



Date: April 6, 2009

TO: Board Members - Parks and Recreation
FROM: General Manager - Parks and Recreation
SUBJECT: Outdoor Sports Facilities Permit Fees & Charges Changes for 2009

RECOMMENDATION

THAT the Board approve the Fees & Charges adjustments for Outdoor Sports Facilities (as detailed in Appendix A).

POLICY

The Board's policies on user fees and charges are summarized as follows:

- User fees and charges will be levied to recover all or a portion of overall operating costs.
- All rates and charges will be adjusted to accommodate the changes in the marketplace and in operating and maintenance costs.

BACKGROUND

To meet inflationary cost increases and to ensure the Board's fees and charges are aligned with market rates, staff conduct reviews regularly and make recommendation for fees and charges for next year. At the November 24, 2008 Board meeting, the 2009 Fees & Charges were approved. In that report to the Board, it was noted that further changes to the Fees & Charges for Outdoor Sports Facilities and Special Event Permits were being contemplated pending further research and discussions with user groups. This report addresses the fees and charges adjustments for Outdoor Sports Facilities. The consultation process with stakeholders regarding the Special Event Permit fees has not been completed. A future report will to include the findings and a recommendation on this subject.

The Services and Budget Committee at its meeting of February 10, 2009 reviewed and supported the proposed changes outlined in this report.

DISCUSSION

Staff have completed the review and consultation with field user groups and propose the following changes to bring the Outdoor Sports Facilities fees into alignment with those of other municipalities by adjusting:

- the fee categories for outdoor sports facilities
- the user fees for each user type and facility type

These changes will also assist with the recovery of maintenance costs and with the efficiency of the booking process.

The estimated impact to the budget from the above changes is not expected to be significant. The revenues for Outdoor Sport Facilities are projected to increase annual revenues by approximately \$50,000 (10%) over the 2008 figures. These estimates are based on current usage statistics and may be impacted by external economic factors, weather, changes in use, and other related variables.

Proposed Rate Changes

To develop the proposed rates, staff conducted a review of fees charged by other municipalities and organizations in the Lower Mainland. Appendix A outlines the current Park Board rates, proposed rates and provides comparisons to these other rates. Staff also conducted consultation in order to incorporate user feedback into the development of the rates and fee categories.

Public Consultation

Between December 10, 2008 and January 6, 2009, staff surveyed existing user groups and event organizers to obtain feedback on the proposed fee adjustments. Members of the public were asked to submit feedback by January 7, 2009 so that their input could be incorporated in developing the recommended changes. In the survey on proposed fee adjustments relating to sport fields, diamonds and courts, it was noted in the survey that these changes would take effect on September 1, 2009. This delay will allow time for user groups to make their own internal adjustments with members as may be required. The results have been summarized and included in this report.

These surveys provide the Board with a snapshot of opinions on the proposed changes. 73 electronic surveys were completed by the outdoor sports facility users and written comments (via email) were received from event organizers.

Outdoor Sport Facility Fees

The survey requested feedback on two primary questions:

- the adjustment of fee categories; and
- the concept of applying a fee to all youth non-profit bookings.

The survey respondents included representatives from both Youth and Adult user groups: 63% Youth; 23% Adult; 14% Youth & Adult. The respondents were all current users of Park Board outdoor athletic facilities, with the majority (71%) from diamond-based sports (such as baseball, softball).

On the question of changing the fee categories, from “Youth”, “Adult”, “Prime”, “Non-Prime”, to “Youth Non-Profit”, “Adult Non-Profit”, “Other”, 64% of survey respondents were in favour of the 2009 proposal to move to categories which identify rates for non-profit which are lower than other user groups.

At present, youth user groups are charged a fee only for artificial turf fields and evening use of the all-weather playing fields (a lighting fee). On the question of whether a user fee should apply to all youth bookings (including non-profit ones), 51% of respondents supported the change in the 2009 schedule, and 49% were opposed. While support for such a fee was evenly split, comments in the user survey revealed that further discussions with customers in the youth non-profit category would be prudent before proceeding with a fee recommendation. Therefore, the proposed schedule (see Appendix A) does not include the introduction of a new fee for youth non-profit user groups.

Individual comments on the proposal were received from the survey participants. Feedback was mixed, and included support for the adjustments, concern about how new revenue would be spent and opposition to any increase in fees for 2009.

RECOMMENDATION

Staff recommend that the Board approve the proposed 2009 Fees & Charges schedule for Outdoor Sport Facilities (Appendix A). These adjustments will more accurately reflect the market pricing and customer categories for the operation. These changes will also improve customer services by increasing the efficiency of the application and booking processes.

Prepared by:

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