

DATE OF MEETING NOVEMBER 20, 2024

AUTHORED BY CHARLOTTE DAVIS, ACTING DIRECTOR PARKS AND FACILITY OPERATIONS

**SUBJECT FUNDING REQUEST FROM NANAIMO HORNETS RUGBY FOOTBALL CLUB**

## **OVERVIEW**

### **Purpose of Report**

To present the Finance and Audit Committee with a funding request from the Nanaimo Hornets Rugby Football Club.

### **Recommendation**

That the Finance and Audit Committee recommend that Council approve the Nanaimo Hornets Rugby Football Club's funding request and allocate \$100,000 from the Strategic Infrastructure Reserve Fund, contingent on a successful grant application by the Club to the Province of BC's Community Gaming Capital Grants Program.

## **BACKGROUND**

The Nanaimo Hornets Rugby Football Club (the Club) is seeking funding for a project that would upgrade rugby facilities at May Richards Bennett Pioneer Park.

May Richards Bennett Pioneer Park is an 11 hectare park located in the north of Nanaimo; there are a variety of amenities at this park including softball fields, soccer fields, tennis courts, a skate park, a forested and fenced dog off-leash park, washrooms and a rugby field with clubhouse.

The Club occupies the clubhouse under a long standing License of Use Agreement with the City for the purposes of operating the Club. Under the Agreement, the Club is responsible to pay all taxes, utilities, and cover all costs of repairs within the licensed area. The licensed area incorporates only the clubhouse and does not cover the field. The field is maintained by the City and all costs for this maintenance are covered by the City. The Club does not pay user fees for use of the field.

The Club is proposing to undertake an upgrade project to the clubhouse and field valued at \$300,000 and is seeking \$100,000 from the City towards the funding of the project.

## **DISCUSSION**

The proposed project scope is an upgrade to two major amenities within the rugby facility; clubhouse washrooms and field lighting. The Club has been able to raise approximately \$100,000 in donations and private contributions and are applying for a grant valued at \$100,000 from the Province of BC's Community Gaming Capital Grants Program. They are seeking \$100,000 in funds from the City to be combined with this funding. If successful in receiving all the required funds, the Club aims to have the project complete in 2025.

The first phase of the proposed project will upgrade the field lighting to LED and will meet lighting standards for the competitive level of play at the facility. These upgrades will improve visibility and player safety, allow for expanded use of the playing surface at night including tournament use and potentially reduce costs and carbon footprint of the facility. The club are seeking \$75,000 of funding in support of this element of the project.

The second phase of the proposed project consists of an extension to the clubhouse washrooms, licensed to and operated by the Club. The extension will provide full accessibility and more equity between men's and women's washroom facilities. Gender neutral washrooms will be explored where possible. The main entrance will also be relocated to improve safety, accessibility and emergency egress. The Club is seeking \$25,000 of funding in support of this element of the project.

The License of Use agreement with the Club for the clubhouse states that the Club will not call upon the City at any time to make improvements to the license area. Through this request the Club is requesting support in making improvements to the field (City owned and operated) and the clubhouse. It is possible for the City to only support the lighting portion of the project. However, the impact may be that it jeopardizes the Club's ability to complete the washroom upgrades.

If the project is to proceed, the Club would work with City staff on the coordination of the project. The City would pay for specific invoices to the value of the amount of funding allocated. The City will remain the owner of the facility and the License of Use Agreement concerning the clubhouse will remain unchanged. A new agreement or an addendum to the existing License of use agreement would be drafted and signed by both parties to agree the scope and required specifications of the project prior to project commencement.

## **OPTIONS**

1. That the Finance and Audit Committee recommend that Council approve the Nanaimo Hornets Rugby Football Club's funding request and allocate \$100,000 from the Strategic Infrastructure Reserve Fund, contingent on a successful grant application by the Club to the Province of BC's Community Gaming Capital Grants Program.
  - The advantages of this option: Accessibility improvements to the clubhouse entrance and washrooms are achieved. There will be more equity between men's and women's washroom facilities. Field lighting will be improved meaning that visibility and player safety is improved. The lights will allow for more use of the field in the evenings.
  - The disadvantages of this option: Project risks, as with any construction project; the full scope of the project may not be completed if project costs are higher than budgeted and additional funding can not be secured.
  - Financial Implications: The revised projected 2025 closing balance of the Strategic Infrastructure Reserve Fund based on the 2025 – 2029 Draft Financial Plan would be \$3,174,709, if the grant is approved. This reserve has a minimum balance requirement of \$351,780 for 2025.
  - The 2025 – 2029 Financial Plan would be amended if the grant is approved.
2. That the Finance and Audit Committee recommend that Council approve a portion of the Nanaimo Hornets Rugby Football Club's funding request and allocate \$75,000 from the Strategic Infrastructure Reserve Fund towards the lighting elements of the project only, contingent on a successful grant application by the Club to the Province of BC's Community Gaming Capital Grants Program.
  - The advantages of this option: Field lighting will be improved meaning that visibility and player safety is improved. The lights will allow for more use of the field in the evenings.

- The disadvantages of this option: There are no improvements made to the facility in terms of washroom or access upgrades.
  - The disadvantages of this option: The Club will have less funds with which to complete the washroom upgrades. Project risks, as with any construction project; the full scope of the project may not be completed if project costs are higher than budgeted and additional funding can not be secured.
  - Financial Implications: The revised projected 2025 closing balance of the Strategic Infrastructure Reserve Fund based on the 2025 – 2029 Draft Financial Plan would be \$3,200,022 if the grant is approved. This reserve has a minimum balance requirement of \$351,780 for 2025.
  - The 2025 – 2029 Financial Plan would be amended if the grant is approved.
3. That the Finance and Audit Committee recommend that Council not support this funding request.
- The advantages of this option: The Strategic Infrastructure Reserve is not depleted.
  - The disadvantages of this option: There are no improvements made to the facility in terms of washroom or access upgrades or field lighting upgrades.
4. That the Finance and Audit Committee provide alternate direction. |

#### **SUMMARY POINTS**

- The Club is proposing to undertake an upgrade project to the clubhouse access and washrooms and to field lighting on the rugby pitch at May Richards Bennett Pioneer Park.
- The project is valued at \$300,000. The Club has raised approximately \$100,000 in private contributions and are seeking \$100,000 from the City.
- Staff recommend that the request for funding is approved contingent on the Club being successful in securing a \$100,000 grant from the Province of BC.

#### **Submitted by:**

Charlotte Davis  
A/Director, Facility & Parks Operations

#### **Concurrence by:**

Wendy Fulla  
Director, Finance

Laura Mercer  
General Manager, Corporate Services

Richard Harding  
General Manager, Community Services &  
Deputy CAO

Dale Lindsay  
CAO