

# **REPORT**

## ***Parks and Recreation***

**To:** Mayor Johnstone and Members of Council  
**Date:** June 12, 2023

**From:** G. Dean Gibson  
Director of Parks and Recreation  
**File:** 2297262

**Item #:** 2023-390

**Subject:** Parks and Recreation 2024 Fees and Charges Bylaw Process

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### **RECOMMENDATION**

**THAT** Council consider, provide comment and endorse the proposed process, as outlined in this report, for the preparation of amendments to Parks and Recreation Fees and Charges Bylaw (Attachment “A”).

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### **PURPOSE**

The purpose of this report is to provide Council with the background, existing practice and emerging themes to consider in the preparation of amendments to the 2024 Parks and Recreation Fees and Charges Bylaw. This report recommends to Council the proposed process the Parks and Recreation Department will initiate in the development of the amendments and provide an opportunity to make recommendations of emerging Council priorities.

### **BACKGROUND**

Parks and Recreation fees were historically set by policy, as recommended by the Parks and Recreation Committee, and approved by City Council. In 2000, the Local Government Act, and subsequently, the Community Charter required that fees and charges be approved through Bylaw.

### **EXISTING PRACTICE**

The Parks and Recreation Department reviews fees and charges and makes recommendations for adjustments annually. Recommended fees were adjusted

marginally (0-5% increase) so the public was not subjected to large increases at any given time. In establishing fees, the Department considers market value, inflation, salary and benefits increases resulting from collective bargaining, partial cost recovery, minor sports discount formulas, operational costs and budget targets. Approval of the amended bylaw was typically sought several months before implementation to allow for public notice of fee changes and to provide rental groups with accurate pricing quotations for bookings that would originate several months into the future.

The Parks and Recreation Fees and Charges Amendment Bylaw implementation process is separate from other City fees and rates processes in that facility and parks renters tend to book spaces annually around the school and holiday calendar. Registration, rental and software processes in place necessitate the City to have applicable rates uploaded 6-8 months (sometimes 12 months) in advance of rentals and bookings.

## **ANALYSIS**

The Department historical process is to propose fees and charges adjustments using a 0 - 5% fee increase range. The fees and charges outlined in the current bylaw, included as Attachment "A" (effective January 1, 2023), reflect this process.

For the development of proposed 2024 Fees and Charges, the Parks and Recreation Department would like to consider an alternate method of establishing a fee schedule. The historical practice of increasing rates using a 0-5% range has kept fee increases at a minimum however this practice has decreased the Department's opportunity to actively manage resulting operating subsidy levels. As neighbouring communities have added new facility infrastructure over the years, their fees have increased to be more reflective of the quality and quantity of the facilities and services offered. This has resulted in a disparity in admission and rental fees charged within the City of New Westminster as compared to neighbouring municipalities.

As New Westminster adds a new state of the art multi-purpose aquatic and community centre to our facility inventory, the Parks and Recreation Department proposes to engage in a comparative analysis of fees and charges across neighbouring municipalities and make recommendations to Council based on a comparative mean. This will align the resulting proposed fees with the City's comparative neighbours and keep costs relatively similar for residents who may have utilized services in those communities. Parks and Recreation staff will consider existing and estimated operating costs of all City facilities and the effect on facility subsidization in the resulting report.

When analyzing the 2023 Parks and Recreation Fees and Charges manual which includes over 12 pages of recreation services fees alone, staff have noted many clarity, consistency and streamlining opportunities to make the proposed fee schedule more transparent, consistent and user friendly. As the 2024 Bylaw Amendment must now also include proposed rates and fees in anticipation of the opening of the təməsew̱txʷ Aquatic and Community Centre (TACC), it will be imperative that fees associated with indoor space rental are implemented consistently across the facility inventory.

The creation of one consistent fee schedule for all indoor drop-in services (Aquatics, Fitness, Gymnastics, Skating, and Sport), be it via single admissions or multi-session passes, will create transparency and clarity for facility patrons. In addition, it will allow multi-session pass holders access to all drop-in services at all facilities. This practice should encourage regular single admission patrons to gravitate towards accessing the multi-session pass program which comes at a lower per visit cost to the patron. Multi-session pass programs will also help to decrease lines at admission tills via access scanning stations, allow pass holders to register for single event classes online in advance, and create a more predictable admission-based revenue stream.

Changes will also be recommended in the 2024 fee schedule that will further emphasize Diversity, Equity, Inclusion and Anti-Racism (DEIAR) priorities. A comparative analysis of age definition categories will allow staff to recommend fee changes and new fees that promote equity in access across different age categories (e.g. proposing new age categories and rates for Super Seniors (75 or 80+), Families, and Under four years of age).

No changes to the Department's recently updated Access and Inclusion programs are contemplated at this time.

### **TIMELINE**

In order to meet Departmental program marketing and advertising deadlines for the January 2024 period, staff have identified the following timeline requirements that will allow for the uploading of new approved fees into the registration software system prior to the facility user booking season.

- June 12 - Report to Council re: The Parks and Recreation 2024 Fees and Charges Bylaw Process
- June 26 - Bylaw Amendment considered by Council for three readings
- July 10 - Adoption of Fees and Charges Bylaw Amendment
- August - New fee schedule incorporated into Recreation Management Software system and incorporated into program marketing and advertising for the period commencing January 1, 2024.

### **FINANCIAL IMPACT**

Parks and Recreation and Finance staff will work together using financial principles to ensure recommendations for the upcoming amendments to the Parks and Recreation 2024 Fees and Charges Bylaw are:

- Sustainable
- Adaptable
- Stable
- Accountable

Staff will further provide a financial outlook of how the proposed fee schedule will achieve 2024 revenue targets and operating subsidy.

### **INTERDEPARTMENTAL LIAISON**

The Finance Department has reviewed the report, and proposed fees and process.

### **ATTACHMENTS**

Attachment A: 2023 Fees and Charges Schedule

### **OPTIONS**

1. Council approve the proposed process for the development of the amendments to the 2024 Parks and Recreation Fees and Charges Bylaw;
2. Provide other direction to staff.

Option #1 is recommended.

### **CONCLUSION**

The 2024 Parks and Recreation Fees and Charges Amendment Bylaw is due for review and adoption to meet facility rental timelines. As the review process of Bylaw Amendment No. 8343,2022 must now include proposed rates and fees for tømøsewtx<sup>w</sup> Aquatic and Community Centre (TACC), Parks and Recreation staff have proposed a new process for establishing admission, pass and rental fees. Using a comparative analysis of neighbouring communities' Fees and Charges, and utilizing a DEIAR lens on program schedule components, Recreation and Finance staff will present a proposed Bylaw Amendment to Council on June 26, 2023.

### **APPROVALS**

This report was prepared by:

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This report was approved by:

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