

Skateboard park to stay put at Leisure Complex ? for now

The skateboard park at the Aurora Family Leisure Complex (AFLC) will stay put for the time being, despite ongoing issues with its construction.

Sitting at the Committee level last week, Council tentatively voted to maintain the ?status quo? at the oft-repaired skateboard park. The decision came following a recommendation from staff that the concrete space be reconstructed at its current location to the tune of \$1.195 million.

?In 2018, the Town retained the services of an engineering consultant to investigate the deterioration and to provide remedial alternatives and associated costs,? said staff in a report before Council last week, noting the rising price tag the potential reconstruction has seen since 2018. ?As part of the 2021 Capital Budget, staff requested an increase of \$520,000 to the total approved budget authority?. Council did not approve the requested increase and instead asked staff to report back on alternative locations for the construction of a new replacement skatepark and the potential for a parking area to be constructed at the AFLC where the existing skatepark sits, should it be relocated.?

A report was subsequently requested for additional options for repairs as an alternative to a full replacement.

Last week's report looked at three alternative sites for the skate park ? the Aurora Community Centre, the Stronach Aurora Community Centre, and Stewart Burnett Park, just behind the SARC ? but staff's ultimate recommendation was to leave it at the AFLC as it is considered a youth hub.

Despite the issues with the skateboard park as it is, Council voted against the recommendation of a \$1.195 million rebuild, instead opting to maintain the status quo: continued monitoring of the site conditions and a repair budget up to a certain threshold.

When the park is finally deemed unsafe and inoperable, however, further options will then be ?explored.?

?Cracks are forming, water is getting underneath, and freeze/thaw cycles cause it to heave and expand,? said Parks Manager Sara Tienkamp last week. ?While I am not an engineer? I am familiar enough [with] how it actually performs under these extreme conditions. It's got some cracks, we have done repairs, we do inspections regularly at the start of the year and then daily throughout the year. While I can't predict exactly when we might need to close it or move it to the next step of replacement, I do feel there is some longevity to it.

?Based on that, in my personal opinion, we can continue to maintain it and mitigate the risk and should something arise that we need to deal with, then we can deal with it at that time through Council.?

The most the Town has spent on repairs has ranged between \$1,500 and \$8,000 a year, she added, and ?we have confidence it is not costing the Town a whole lot to maintain it at this time.?

This information was welcomed by Council, including Mayor Tom Mrakas who put forward the motion to maintain the status quo.

?If we get anywhere from two, five, six years? and if at a point it does fail, that is when we can sit down and make a decision on how we move forward and, for all we know at that point in time, we might not want it to be a [skateboard park] at that time; we might be looking to change it. It is premature for us to look at repairing it completely when we can continue to mitigate any risk just by doing maintenance on it over a period of time.?

Ward 2 Councillor Rachel Gilliland was of a similar viewpoint, stating that continuing to repair it as needed would be a greater return on investment.

?At the high end of it, we spend \$60,000 maintaining it, we can still get 20 years out of it,? she said. ?To [the Mayor's point], maybe we don't want a skating park in the next 10 to 15 years. Maybe there is a different kind of project?. I think it would be responsible for us as a Council to keep our spending as low as possible on something we can take care of until it is absolutely necessary.?

Support for the status quo was also offered by Ward 5 Councillor John Gallo, Ward 3 Councillor Wendy Gaertner, and Ward 1 Councillor Ron Weese.

?It is financially prudent and just common sense to follow through on what we have decided,? said Councillor Gartner.

Noted Councillor Gallo: ?In the interim, we shouldn't give up on either new technologies or reaching out to specialty companies that do these types of injections? there are plenty of high-rise condominiums in Toronto where it's found their foundations need work. They don't knock down a building; they fix it from within. I think we should continue to reach out to these expert companies and see if we can make it last as long as we can, but? I am supportive of the status quo.?

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