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Shelburne Town Council waives rental fees for parks and fields

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Local Journalism Initiative Reporter

Local sports teams and organizations are catching a financial break.

Shelburne Town council, during their meeting on June 28, approved a motion by Coun. Lindsay Wegener to waive the rental fees of parks and fields for locally based user groups, and to have the budget impacts directed to the Town's COVID-19 Safe Restart Funding.

?In regular times I would not necessarily recommend this, but we are in COVID times right now and I think a lot of people are struggling,? said Wegener. ?If we can help them, we should help them.?

The decision comes after three community organizations ? Shelburne Cricket Club, Towne Fitness and Shelburne Rotary ? submitted requests to waive the rental fees at specific parks and fields, for set dates as well as seasonally.

The Shelburne Cricket Club requested that all field use fees at KTH Park for this year be waived, while Towne Fitness asked for the fees to be waived for a fitness program at Hyland Park. Shelburne Rotary, who have annually received support in fee waiving from the Town, requested the waiving of fees for two events scheduled for June 19 and Aug. 8 at Fiddle Park.

?In 2020 council did provide an exemption due to COVID-19, to all field and sport organizations that were Shelburne based to help them manage the significant loss of revenue with the cancellation of their season,? said Denyse Morrissey, chief administrative officer.

Morrissey noted to council, that other communities have looked at and implemented a percentage reduction for user fees, as a way to compensate organizations and help them in the same capacity as last year. In some cases the percentage reductions has been as low as 15 per cent and as high as 50 percent.

With other user groups in Shelburne, including fitness facilities, soccer teams and baseball teams, Wegener added they could see other requests to waive rental fees.

?You may expect other organizations to make the same requests and then we would come back with a subsequent report,? confirmed Morrissey. ?If council directed us similar to the recommendations we made last year to waive as a component of a COVID-19 strategy, there may be more organizations that have cancelled their season that may consider resurrecting part of it, if that was not a financial barrier for them.?

Wegener recommended waiving the fees for all local users to avoid repetitive reports, a sentiment shared by Mayor Wade Mills

?It doesn't make a whole lot of sense to deal with these requests on a one-off basis and have staff reports coming back constantly,? said Mills. ?I think being proactive on this may help some of our organizations jump start what may otherwise be a questionable season.?

The Town of Shelburne doesn't have an hourly field fee and instead has a ?per game? fee which has traditionally been for field sports like baseball and soccer, whose play time is generally one to two hours.

At KTH Park, adult soccer rates, which would be the same for cricket, are $19.65 and would cost $39.90 for a four hour game and $58.95 for a six hour game.

The cricket season runs from July 2 to Oct. 17 (16 weeks) and with a minimum of one game per week the cost would be $628.80 (four hours) or $943.20 (six hours), plus taxes.

Towne Fitness is running an 18-week program for its members which will be an hour long class, five times per week. There are two cost estimates for Towne Fitness, either a charge of $57 per park use or $16.15, the rate for a youth baseball game.

The Shelburne Rotary would see a cost of $200 per day for the events at Fiddle Park, a total of $800.

Although the Town has waived the rental fees for Shelburne user groups, it does not waive insurance.