

User fees slated to go up in King in 2016

By Mark Pavilons

Groups using Township facilities will likely have to pay more next year.

King council received a report updating the current state of fees, and indicated areas where increases are proposed.

As part of its annual review, Township staff examined all fees to determine which ones will be increased, based on operational costs. As well, they looked at any new fees.

According to a report by Chris Fasciano, director of Parks, Recreation and Culture, staff did identify several new fees that will require a significant increase well beyond a standard 1.5 to 2 per cent.

Increases to fees are related to increases in utility costs, minimum wage, operating expenditures ... and increases to anticipated capital expenditures required for facilities. While all of these factors are a consideration, utility costs, and more specifically hydro, are the primary driver for facility based increases.

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 proposed for a number of reasons, including administrative requirements, new services being offered and community demand.

An example of the proposed increases 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.

The main reason to discuss fees at this point, is to give user groups time to address the increases by adjusting their own fees, etc. The next step, Fasciano, noted, is to communicate these fees to all the affected parties.

Standardizing the user fees is extremely important, Fasciano noted, because it allows staff to directly correlate the cost of operations, administration and capital components into those fees and charges.

Through this exercise, staff is able to gain a better understanding of the costs associated with our services, in addition to increasing our revenue streams and thus contributing to our overall financial sustainability, Fasciano stated in his report. Increased fees are fundamental to offering services while mitigating the impact to the tax fee.

Mayor Steve Pellegrini said he had no issue with the new rates and admitted he doesn't want to nickel and dime our volunteers.

He asked Fasciano to come up with some hard figures, in preparation of the 2016 budget, which reflects the Township's in-kind donations to community groups and events. This would show the real value of the services these groups get from the Township and their user fees.