

DATE: February 09, 2024**FILE:** 1700-02**TO:** Chair and Directors
Comox Valley Recreation CommissionSupported by James Warren
Chief Administrative Officer**FROM:** James Warren
Chief Administrative OfficerJ. Warren**RE: Artificial Turf Field Budget Options**

Purpose

To provide the Recreation Commission with options for the artificial turf field project, given that Bylaw No. 795 being "Comox Valley Sports Track and Fields Service Conversion Bylaw No. 2353, 2001, Amendment No. 2" did not receive two-thirds participating area approval and the Board cannot increase the current maximum requisition to accommodate the anticipated short-term borrowing for the project in 2024.

Recommendation from the Chief Administrative Officer:

THAT the proposed 2024 - 2028 Financial Plan and capital expenditure program for function 601, Comox Valley Track and Fields Services, be amended by removing the artificial turf field project from the capital plan until the Decarbonization Strategy is complete and the project can be revisited at a later date;

AND FURTHER THAT the 2024 - 2028 tax requisitions remain at the current maximum levy of \$985,970 (based on the 2024 BC Assessment Authority completed role), and that an annual reserve contribution of \$670,068 be made to the Comox Valley Track and Fields Future Expenditure Reserve (#601) for the second artificial turf field capital project.

Executive Summary

- At the November 21, 2023 meeting of the Recreation Commission (Commission) the following decisions were made concerning a potential new artificial turf field:
 - 1) The Commission was presented with four design options. Design Option A was chosen by the Commission as the preferred design and at an estimated cost of \$5,717,522.
 - 2) The Commission was presented with two borrowing options; five year short-term borrowing or 10-year long-term borrowing. The five year

short-term borrowing option was approved by the Commission in alignment with the Recreation Strategic Plan.

- On December 12, 2023 three readings were given to Bylaw No. 795 being the "Comox Valley Sports Track and Fields Service Conversion Bylaw No. 2353, 2001, Amendment No. 2".
 - The intent of the bylaw was to increase the maximum requisition to implement the approved capital plan.
 - The maximum requisition increase, to budget for the annual principal and interest payments needed for short-term borrowing.
- On January 10, 2024 the City of Courtenay provided consent to the amendment bylaw on behalf of their electors.
- On January 24, 2024 the Town of Comox provided consent to the amendment bylaw on behalf of their electors.
- The directors for Electoral Areas; Baynes Sound - Denman/Hornby Islands (Electoral Area A), Lazo North (Electoral Area B), and Puntledge – Black Creek (Electoral Area C) did not provide consent on behalf of their electors.
- As two-thirds of the service participant votes in favor of the motion was not received, the bylaw amendment cannot proceed.

Prepared by:

Concurrence:

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Government and Community Interests Distribution (Upon Agenda Publication)

City of Courtenay	✓
Town of Comox	✓
Comox Valley Schools	✓

Background/Current Situation

Following the development of the Recreation Strategic Plan in the spring of 2023 where the examination of a new artificial turf field was identified as an immediate priority, Comox Valley Schools (CV Schools) provided approval for an artificial turf field to be constructed on the playing field at Georges P. Vanier Secondary School.

On November 21, 2023, the Commission approved a design for the new artificial turf field, estimated at \$5.7 million, and approved moving forward with five year short-term borrowing to fund the construction of the field in alignment with the Recreation Strategic Plan. To raise the funds needed to pay the principal and interest payments for the borrowing, an increase to the maximum requisition is needed.

On December 5, 2023 Bylaw 795 “Comox Valley Sports Track and Fields Service Conversion Bylaw No. 2353, 2001, Amendment No. 2” was brought forward for the Board’s consideration which would facilitate an increase in the maximum requisition for the service. Although not approved on December 5, 2023, it was reconsidered at the December 12, 2023 Board meeting and was given three readings. This allowed the bylaw to move forward to the participants in the service (the City of Courtenay, Town of Comox, and the Electoral Areas A, B, and C) to consider providing consent on behalf of their electors. Under the requirements of the *Local Government Act* two-thirds (four of the five) of the participants must provide consent to the adoption of the amendment bylaw in order for the maximum requisition to be increased.

In January 2024, both the City of Courtenay and Town of Comox provided consent to the bylaw amendment. Electoral Areas A, B, and C declined to provide consent to the amendment of the bylaw, and as such, the bylaw amendment has not obtained the necessary two-thirds consent of the participants to be approved. As a result, the artificial turf field project cannot move forward in the 2024 Financial Plan.

Options

The recommended option (number three below) of transferring funds to the reserve fund for future field projects allows for grants or other funding to be revisited when appropriate. By choosing the proposed option the Commission will also have time to digest the decarbonization study, which is expected by summer 2024. Other possible options are outlined below for consideration.

1. That the artificial turf field project be removed from the 2024 – 2028 financial plan and the Recreation Strategic Plan be reassessed in 2024.

Considerations:

- The need for two artificial turf fields was identified as early as 2008, the need has not changed as the Comox Valley has grown over the past 16 years and continued population growth is expected.
- There is strong support for the project by sport groups.

2. That the proposed 2024 - 2028 financial plan be amended by moving the artificial turf field project forward to 2025 and seek participating area approval through an alternative approval process (AAP) or assent vote to authorize long-term borrowing over a minimum term of ten years.

Considerations:

- The cost of the project may increase seven-fifteen per cent annually
- See Appendix B for more information on the legislative process and timelines related to an AAP and assent vote.
- Three out of five participating jurisdictions in this service do not support the immediate construction of the second artificial turf; advancing to an AAP or assent vote may be detrimental towards future discussions amongst the Recreation Commission members when consideration is given to other infrastructure projects in the Strategic Plan.

3. That the proposed 2024 - 2028 financial plan be amended by moving the artificial turf field project into the future and increasing the transfer to reserves over five years so that the debt necessary to fund the project decreases to approximately \$2.7 million.

Considerations:

- The cost of the project may increase seven-fifteen per cent per year
- By substantially increasing the reserve, the maximum requisition in the service establishment bylaw does not need to be amended.
- The Commission may wish to revisit the Recreation Strategic Plan to consider how the change in the timeline for the artificial turf field may impact the other anticipated projects.
- See Appendix C for more information on this funding strategy.

Financial Factors

The 2024 - 2028 financial plan proposes construction of the artificial turf field in 2024 at a cost of \$5.7 million with short-term five year borrowing to start in 2024. Given that the project cannot proceed without an amendment to the bylaw, the financial plan must now be amended.

Staff recommend maximizing the transfer to reserve for this function to provide a stable source of future funds that will facilitate a reduction in the anticipated debt for the construction of a second artificial turf field at a later date or other playing field amenities.

Staff will continue to seek out grants that may be applied to the project.

Strategic Considerations - Strategic Drivers									
Fiscal Responsibility	✓	Climate Crisis and Environmental Stewardship and Protection	✓	Community Partnerships	✓	Indigenous Relations	✓	Accessibility, Diversity, Equity and Inclusion	✓

Fiscal Responsibility:

- Partnering with CV Schools for the development of a second artificial turf field results in a significant cost savings to the project and taxpayers as a result of the donated land.

Climate Crisis and Environmental Stewardship and Protection:

- The artificial turf field has greatly reduced the quantity of water required to maintain the field compared to the former all-weather/sand field.

Community Partnerships:

- This service is built on strong partnerships with CV Schools, the City of Courtenay, and the Town of Comox.
- The CVRD partners with CV Schools and the City of Courtenay for the operation and maintenance of the track and synthetic turf field at Georges P. Vanier Secondary.
- The CVRD, CV Schools, and Comox Valley United Soccer Club partner to work towards the construction of a field house next to the existing synthetic turf field.

Accessibility, Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion:

- The construction of a multi-sport artificial turf field may lead to greater opportunities for programs such as the Challenger Baseball program that generally utilizes artificial turf fields in order to increase accessibility for their participants.

Strategic Considerations - Regional Growth Strategy Goals							
Housing	✓	Ecosystems, Natural Areas and Parks	✓	Local economic development	✓	Transportation	✓
Infrastructure	✓	Food Systems	✓	Public Health and Safety	✓	Climate Change	✓

Infrastructure:

- The development of a new artificial turf field on the site of an existing grass field, means that new infrastructure will be able to be developed while preserving vacant land elsewhere for other development needs.

Public health and safety:

- The development of a second artificial turf field would mean that an increased number of children, youth and adults will be able to enjoy year-round outdoor sport opportunities.

Climate change:

- As stated above

Intergovernmental Factors

Recreation staff is working closely with CV Schools on the development of a new artificial turf field concept. Currently there is an agreement in place between the CVRD and CV Schools with respect to maintenance, water purchase, and use for the existing field and track. Moving forward through the development of the new artificial turf field will bring an opportunity for another partnership agreement with CV Schools.

Citizen/Public Relations

If the artificial turf field project is moved forward to a future budget year or is canceled, a communications plan should be developed to inform the community of the decision. Further engagement with sports groups will also be required.

Attachments:

- Appendix A – Artificial Turf Field Backgrounder
- Appendix B – Electoral Consent financing
- Appendix C – Reserve Contributions financing

Artificial Turf Field Backgrounder

December 18, 2023

The following “Backgrounder” provides a summary of the background and timeline of decisions made by the Comox Valley Recreation Commission or Regional Board and the anticipated next steps in the process to bring the artificial turf field (ATF) to a point where construction may proceed in 2024.

Background

In 2019, the Comox Valley Recreation Commission identified a long-term plan for recreation infrastructure and sustainable delivery of these services as a strategic priority. RC Strategies was retained to work with our municipal partners and Comox Valley Schools to:

- Assess the current inventory, condition and allocation of sports fields;
- Ensure current needs, and future growth, can be accommodated; and
- Review field booking and allocation processes.

The work on the Sport Fields Strategy commenced in June 2022, with condition assessments of the fields completed through the summer and fall as well as consultation with stakeholders and the public. Some of the feedback received included:

- Groups are interested in having more access to artificial turf field surfaces, uniform condition (always available with the same surface condition), and not weather concerns were the primary driver of this demand.
- Groups reflected a clear preference for sport field “hubs” (multiple fields/diamonds on the same site). The benefits of these hubs expressed by groups include a better ability to facilitate tournament play, atmosphere, and minimizing driving for parents, participants and volunteers;
- There is a desire for greater access to washroom facilities at outdoor fields / diamonds; and
- The benefits of added lighting to more sites to extend play and add capacity to the system was expressed by some stakeholders.

The [Sports Fields Strategy](#) was presented to the Commission in February 2023. A key finding of the study includes:

“The majority of respondents generally felt that the sport field inventory meets their summer needs, but not their winter season needs. Commonly identified reasons why the sport field inventory is perceived as lacking during the winter months were field

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conditions and amenities (don't have enough artificial turf or lighted fields), a general lack of field time, and deficient support amenities (e.g. washrooms)."

Timeline:**March 21, 2023 Comox Valley Recreation Commission**

At the March 21, 2023 meeting of the Comox Valley Recreation Commission, the Commission adopted the Recreation Strategic Plan. Several initiatives were identified for further examination including the possibility of constructing a new artificial turf field at G.P. Vanier Secondary School. The artificial turf field was identified as an immediate priority for examination in 2023 with possible construction in 2024, while the examination of a third arena and addition to the Aquatic Centre were identified as short-term and medium-term priorities.

May 30, 2023 Comox Valley Schools Decision

Comox Valley Schools provided approval to the CVRD to proceed with examining the construction of a second artificial turf field at G.P. Vanier Secondary School.

June 20, 2023 & June 22, 2023 Strategic Plan Open Houses

On June 20, 2023 the CVRD hosted an in-person public open house to present the [Recreation Strategic Plan](#) to the community. A virtual open house was also hosted on June 22, 2023.

At the open houses, the Commission presented the projects that will be examined as well as a gradual, stepped approach to tax increases that are anticipated as the CVRD moves forward with implementing the strategic plan.

The plan starts with five year short-term borrowing for the artificial turf field, and then an anticipated increase for 30-year long-term borrowing for a new ice arena. Once the artificial turf field is paid off in five years, then it is anticipated that the CVRD will conduct 30-year long-term borrow for an addition to the Aquatic Centre Pool.

The following graphic demonstrates these anticipated and estimated tax increases should these projects proceed to construction.

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Cost Estimates for Steps Ahead

There are a lot of unknowns still about the path forward, including whether pieces will proceed as proposed once further assessments/analysis are completed. Preliminary costs have been considered and mapped out (see graphic below). The below estimates are provided in 2023 dollars.

	2024	2025	2026	2027	2028	2029	30+ years
Preliminary Estimates of Costs							
Sports Field Expansion	← \$5M →						
Full Sheet Ice Rink Expansion			← \$16M →				
Add indoor pool to Aquatic Centre						← \$26M →	
Implications to Residential Household	\$32/yr 5 yr term		\$29/yr 30 yr term			\$46/yr 30 yr term	
Cumulative Impact		\$32/yr	\$61/yr	\$61/yr	\$61/yr	\$75/yr	\$75/yr



COST TO BE CONFIRMED

There is a significant amount of assessment work to be completed before decisions are made about whether these initiatives will proceed and to further refine/assess the preliminary cost estimates above.

September 25, 2023 Sports Field User Group Engagement

On September 25, 2023 a meeting was held with the lead consulting firm, CVRD and Comox Valley Schools staff and representatives from the following sport organizations:

- Comox Valley Cricket Club
- Comox Valley Baseball Association
- Comox Valley Sport and Social Club
- Comox Valley Field Hockey
- Comox Valley Kickers
- Comox Valley Raiders Football
- Comox Valley United Soccer

The purpose of the meeting was to hear from stakeholder organizations regarding their sport-specific needs related to a new artificial turf field. What we heard from the stakeholder organizations included:

- Maximize the field space while working within the budget;
- Amenities are secondary to having the largest field possible;
- Need space for practices and warm-up;
- Vegetation around fields makes ball retrieval challenging;
- Fences need to be higher to stop stray balls;
- Spectators can sit on upper bench under picnic shelter;
- Too many permanent lines can lead to line confusion and weaken the turf;

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- Temporary lines can be painted on the turf like they are painted on natural grass;
- Cricket can be placed between the two grass fields, needs 120m diameter around wicket;
- Most common size for soccer is 64m x 100m;
- Lacrosse is transitioning to six versus six game (64 m x 37m);
- Ideally baseball needs 81m x 20m; baseball could use a portable pitcher's mound if the infield overlaps with the rectangular field;
- Football requires 137m field, if the field is too small for football, then don't add permanent lines; the field can be lined for practices when needed; and
- Rugby can work on a field the same width as soccer and length as football, the minimum size is 106m long.

September 26, 2023 to November 1, 2023

Following the meeting, the consulting firm developed concepts based on the stakeholder feedback and requirements of the scope of work. The "community field" concepts included a regulation-size field for soccer and lacrosse and an overlapping U15 baseball field. The concepts also demonstrated how practice space for rugby and football could be accommodated with temporary lines.

November 21, 2023 Comox Valley Recreation Commission

At the November 21, 2023 meeting of the Comox Valley Recreation Commission the following decisions were made:

- 1) The Commission was presented with four design options. Design Option A was chosen by the Commission as the preferred design and at an estimated cost of \$5,717,522.
- 2) The Commission was presented with two borrowing options; 5-year short-term borrowing or 10-year long-term borrowing. The 5-Year short-term borrowing option was approved by the Commission in alignment with the Recreation Strategic Plan.

December 5, 2023 Regional Board

At the December 5, 2023 meeting of the Regional Board, the Board allocated \$808,500 from the Growing Communities Fund. As a result of this decision, the funding plan for the artificial turf field has changed (as per below) from what was originally projected in the report to the Comox Valley Recreation Commission on November 21, 2023.

Source of Funds	Amount
CVRD Reserve Funds	\$500,000
Recreation Grant	\$18,000

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Growing Communities Fund	\$808,500
Short-term borrowing	\$4,391,022
TOTAL	\$5,717,522

December 12, 2023 Regional Board

The Board gave three readings to Bylaw No. 795 being the "Comox Valley Sports Track and Fields Service Conversion Bylaw No. 2353, 2001, Amendment No. 2". The intent of the bylaw is to increase the maximum requisition to implement the approved capital plan. The maximum requisition must increase to budget the annual principal and interest payments needed for short-term borrowing.

Next Steps:

As noted in the letter from Lisa Dennis, CVRD Manager of Legislative Services, the bylaw, prior to submission for approval from the Inspector of Municipalities, requires written consent of two-thirds of the participants in the service, being the Directors for Electoral Areas A, B and C, the City of Courtenay and the Town of Comox.

The next steps in the process are as follows:

COMPLETED**Part 1** Board gives 3 readings to bylaw

- The Board has to give 3 readings of the bylaw amendment so that it can go to the next step in the process

WE ARE HERE**Part 2** Participants provide written approval

- City of Courtenay & Town of Comox bring the bylaw to council for consideration
- Electoral Areas A, B and C decide if they wish to provide written approval

Part 3 Inspector of Municipalities Approval

- If two-thirds or 4/5 of the jurisdictions provide written approval, the Inspector of Municipalities must also provide approval

Part 4 Board final adoption

- If the Inspector provides approval, then the Board may provide final adoption of the bylaw.

If two-thirds consent is not received from the service participants, then short-term borrowing for the project cannot proceed and the bylaw will be brought back to the Board and Recreation Commission to consider:

- Seeking elector approval to amend the bylaw,
- Deferring the project to a future year.

APPENDIX**Budget Approval:**

In February 2024, the 2024 Function 601-603 Track and Fields Services budget, including the artificial turf field capital project, will be considered by the Recreation Commission.

Artificial Turf Field Construction:

For the artificial turf field project to proceed to construction in 2024, utilizing short-term borrowing to fund a significant portion of the project, two things must be approved before the end of March 2024:

- 1) The service establishment bylaw amendment; and
- 2) The capital budget.

Other Next Steps:

In early 2024, once the field design is completed, CVRD staff will be:

- Meeting with the sports organization stakeholder group for the ATF project in January 2024 to determine if there are any partnership opportunities;
- Seeking out and applying for grants where possible; and
- Seeking out in-kind donations of labour, materials and/or equipment.

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DESIGN OPTION A



Design A \$5,717,522

8,790 m2 = 110m x 70.1m
 trapezoidal top area of 38.5m side length and 1.4m small base

2 washrooms	✓	2 dugouts	✓
2 player shelters	✓	perimeter pathway	✓
3 boot brushes	✓	lighting	6 poles
2 reg size soccer goals	✓	fencing	✓
4 youth soccer goals	✓	spectator seating pad	✓
operations storage area	✓	spectator seat walls	none

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SPORTS			
Baseball	80ft long basepath; 255ft from home to edge of outfield; will need to provide mobile pitcher's mound	Football	Canadian practice only; temp lines needed
Soccer (reg & mini)	√	Rugby	temp lines needed; not long enough for regulation play; will need mobile goals
Field Lacrosse	√	Cricket	Cricket between 2 grass full-sized soccer fields
Field Hockey	temp lines needed		

PROS	CONS
A less expensive option that includes baseball, soccer, mini soccer, men's lacrosse; warm-up space & washrooms	No spectator seating, rugby and football fields are modified for practice use only; elevated cost associated with lighting to light the baseball playing field

Alternative Approval Process & Assent Vote Process

- Provincial legislation requires that all long-term borrowing by regional districts requires participating area approval of the associated bylaw. In general, such approval may be obtained through an assent vote (referendum), alternative approval process or through council and electoral area director consent.
- An assent vote, also known as a referendum or plebiscite, is a voting process that is conducted similar to the process for general local elections. Approval is deemed to have been obtained if a majority of the votes counted are in favour of the question. If a majority of the votes counted are opposed to the question, the bylaw cannot be adopted. The costs of an assent vote are estimated at between \$60,000 to \$80,000 should the CVRD undertake the assent voting process across the entire service area. An assent voting process typically takes six to eight months to complete and requires considerable staff resources throughout the timeframe.
- An alternative approval process (AAP), previously known as the “counter petition”, is established through legislation and provides eligible electors with at least 30 days to register their opposition to the initiative by completing an elector response form. Approval is received if less than ten per cent of the eligible electors within the service area sign and submit a form by the deadline. If approval is not received an assent vote must be held in order for the initiative to advance. The costs of an AAP are estimated at between \$3,000 to \$5,000 for the entire service area and the process typically takes four to five months to complete.
- Staff have considered the above methods in the context of the artificial turf field project. It is perceived that an individual assent vote not timed with a general local election is likely to receive low voter turnout. Noting the clear advantages of the AAP with respect to elector accessibility and convenience, cost and timing, as well as the limited financial impact of the project to electors, an AAP is recommended.
- There are numerous legislative considerations with respect to the logistics for participating area approval, however, given that this responsibility ultimately falls to the CVRD Board it is proposed that staff would provide a subsequent report to the Board should the Recreation Commission confirm a desired approach with respect to the artificial turf field.

Option Three Funding Strategy

- Assumptions:
 - In 2029 the cost to construct the field is projected to increase from \$5.7 million to \$6.2 million as a result of inflation.
 - Property assessments remain constant between 2024 and 2029 and the max levy remains at \$986,000 per year.
 - Operating costs remain stable at \$235,000 per year, which allows the CVRD to transfer approximately \$700,000 to reserve per year for five years.
 - At the end of five years, the reserve would have \$3.5 million to put toward the project.
- The implication to the average \$800,000 household to raise and transfer \$700,000 annually to reserves is approximately \$21 per year
- In 2029 the CVRD could short-term borrow \$2.7 million (\$6.2 mill project cost less \$3.5 mill reserve over five years)
- Principle and interest payments equal \$650,000 per year for five years and which leaves \$50,000 per year potentially contributed to the reserve
- By substantially increasing the reserve, the CVRD will not need to increase the maximum requisition by amending the service establishment bylaw