



For the Committee of the Whole Meeting November 15, 2018

Date: November 14, 2018

From: Mayor Helps

Subject: Middle Ground, Path Forward on Crystal Pool

Background

This short report proposes a middle ground and a path forward for Crystal Pool and Wellness Centre replacement project that will keep the pool open during construction, will provide an option for keeping Central Park intact during construction, and will give residents an opportunity to weigh in through referendum on which option to proceed with and seeking the accompanying borrowing authority.

As the staff report outlines, a great deal of work has been put into the current proposal to reconstruct the Crystal Pool in Central Park with a Council approved budget of \$69.4 million. The City has received \$7 million in grants towards this project, \$6 million in gas tax funding and \$1 million from the Canadian Tire Jumpstart Foundation. The City has also done a great deal of relationship building work with the Provincial and Federal governments in anticipation of the Federal-Provincial infrastructure funding, applications for which are due January 23 2019.

In the past six months the North Park Neighbourhood Association and others have shared in more detail the impact that building the pool in the proposed location would have on their use and enjoyment of the park and their sense of connection and community. They have also suggested that the City could achieve more in that area of town than simply replacing the pool, including, but not limited to, housing, a Welcome Centre for refugees and newcomers, a community centre, a heat recovery option as well as a swimming pool and recreation centre. This would fill a gap in services in the Downtown/Harris Green, North Park and Quadra Hillside Neighbourhoods.

More recently, we have heard again from users of the pool, particularly people with disabilities and people who work with various low-income and marginalized pool users. They stress the importance of the pool to their well-being and quality of life. They strongly support any option that keeps the current facility open during the construction of a new one.

Risks

There are risks to proceeding with the current project as proposed as well as risks of changing course at this time.

The key risk of proceeding with the proposed project is that there is not social licence in the neighbourhood for the City to proceed. In addition to battling with the neighbourhood for the next couple of years – which is a social cost and does not build community - this could be a great financial risk to the project. If we don't secure enough funding from senior levels of government, we would need to hold a referendum. We could risk some neighbourhood residents or the Neighbourhood Association organizing for the "no" side.

The risks to changing course at this time are that we could lose the \$7 million in funding currently proposed for this project. We will also miss the first intake of infrastructure funding from the federal and provincial governments and it is not clear when a second intake would be or how much funding would be allocated for social infrastructure. There is also the reality that construction costs will continue to escalate for every month of delay.

Recommendations

Balancing the risks, the social costs, the financial costs, and the potential of achieving a more comprehensive use of city-owned land in the North Park Neighbourhood, I proposed the following recommendations which are meant to be taken as a set:

That Council directs staff to:

1. Wrap up work on the current proposed project. (Project A)
2. a.) Ask staff to report back with a scope and budget to develop a plan and budget for citing the facility on the arena parking lot including the amenity and partnership opportunities roughly outlined in the North Park Neighbourhood Association submission. (Project B)
b.) Report to Council quarterly on this process.
3. Hold a referendum no later than the second quarter of 2020 presenting the two options to electors and requesting that electors answers two questions:
- Do you support proceeding with the redevelopment of the Crystal Pool and Wellness Centre Replacement Project? Yes or No.
- If yes, do you support borrowing up to \$X for Project A (current project with cost escalation at date of referendum factored in) or up to \$Y for Project B.
4. Write to the \$1 and \$6 million funders, respectively, and pursue opportunities for extending the timeline for funding applicability.
5. Continue to work with the federal and provincial governments to pursue options for funding for Project A and Project B (once more clearly defined) including the wider range of funding options that may be available for a facility or complex with more amenities than only a swimming pool and recreation centre.

Respectfully Submitted,



Mayor Helps