



Municipality of Port Hope

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Port Hope, ON
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REPORT TO: Parks, Recreation and Culture Advisory Committee

FROM: Leslie Murray, Manager, Community Recreation and Culture

SUBJECT: Comprehensive User Fee Review 2021 - Schedules E and J

DATE: September 7, 2021

RECOMMENDATION:

That the proposed amendments to the Fees and Charges Bylaw (By-law No. 25/2015), relating to Parks, Recreation and Culture Schedules “E” and “J”, be posted for public review from September 8-22, 2021, and further;

That staff report back to Council following the consultation process with a recommendation based on public feedback received.

BACKGROUND:

The current fee schedule (Schedules E and J) for Parks, Recreation and Culture relating to admissions, facility rentals, program fees, marina, parks, cemeteries, and advertising expired December 31, 2020. Due to the pandemic and resulting service interruptions, capacity limitations and provincial lockdowns, Council approved holding 2020 fees throughout 2021 (Resolution 53-2020).

The Municipality of Port Hope’s Strategic Financial Plan indicates that when establishing user fees, consideration should be given to the need to regulate demand, the desire to subsidize certain services, competitive market rates, as well as the promotion of other goals (health and wellness, accessibility, etc.). The following are the policies and strategies that pertain to user fees as outlined in the Strategic Financial Plan:

1. User fees will be considered by the Municipality where:
 - There is a clear relationship between the fees paid by users and the benefits received by the user.

- A member of the public has a choice as to the extent to which he/she uses the service.
 - It is administratively feasible to collect the charge at a reasonable cost.
 - The benefits can be quantified and attributed to the user.
2. The Municipality will review and update user fees annually taking into consideration the increase in all costs (direct and indirect), the current “market” situation, and minimizing the negative impacts to the public that would result in limiting access to the service.
 3. A comprehensive user fee review will be undertaken a minimum of every five years, or earlier, as required to reflect changes in the cost of service, demand for service or service offerings.

As a result of these recommendations, staff has undertaken a department user fee review. The process to complete a comprehensive fee review and revision of fees involves a thorough assessment of the market using municipal comparators as well as surrounding communities. During this process, staff will meet with the major user groups and are prepared to post the draft fee schedule for public comment, prior to Council approval of the fees. The review includes Municipal comparators who have similar facilities such as an arena, indoor pool, and sports fields, cemeteries, and recreation programs. Other surrounding municipalities were also surveyed to ensure that the Port Hope rates remain competitive with the surrounding competing markets.

Comparators are selected from the following pool: Alnwick Haldimand, Amherstburg, Belleville, Brighton, Brockville, Clarington, Cobourg, Cobourg YMCA, Colborne, Collingwood, Greater Napanee, Hamilton Township, Midland, North Grenville, Oro Medonte, Oshawa, Peterborough, Quinte West, Scugog, Spring Water, Trent Hills, and Whitby.

The attached schedules (**2021.09.07 Draft Schedules E and J**) include the proposed fees and charges for 2022.

ARENA

The comparison indicates that Port Hope rates remain competitive with surrounding municipalities. The proposed change is a 3% increase over 2020 fees for 2022, followed by a 3% increase per year from 2023 - 2026 which will keep the ice rates comparable to the surveyed comparators. This maintains the previous annual increase for the existing fee bylaw. A review will be conducted in 2023 to assess the environment and operational requirements post pandemic, and to ensure that the 3% increase scheduled will support cost recovery.

Notable Changes Proposed:

- New fee for dropin arena floor program for use in youth programming
- New daytime ice fee for weekdays before 4 pm to encourage use during underutilized times

Summary: Staff are proposing that a 3% increase per year from 2022-2026 be applied to all arena fees.

POOL AND AQUATICS

The previous fee schedule included a 5%/year increase of fees as the 2016 review determined prices were below market norms. In this year's review, it was determined that fees are now at the top of the average of comparators. A 3% increase per year is proposed.

Notable Changes Proposed:

- The Water Safety Instructor Course fee must be changed to match the National Lifeguard program based on changes to the requirements and delivery method of the program

Summary: Staff are proposing a 3% increase per year from 2022-2026 be applied to all pool and aquatics fees.

RECREATION PROGRAMS AND DAY CAMPS

Port Hope's recreational programs and day camps are close to the midpoint of the average of municipal comparators and surrounding municipalities. A 3% fee increase is recommended for 2022, followed by an increase of 3%/year for 2023-2026. Dropin fees are recommended to be as a flat fee.

Notable Changes Proposed:

- To address varied uses of the gymnasium space at Town Park Recreation Centre, a three-tier fee structure is proposed, which takes into consideration the set up and take down required for specific uses, as well as the number of users who can be accommodated for specific activities. For example, certain uses which only allow 4-6 users at a time and/or require intensive set up and take down have a higher fee (tier 3) than uses that permit many users and/or have limited set up and take down.
- The proposed drop in program fees are to be flat rate fees and are not subject to annual percentage increases but will be reviewed on a regular basis through comparator markers.
- A three-tier fee rental package fee for birthday parties has been created based on staff and supply costs for varying party types.
- It is proposed that the previously approved trial of free access to the youth centre be continued, as facility closures due to the lockdown have not provided an opportunity for assessment of the impacts of free access.
- A supply fee is recommended to be used for program supplies requiring an additional cost to participants.

Summary Staff are proposing a 3% increase per year from 2022-2026 be applied to all programs, day camps and birthday party packages and drop-in programs remain as flat fees.

PARKS AND SPORT FIELDS

During the review of parks fees, it was identified that additional fees are needed for specific uses.

Notable Changes Proposed:

- Fees specific to soccer field lining are required as materials and labor are Increasing.
- It is proposed that lighting fees be divided into two separate fees, one for rentals using lights for more than two hours, and one for rentals using lights for less than two hours.
- Fees for picnic table rental and delivery are to be modified to a per day basis, with delivery included in the price.
- The tournament fee is low in relation to comparators. An increase of 5% for 2022 followed by 3%/year until 2026 would assist in aligning fees.
- Indoor storage fees are proposed to increase by 2%/year until 2026.
- Water fees are to be added to hydro rates for overnight camping stays at Town Park Recreation Centre to support cost recovery.

Summary: It is recommended that an increase of 3% per year from 2022-2026 be applied to all parks fees, with the exception of:

- **Daily tournament fee, for which a 5 % increase in 2022 followed by 3% increases for 2023-2026 be applied**
- **Indoor storage fees, for which a 2 % increase per year be applied**

MEETING / GYM / BANQUET ROOMS

Room rental rates are at the lower end of the average of municipal comparators and other local providers.

Notable Changes Proposed:

- Based on current public health guidelines and Covid plan requirements, it is recommended that private rentals at Ruth Clarke Activity Centre and Canton Hub, which have previously been unstaffed, be staffed moving forward, being charged the private rental fee.
- Rental fees for partners who contributed to fundraising at Town Park Recreation Centre (Port Hope Racquet Club, Northumberland Minor Soccer Association, Port Hope and District Agricultural Society, Northumberland Minor Hockey) are currently calculated at a 50% discount. As 2022 marks the 20th year of operation, it has been identified that this discount arrangement should be reviewed.
- Fees for Ruth Clarke Activity Centre and the Port Hope Community Hub will be reviewed for 2023 with implications for rentals and services. The existing partnership arrangement for current users will continue for 2022, with the addition of a private rental fee to be implemented in 2022.

Summary: Staff are proposing a 3% increase per year from 2022-2026 be applied to all room and facility rental fees. Staff are also proposing that the 50% discount be extended to organizations who contributed to fundraising for Town Park Recreation Centre be reviewed, with consideration given to phasing out or modifying this agreement.

ADVERTISING

Notable Changes:

- Advertising on stair risers at Jack Burger Sports Complex will be added as an additional revenue stream.
- Booklet ad sales included with fees to be determined at such time that distribution of booklets such as the leisure guide and special event booklets is possible.

Summary: Staff are proposing a 3% increase per year from 2022-2026 be applied to all advertising fees.

CEMETERIES

A comparative review of cemeteries fees supports minor adjustments in a number of fees. Cemetery fees have not increased in the last 5 years.

Notable Changes Proposed:

- Regular/Adult/Child interment rights and interments for coffin/vault and cremation fees increasing to become more comparable.
- Child interment and grave set up increasing slightly to cover increased contracting costs to target minimum cost recovery.
- Saturday fees being lowered to align with operating costs and more comparable costs for other services.

Summary: Staff are proposing that the listed increases be effective for January 1, 2022.

RESOURCE IMPLICATIONS:

In keeping with the recommendations of the Strategic Financial Plan, fee reviews are to be conducted regularly to ensure comparable rates with other local municipalities. There are also other factors that must be reviewed in operations including examples like minimum wage increases, increased hydro costs as well as alignments with daily operations and data systems. The slight increases in revenue help to offset increases in operational budgets while remaining competitive in the delivery of quality programs, facilities, and services.

Given the evolving operational impacts of the pandemic, it is recommended that a comprehensive review be conducted in 2023 and any necessary adjustments based on sector recovery trends be proposed.

CONCLUSION:

The mandate of Parks, Recreation and Culture is to enhance the quality of life for Port Hope residents through a wide range of innovative, inclusive, and accessible programming, as well as providing opportunities for physical activity, social interaction, and community engagement. Ensuring safe and responsible operations during the current pandemic requires creative solutions, regular evaluation and review and flexible program offerings. The variety of programs, parks and facilities provided to the community ensures that opportunities are available to engage people of different ages, physical ability, and socio-economic status.

Increases to user fees provide additional funds to help sustain infrastructure, maintain program quality and community engagement while assisting in reducing the impact on the tax levy. User fees generate revenues for Municipalities; however, pricing those services is also an important mechanism for monitoring demand for services.

Establishment of fees for the Parks, Recreation and Culture facilities, parks and programs is guided by the Strategic Plan with focus on being fiscally responsible, accountable, and sustainable while supporting a healthy and active community.

Respectfully submitted,

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