality and, on top of that, it is going to be an income source to the municipality, I absolutely have a hard time believing how we would say no to that.'

Councillor Pirri, later followed by Councillor Buck, then took it upon themselves to look for opportunities to formally reconsider the original proposal and get it back on the table. Councillor Pirri led the way, questioning if it would be possible to ask the original proponent if they were still willing to go forward with the project on their original terms.

This would be impossible to do because Council's vote last year cancelled the RFP entirely, according to Town Solicitor Warren Mar, who added the only option available would be to sole source the project to the original applicants.

Although Councillor Pirri's subsequent motion to do just that was seconded by Councillor Don Constable, it failed to get the required two-thirds vote from Council to be formally discussed.

'I am very disappointed we are not moving forward on this,' said Mayor Geoffrey Dawe after the vote failed. 'I share Councillor Pirri's disappointment. It is totally inappropriate we are not moving forward on this. We missed a great opportunity.'

Councillor Evelyn Buck, on the other hand, wasn't going to turn down an opportunity to take another stab at it, raising a similar motion to Councillor Pirri's under new business.

'I was unable to support the previous motion [to reconsider but] I was glad to see there was concern around the table,' she said. 'I am doing my best to move it forward and take another crack at trying to complete this piece of business. I think we did a good job, staff did a good job, it came to us in a satisfactory resolution [in] the response to the request for an all-season facility and we didn't do that. I think we should try again.'

This second attempt also found support from Councillor Michael Thompson, but not from Mr. Mar, who said the wording of the motion was too close to that put forward by Councillor Pirri.

While Mayor Dawe sided with Mr. Mar on the matter, effectively ending the debate, Councillor Buck challenged Mayor Dawe's ruling, which was ultimately upheld 5 ? 4.