

Utility hikes drive user fees up in King

By Mark Pavilons

Rising hydro rates are the driving factor for King's user fees.

Councillors approved increases which take effect Jan. 1, 2016.

In the staff report by Chris Fasciano, director of parks, recreation and culture, he noted municipalities like King are facing increasing costs to deliver essential services that residents rely on. Fees and charges help cover a portion of the costs, and full cost recovery isn't always possible.

Traditionally the user fees have been developed using a combination of actual direct costs to deliver the services.

Staff was asked to conduct a review of all fees and charges, to ensure the revenue was adequate. In the end, staff recommended upping the fees by 1.3% which is in keeping with the CPI Index.

The fees range from municipal facility rentals to bylaw charges, permits and marriage ceremonies.

The proposed fee changes are designed to ensure that the cost of providing a specific service is fully or partially recovered from the user of that service, while minimizing the cost and effect to all tax and user ratepayers, Fasciano wrote.

Fasciano noted those impacted the most by utility costs were ice, baseball diamond lighting and general facility rentals. Ice user groups will be hit with the increase in the spring of 2016, while baseball groups will see a smaller hike in the hydro fee.

He noted new fees are created for a number of reasons, including administrative requirements, new services being offered and community demand.

An example is the prime time ice rate for a single use is going up \$10 per hour, as is the summer ice rental rate. Non prime time rental is going up roughly \$5 per hour.

Some councillors asked Fasciano whether the Township can come up with a pass card system or season's pass. He said he would look into it.

Councillor Bill Cober wanted to know what to tell the public, when they ask why the fees are going up. Fasciano reiterated that it's primarily hydro costs, along with minimum wage increases and other direct costs.