

Committee of the Whole Report

For the Meeting of June 11, 2020

process of disinfecting the pool water. An engineering consultant has provided an assessment of the repair options and implications to address this issue over the coming months. The repairs will require approximately six months to complete.

PURPOSE

The purpose of this report is to outline the proposed plan for re-opening parks and recreation services, during the COVID-19 pandemic.

BACKGROUND

In response to the growing risks associated with the COVID-19 pandemic, the City responded to advice from public health officials by immediately restricting the use of various parks and recreation services in March 2020. Actions such as these, along with strong adherence to the directives of health authorities, helped to “flatten the curve” and mitigate widespread transmission of the virus. During this period, citizens complied with recommendations relating to physical distancing and self-isolation, and along the way participated in an impressive demonstration of community support for general population health.

In early May, the Premier revealed the BC Restart Plan in anticipation of an era of recovery. This plan provides guidance to private and public sector organizations on the priorities and pace of “re-opening” throughout the province. Following this release, industry leaders and health officials began the process of developing industry-specific tools to assist with the detailed planning of employers, service providers, facility operators, and others.

The BC Recreation and Parks Association (BCRPA) is a non-profit organization representing the interests of recreation and parks service providers across the province. Throughout the month of May, the BCRPA convened collaborative sessions with industry leaders, regulatory agencies, technical experts, and health officials to gather critical input towards the development of a recovery package for local and regional authorities. The Guideline for Restarting Operations has become a critical resource for staff, non-profit societies, and elected officials involved in the planning and delivery of community programs and services.

Staff have committed significant energy towards the development of the enclosed plan for Council consideration, as the City seeks to re-activate key community services in a safe and timely manner.

ISSUES & ANALYSIS

Recovery Plan Highlights

The re-introduction of parks and recreation services is an important step towards helping community members with their overall health and wellness goals, particularly critical given the isolation and difficulties that many have experienced due to the pandemic.

The City's Recovery Plan, described in detail in Attachment A, follows a risk-based approach to bringing services back into operation, ensuring the necessary procedures, resourcing, and control measures are coordinated, in advance of each action. The Plan is organized according to BCRPA's progressive planning framework, with four levels of gradually increasing service provision.

City Recovery Planning Framework

Level 1 Starting Mid-May	Level 2 Starting Mid-June	Level 3 Starting Fall 2020	Level 4 TBD
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Parks, beaches trails, washrooms • Tennis, pickle ball courts • Bike park • Skate park • Casual use of sport fields (no lessons, leagues) 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Playgrounds • Outdoor fitness • Spray parks • Basketball courts • Lacrosse box • Field, court bookings • Outdoor programs 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Save-on-Foods Memorial Centre • Crystal Pool and Fitness Centre 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • All programs and facilities are operating under “new normal” conditions

The City is currently at Level 1 and, with Council approval, would begin the transition to Level 2 immediately. The first actions in Level 2 consist of re-opening park amenities such as playgrounds, outdoor fitness pods, and basketball courts, as well as the launch of registration for summer programs. Given that Crystal Pool will remain closed for maintenance, staff are preparing to utilize Royal Athletic Park as the base of operations for children’s camps and other recreation programs. This facility has an extensive outdoor area along with infrastructure supports that can be modified to accommodate the necessary safety control measures. Staff have also developed a schedule that will see the stadium opened for free community use on weekends, which represents an increased level of service from recent years.

The Save-On-Foods Memorial Centre is presently being used as a temporary shelter for citizens experiencing homelessness. Depending on the duration of this use, staff will work with our operating partner for the arena to coordinate a return to ice rink programs in Level 3.

By January 2021, staff anticipate the building system work required to repair the ventilation system in the Crystal Pool and Fitness Centre will be complete, allowing the return of indoor recreation and aquatics services.

Level 4 is identified as the final stage in the re-opening process, which would be triggered by a transition by the Province to Phase 4 of the BC Restart Plan, with the introduction of a COVID-19 vaccine or widespread treatment. This phase represents what many are referring to as the “new normal”, when large gatherings will once again be permitted and effectively all parks and recreation services would be operationalized.

It is important to also note that many local recreation services are provided by third parties, including neighbourhood based non-profit organizations with support from the City. Staff are committed to assisting these operators with their own planning efforts as they seek to expand their programs and services over the coming weeks and months.

Crystal Pool and Fitness Centre Maintenance

The condition of the Crystal Pool and Fitness Centre and building systems have been highlighted in several reports to Council in recent years. Many of the nearly 50-year old building’s components are due for replacement or rehabilitation. Staff have continued to monitor the various systems closely and obtain Council approval for strategic investments, while the long-term replacement plan remains ongoing. The assessment and potential rehabilitation of the aging HVAC system was noted in the 2020 Financial Plan, with \$190,000 approved by Council for this purpose.

In March 2020, an initial review of the building's ventilation system highlighted deficiencies relating to the handling of potentially harmful vapours from the pool disinfection process. Over the past two months an engineering consultant has been conducting an evaluation to identify the repair options. Staff recently received the consultant's report and will be proceeding with the necessary work to ensure the recreation centre can safely re-open. Unfortunately, the timetable required to complete the remedy is five to six months. Therefore, staff anticipate re-opening the facility by January 2021.

OPTIONS & IMPACTS

Staff recommend Council approve the attached Parks and Recreation COVID-19 Recovery Plan for immediate implementation so the community will have access to important health and wellness programs and services this summer.

Accessibility Impact Statement

The return of parks and recreation programs and services is of critical importance to citizens of all ages and abilities. Staff will ensure accessibility remains a focus of program planning and delivery for all phases of the plan implementation.

Impacts to Financial Plan

The closures of recreation facilities during the pandemic has resulted in an unforeseen financial impact. The planned re-opening can be accommodated within the net cost budget approved in the 2020 Financial Plan.

The total cost estimate for the recommended system repairs is \$487,200, with contingencies included. Council approved \$190,000 for capital repairs to the Crystal Pool and Fitness Centre, in the 2020 Financial Plan, and \$157,900 remains from this amount. The additional \$329,300 will be funded from the Facilities maintenance program to allow the required work to proceed.

CONCLUSIONS

As the City continues through these unprecedented times and seeks opportunities to support citizens, the return of much needed parks and recreation services represents an important milestone in the recovery period.

Respectfully submitted,



Thomas Soulliere
Director
Parks, Recreation and Facilities



Report accepted and recommended by the City Manager:

Date: June 8, 2020

List of Attachments (if relevant)

Attachment A City of Victoria Parks and Recreation COVID-19 Recovery Plan