

## Township, Villanova explore field partnership

**By Mark Pavilons**

King Township and Villanova College are joining forces to investigate a mutually beneficial deal.

King council received a report from Chris Fasciano, director of Parks, Recreation and Culture, that outlines the proposal, subject to further discussion and funding approvals in 2015.

Council okayed that King and Villanova enter into a "sports field agreement" to make improvements to their turf facilities, a deal that will benefit both the school and local user groups.

For several years, King has worked with local sports organizations to get a handle on the need for fields, as further growth takes place. Last year, King created its Parks, Recreation & Culture Master Plan, which recommends that field development takes place, through strategic partnerships.

And that's where Villanova came in. Staff and college management began discussions on putting an artificial turf field in place of the current football field at the 15 Sideroad campus.

The scope of the project includes a larger footprint, removing the current running track. The Township is responsible for the funding and construction and the school may look at an enclosed dome down the road.

This development would allow the expansion of programming time for King's groups. They can play longer (April to October) and later into the evening with added lighting. This turf would also allow for a higher caliber of play.

"This additional usage in conjunction with the higher quality of play available will be a huge benefit to our soccer clubs in King and represents a creative, strategic partnership to enhance the amenities to our user groups and residents," Fasciano wrote.

He admitted that the field development does require a large upfront financial commitment, an estimated \$1.6 million. But, the ongoing maintenance is less than that of a standard field.

"This allows the municipality to explore new ways to manage the higher requirements of parks services as they grow and thus allow staff to increase the quality of life for our residents while being financially aware."

Fasciano pointed out the current deal with Villanova doesn't commit King to the project just yet. Its funding, and potential sources of funding, will be brought to council as part of the 2015 budget discussions.

Money has already been put aside for the design and tender portion of the project.