

Pool in SouthFields backed after a heated debate

By Bill Rea

Caledon council closed out 2016 by changing its position on planned recreation facilities for SouthFields Village.

In committee, councillors had previously approved a staff recommendation calling for what was known as Option A, which did not include an aquatics facility. But when it came time to ratify that at the last council meeting of the year, Option B, which includes an indoor aquatics facility, got the nod.

The amendment came from Councillor Johanna Downey, but Councillor Barb Shaughnessy made an unsuccessful attempt to get the matter referred back to Town staff so there could be meetings with concerned stakeholders, including developers interested in the second phase of Mayfield West.

"This is a really serious issue," she remarked. "We need to do our due diligence on this."

One of the reasons for not including the pool in the first phase is it would be close to the pool at Mayfield Recreation Complex. Shaughnessy was concerned putting a pool in SouthFields Village would reduce the chances of one going in the second phase because it would be thought there were too many pools too close together.

She was also concerned that this proposal had not been discussed with the landowners in the second phase. She was concerned about agreements that might have been made with them.

"Quite frankly, I'm tired of litigation," Shaughnessy declared. "I'm tired of everybody suing us."

"It doesn't hurt to put it off for a month or two," she added.

Shaughnessy also protested that two councillors were absent. Doug Beffort was ill and Annette Groves was dealing with a family matter. She wondered if the pool supporters were taking advantage of that.

"I put a lot of work into this project," Downey responded, pointing out the pool she was advocating would serve all residents on the west side of town.

Downey also denied taking advantage of the absent councillors.

"I would do my job regardless of whether all the council were here or not," she declared.

"I just think we should listen to staff a lot more," Councillor Gord McClure said. "We shouldn't push this forward today."

He was also reluctant to go ahead with two councillors missing.

General Manager of Community Services Peggy Tollett said a recreation facility has always been planned for the first phase, but it's never been specified what it would contain. She added if a pool goes in the first phase, staff would recommend there not be one in the second.

General Manager of Finance and Infrastructure Services Fuwing Wong added the landowners in the second phase have been told there will be recreation facilities, but there's nothing in any agreement specifying a pool.

The original position came after the committee had heard a presentation from consultant Todd Brown of Montieth Brown regarding a facility needs assessment study for the area.

He told councillors they were presented with recommendations in October for recreational components, along with a community-hub feature for the first phase of Mayfield West. It was slated to go at Kennedy Road and Dougall Avenue, and was to include a gymnasium, fitness centre, aerobics studio, multi-purpose rooms, a library branch and future outdoor amenities, which could include a plaza, fountain, splash pad and skateboard park. Brown said council had asked them to come up with an alternative that could see a small-scale indoor pool.

Brown observed that consultations across town indicated there is dissatisfaction with the pools at Caledon Centre for Recreation and Wellness (CCRW) in Bolton and Mayfield Complex. He also said the numbers of those using the programs at the two pools indicate there is still capacity available. He added the findings indicate about half the users at Mayfield come from outside Caledon, and pools in the northern part of Brampton are expected to open and reduce demand on Mayfield.

They did come up with Option B, which reduced the size of some of the amenities, like the fitness centre and aerobics studio, but allowed for a small pool.

Brown also reported the estimated capital cost would be a little more for Option B (\$27.14 million as opposed to \$27.016 million for Option A). The operating costs for Option B would be about \$1.735 million, compared to \$1.335 million for Option A. Option B would add more to the Town's tax rate.

The staff report to committee indicated that Caledon would be ready to support a third aquatic facility when the population reaches 100,000, which is anticipated around 2025, although they said it could grow into that third pool.

Staff also pointed to recent and ongoing capital investments at Mayfield, meaning it has a substantial life ahead of it.

The report favoured a strategy to develop a pool as part of a community centre in the second phase of Mayfield West. Staff said there had been strong community feedback from across town for the need of a certain size of aquatic facility. There are calls for a 25-metre rectangular pool with six lanes, as well as a separate tank for warmer water programs. There are plans to locate such a facility in a future secondary school. Assessing the options, staff said putting a new pool close to the largest one in town would be both operationally and financially challenging.?

They added there would be limits to the size of facility that could be built there.

Staff opted that the pool should wait for the second phase of Mayfield West.

In supporting the pool option, Councillor Nick deBoer said it's good to listen to consultant, but they also have to keep in mind what the community has asked for.