

## Partners sought for indoor tennis facility

**By Brock Weir**

Attempts made last year to build an indoor, multi-purpose tennis facility at Fleury Park by the Aurora Community Tennis Club were ultimately unsuccessful, but the vision could become a reality in another part of Town.

Council is set this week to review a plan to go out and seek expressions of interest to build a similar facility at Stewart Burnett Park in east Aurora. According to Al Downey, Aurora's Director of Parks and Recreation, such a move would be more feasible and practical than the original plan.

Those plans included the construction of two additional tennis courts at Fleury Park, just west of Yonge and Wellington Street, which would have then been covered with a roof facility and garage-like doors which could easily change the sheltered but open-air facility into a completely indoor, multipurpose building.

It was the idea of the Aurora Community Tennis Club to build the facility as a Sesquicentennial Project in partnership with the Town. The finished result, they said would not only serve users of the tennis club in the winter season, but be open to everyone in the community for use during the spring and summer. Plans also included an amphitheatre to make the 'Fleury Ploughhouse' a venue for local music festivals, clad in solar panels and other innovative technology to implement a solar power generation cooperative to not only generate energy for its own use, but also turn a profit.

However well-intentioned these plans, things hit a snag when the Club and Council got into a dispute of whether construction of a permanent facility would be permitted at Fleury Park, which is in a flood plain. Communications between the two parties indicated, at the end of the day, permission to build from the Lake Simcoe Region Conservation Authority would be difficult to obtain and Council ultimately directed staff to come up with further options.

'Staff have investigated suitable alternative locations for this facility,' said Mr. Downey, in his report to Council this week. 'Consideration was given to available parking and other park amenities, distribution of tennis courts within the community, servicing, park acreage, and compatibility with other facilities. The Town has a limited number of community parks that could accommodate this facility, without consideration of purchasing lands to address this need.'

'With consideration of all these factors, Stewart Burnett Park best accommodates the facility. It can be located adjacent to the ball diamond in an area that would normally be susceptible to foul balls and not recommended for uncovered amenities. The park is fully serviced, parking is available immediately adjacent to the facility and services a part of the community that is lacking tennis courts.'

Mr. Downey recommends going out to the community seeking expressions of interest for groups wanting to take on the challenge of making such a project a reality. The proponent, he recommends, would have to pay for 'all capital costs for the design, supply and construction of six tennis courts, change rooms, dome lighting and any other ancillary facilities', as well as get all relevant permits and approvals, take on utilities and operational costs, ensure that the public would be able to use the facility in conjunction with the Aurora Community Tennis Club.

'The provision of an all-weather, multi-purpose facility is desired by Council and staff have evaluated our present inventory of parkland and recommend that Stewart Burnett Park be the preferred site for this facility,' concluded Mr. Downey.

Looking over what will be before Councillors this week, Brent MacKinnon, President of the Aurora Community Tennis Club, and a staunch proponent of the previous proposal, said he and the club would welcome another opportunity to make an indoor facility a reality.

'Our Board is encouraged by the Expression of Interest Report suggesting the Stewart Burnett site for a new multi-use tennis structure. The ACTC has extensive experience providing organized and affordable tennis programs in partnership with the Town of Aurora. We (the ACTC Board) are very pleased to have an opportunity to work with the Town to explore the viability of the

Stewart Burnett site and proposed business model.?