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Council discuss Town?s parks bylaw for final term meeting

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Monday night saw the final council meeting for the currently sitting council members discuss the interim re-write of the Town's Parks bylaw.

The re-write was predicated on the incidents of needles having been found, in community parks and the subsequent injury to one young resident by a needle. In July council asked that the current by-law be rewritten to better define and limit unsanctioned activities in Town Parks after hours. A more complete and finalized bylaw will be presented to council in late spring 2019, said CAO Denyse Morrissey.

The financial impact to the Town, due to new signage outlining the new hours of operation, will amount to $1,875. The decided hours the arks will be closed for public use is between 11:00 p.m. and 5:00 a.m. seven days a week, except when being used for an event with an extended hours permit.

Police Chief Kent Moore, who consulted with staff in drafting the interim bylaw, presented his opinions and to answer any questions. He stated the bylaw had his full support and it would give officers a better tool to help police and control after hour's activities in the parks. Although a police presence will not be increased in the parks, Chief Moore stated they are already adequately patrolled, the new bylaw will allow for better enforcement and the laying of charges, such as trespassing, if required. The Chief also noted that the issue of needles seems to have abated, perhaps due to the publicity received by the incidents.

Councillor Sample noted that some of the parks are lit at night and asked the Chief if he felt this should be stopped. Chief Moore responded that he did not feel this would be necessary and CAO Morrissey later pointed out that lights in pavilions and other such features could be put on timers and extinguished at park closing hours.

Councillor Benotto mentioned that the rink in Greenwood Park is used after hours frequently, perhaps to finish up a game or for other reasons, and asked the Chief what his solution would be. He also wondered if there would be a grace period before charges would be laid. Chief Moore indicate that such incidences would fall under officer discretionary powers and generally would simply result in a warning and a request to leave the park, and CAO Morrissey told Council there would be a transitionary period to allow all residents to acclimate to the new rules.

Following the meeting, CAO Morrissey took a moment to express the gratitude and admiration of the involvement with council and staff. She said that they were all people of integrity and had been a pleasure to work with during their tenure. Mayor Bennington, who is now leaving public office after 20 years of service, when asked to summarize his career and term as Mayor, stated that he felt gratified to have served the Town and wished the new Council well in their endeavours.

The newly elected Council will be sworn in on December 3rd.