



**Subject:** *East Hants Sportsplex - Facility Update*  
**To:** Council  
**Date Prepared:** October 1, 2024  
**Related Motions:** C21(214), C24(178)  
**Prepared by:** Scott Preston, Manager of Recreation and Facilities  
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**Approved by:** Kim Ramsay, CAO

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### Summary

On May 15, 2024, the Municipality of East Hants assumed daily operations of the East Hants Sportsplex from the East Hants Arena Association (EHAA). The purpose of this report is to provide an update to Council on the work that has been completed at the facility since transitioning operations and to provide updates on the capital repairs and potential future projects.

### Financial Impact Statement

No financial impact at this time.

### Recommendation

To conduct a review on rental fees for indoor turf and arena rentals to recommend rates for the 2025/2026 season and future years.

### Recommended Motion

*Move that the Parks, Recreation & Culture Committee recommend to Council that Council keep 2024/2025 Sportsplex rates in place for the remainder of the current fiscal year and to direct staff to conduct a review on rental fees for indoor turf and arena rentals to recommend rates as part of 2025/2026 budget discussions.*

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### Background

In February 2024, Council made the decision to transition daily operations of the East Hants Sportsplex (Sportsplex) over to municipal staff as of May 15, 2024. A majority of the original staff remained on contract reporting under the municipal Manager of Recreation and Facilities.

On May 22, 2024, Council terminated Capital Project 21-012 and approved Capital Project 24-043 (Sportsplex Revitalization) totaling \$835,332 for staff to complete projects required at the facility.

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## Discussion

### Transition of Operations and Staff

Leading up to the changeover, staff worked with the existing EHAA staff to prepare for the facility transition. Staff contracts were prepared for the EHAA employees offering new employment effective May 15, 2024. Following the transition, the municipal Manager of Recreation and Aquatics moved into the Sportsplex facility to begin working directly with the Sportsplex staff. Through assessment and consultation with Human Resources, a new organizational structure has been implemented at the Sportsplex. Feedback from staff has been very positive.

### Capital Repairs

Municipal staff quickly identified immediate repairs and upgrades needed for the facility using condition assessment reports, fire safety data and through physical examinations of equipment. From this, Council approved \$835,000 to begin capital repairs of the facility. To date staff have spent approximately \$200,000+ on fire safety system work, ammonia plant equipment, flooring renovations, LED light replacement and maintenance for the Dome. Staff have also started painting interior doors and walls throughout the facility.

As part of 2025/2026 budget discussions, staff will identify both an operational and capital budget for Council consideration. Revitalization repairs will continue this fiscal year with more painting, light replacement, a new Zamboni, kitchen equipment and other mechanical components in the facility that need repairs.

### Security Assessment

Municipal staff conducted interviews with the Sportsplex staff to understand their thoughts on improvements at the facility, a common theme was the need for improved security.

Based on this, staff issued an RFP for a security assessment of the facility. This was awarded to a security consultant who identified several risks including additional CCTV cameras, controlled door access and alarms systems for the facility. Initial projected implementation costs are quite high and staff are working with the company to finalize the report and determine what sections of these recommendations need to be actioned.

Staff are also exploring on-site security for Friday and Saturday evenings.

### Roofing Assessment

Staff are aware that there are several roof leaks throughout the facility. It is understood that the EHAA had previously contracted a company to repair the issues; however, several leaks exist today.

To better understand the state of the roof the municipality contracted a roofing consultant to conduct an analysis along with potential estimates. Although this report is not finalized, we understand potential repairs to be costly and are not within the current approved capital budget.

### User Groups and Rentals

Communication to user groups was sent out to all previous facility renters at the Sportsplex using information provided by the EHAA. The communication included a new set of Rental Contract Terms and Conditions, Request for Booking Form and new contact information. Staff worked closely with user groups to get contracts in place for existing bookings over the Spring/Summer period and to prepare new rental contracts for the Fall/Winter Season (September - June 2025).

Fall/Winter 2024/25 contracts are now complete with a few empty time slots remaining. Staff are working towards a model that allows online registration for public looking to book space for individual users or user groups. Staff have also created different time slots for free public skates and open turf time.

The projected revenue from current contracts in place to March 31, 2025 is \$1,191,500.

### User Group Feedback & Further Study Required

The overall feedback received by user groups in the changes in management have been positive. Many groups appreciate having a rental contract that clearly indicates the days and times of their rental. There has also been lots of positive comments on the maintenance and upgrades to the facility.

There has also been some negative and constructive feedback received. Staff met some resistance due to long standing agreements of rental time slots, various payment terms and various rental rates. Staff worked diligently with each user group to find a solution that prioritized user groups from East Hants. There was also feedback received on payment terms, insurance requirements and other terms outlined in the rental contract terms and conditions. It is important to note that staff built these rental terms and conditions based on best practices from other municipalities.

### Rental Rate Review

Staff have heard from many groups that would like to see a discounted minor sport rental rate, to have rates more in line with other recreational facilities and an allocation policy to determine which groups should get priority ice and field time.

As per the Municipal Fee Policy, Council has the authority to set fees for the arena and turf rates at the Sportsplex. A review on rental rates for indoor turf and arena rental rates could be brought back to Council to set the rates for future years. This would include a review of all rates at the Sportsplex, discussion on various group rates, jurisdictional scan from comparator facilities, recommended rates and an impact to user groups if rates changes were to occur. It is necessary that a fee review must be accompanied by an allocation policy that provides a framework to staff on allocating rental spaces for different user groups based on the direction of Council.

### STRATEGIC ALIGNMENT

The 2021-2024 East Hants Strategic Plan speaks of sustainable infrastructure and facilities. It also supports informed and sustainable decision-making by considering all relevant information and make decisions that lead to a sustainable community.

### FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS

There are no financial impacts from this report.

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## Alternatives

- 1) That council do not direct staff to conduct a review of rental rates and maintain current rates set in the municipal fee policy.
  - 2) That council defer to have rental rates reviewed until the end of the 2024/2025 fiscal year.
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