

Naming rights for new recreation centre on the table

By Mark PavilonsEditor

King Township is looking at how to name the new Township Wide Recreation Centre. Staff noted the building is on track and nearing completion and they're looking at putting a value on the naming rights. Over the last six months, staff have engaged with interested parties both formally and informally. There has also been a public bidding process. So far, four proponents have expressed interest in parts of the facility, with one section still vacant. Zancor Homes is in the running for naming the facility and building exterior. JTF Homes is interesting in naming one rink 1 and The Country Day School would like to have their name on rink 2. Trisan Construction is eyeing the Aquatics Centre, while the Athletics Centre remains vacant. The Township could see some pretty impressive revenue numbers for the rights. Staff hired a firm to provide a fair market valuation. The name of the building and exterior is pegged at \$1.5 million over 15 years. Rink 1 and its spectator area, is valued at \$350,000 over 10 years. Rink 2 and the Athletics Centre is put at \$300,000 over 10 years and the Aquatic Centre is \$250,000 over 10 years. Staff will also be looking at exploring the potential of naming rights for smaller elements in the Athletic Centre, such as board rooms, community rooms and dressing rooms. Staff noted since the funds will be spread out over 10 to 15 years, they will be put into a reserve fund. "As a part of the annual budget process, these funds can be pulled to support capital improvements to the TWRC, thereby removing the need for taxpayer supported funding," staff said. "Obtaining naming rights within the terms identified for the exterior and large interior spaces of the TWRC will help to meet both the short and long-term financial needs of the facility." King City resident James Bruce Craig shared his thoughts on naming. He pointed out there was a day when the name of a community building reflected the community where it was located and in a sense belonged to everyone in the community. Names were not based on monetary donations or corporate and commercial interests. "I believe it's important that our community amenities in King Township reflect values and interests that are about the community and belong to everyone," he said. A prime example for me is Toronto's very special stadium with a retractable roof built in the 1970s. The public was invited to submit names, and either a committee or some kind of voting process was used to select the name given. "And I remember with enthusiasm when this remarkable stadium was named 'The Skydome' - what a great name that belonged to Toronto and to the people of Toronto. This name was unique and quickly became known internationally as 'Toronto's Skydome.' Even when corporate interests stepped in and the name was officially changed to the Rogers Centre, I continued to call it 'The Skydome' and I still do." He said he hopes that in King we could have a public process that results in a name for the TWRC that relates uniquely to King Township and not to a donor whether it be corporate or private. "Yes, let's recognize with gratitude the generous donations received, but not through the name of the new township-wide recreation centre and its various features inside. Is it possible that corporations in King would be willing to generously contribute a donation for the new Recreation Centre without requiring that the exterior of the facility or large portions of the indoor elements take on a corporate name?" I strongly encourage Council to endorse an approach to naming the TWRC that belongs to the whole community and reflects King Township. Let's give the 'naming rights' to the people of King Township, and let's come up with a special name that relates to place, the local environment or history and truly belongs to King Township and to the community across the Township. Councillor Debbie Schaefer agreed with Craig's points, but she also understands the economic realities. She wondered if a community naming exercise could be undertaken after the 15-year time frame. Mayor Steve Pellegrini noted the Township will likely offer extensions to interested parties after that time frame and he said he didn't want to hinder future councils. The roughly \$2.7 million in revenue is quite substantial and it's a 'balancing act,' he said. He further stressed that no other council or municipality has built a roughly \$100-million facility without burdening the taxpayers.