

Project manager will oversee development of Hallmark Lands

By Brock Weir

The transformation of Aurora's Hallmark Lands into a hub for baseball will be overseen by a project manager, staff have assured Council.

The confirmation came from Al Downey, Aurora's Director of Operational Services, who also said planning for the two senior baseball diamonds approved for the site near Industrial Parkway South and Vandorf Road was soon set to begin.

"We're in the process of acquiring a landscape architect through the procurement process, at which point we will get into the design elements of Hallmark and we hope to start construction in the spring," said Mr. Downey.

With this in mind, Council members questioned the oversight process that will steer the baseball diamond construction to completion.

Project management is an issue that plagued the last Council terms when it came to large scale projects, particularly the Joint Operations Centre, as well as renovations at the Aurora Family Leisure Complex.

"We have an oversight process and it is actually multi-departmental at this point because we have implemented a project manager who is also doing oversight on the corporate level with regards to projects, so we're reporting to that individual on a regular basis," said Mr. Downey, responding to questions from Councillor Wendy Gaertner on what's in place "to make sure we don't get into any trouble."

"Once the project is commenced," Mr. Downey continued, "the administration of that project falls within the landscape architect, or the designer of the project, and it is overseen by our staff. They have been within operations as well as staff within corporate services."

Techa van Leeuwen, Aurora's Director of Corporate Services, added a project manager has been "recently recruited" on a two-year contract.

"[This project manager] is developing a standard methodology for project management and she is reaching out to the individual departments and has oversight of our production management portfolio," she said, adding that funding for a project manager was taken from capital funds allocated for various projects to make it happen.

Council decided after a lengthy debate last summer to transform a parcel of land in behind the former Hallmark building into a destination for baseball.

After striking what many local lawmakers said was a "compromise" in addressing the needs of both the baseball and soccer communities by building one senior diamond and one multipurpose field on the site, plans were changed to build two diamonds after Parks & Rec staff found a multipurpose field would not fit on the land and still face the ideal direction.