

COMMITTEE OF THE WHOLE – MAY 16, 2005

CANCELLATION OF YORK UNIVERSITY STADIUM PROJECT POTENTIAL TO UPGRADE THE VAUGHAN GROVE SPORTS PARK

Recommendation

Mayor Michael Di Biase recommends:

1. THAT the City of Vaughan investigate the opportunities for expanding and upgrading the soccer facility located at the Vaughan Grove Sports Park on Martin Grove Road as a result of the cancellation of the proposed York University stadium;
2. THAT representatives of the City meet with:
 - a) Pertinent Federal and Provincial officials to determine whether funds that otherwise may have been devoted to the York University project are available to support a smaller facility in the City of Vaughan;
 - b) Potential partners to determine if they are interested in supporting, either financially or as an end user, the expansion and upgrading of the existing facility;
3. THAT on completion of these inquiries a report be prepared for the consideration of Council, advising of the results and identifying the opportunities available to the City and recommending future actions.

Economic Impact

There are no immediate impacts resulting from the adoption of the recommendations set out above. The City would undertake the initial work. If additional resources are required, they will be identified in the subsequent report to Council, which is provided for in recommendation 3.

Background – Analysis and Options

On May 12, 2005 York University announced that it was cancelling plans for a 20,000 seat stadium on the south side of Steeles Avenue, east of Jane Street. This was after the Toronto Argonauts, one of the original proponents of the planned stadium, decided to maintain its operation at the Rogers Centre. The primary remaining stadium users were York University and the Canadian Soccer Federation.

The 20,000 seat stadium, which was downsized from 25,000 seats after the Argo's departure, was cancelled because it could not be built in time to be ready for the FIFA under-20 championship in 2007. The Canadian Soccer Federation is the hosting body for this tournament and this stadium was to be one of the two main venues. The games originally intended for this site will be shifted to other cities. York University may proceed with a smaller stadium, on the order of 5,000 – 7,000 seats at some point in the future.

The cancellation of the York University stadium will be a loss to the soccer community in this area. It had the potential to raise the profile of the game, provide an outstanding venue for the FIFA tournament and leave a lasting legacy for future users.

There is a small stadium facility and soccer fields located at the Vaughan Grove Sports Park on Martin Grove Road, north of Steeles Avenue. The site is used by local soccer teams. The Vaughan Grove Sports Park was identified as one of the sites for soccer in the Toronto Bid for the 2008 Olympic Games. The stadium proposed in the Olympic Bid had approximately 15,000 seats. With the cancellation of the York Stadium consideration should be given to upgrading this

facility. A smaller, soccer focused stadium could fill an important niche at a local and regional level.

This is not something the City of Vaughan should pursue in isolation. The Federal and Provincial Governments committed, in total, \$35,000,000 to the York project. The senior levels of government should be approached to see if there is still money available to support a smaller stadium, with a more local focus. There is also the need to identify potential partners for an improved stadium. This could include support from the private sector in the form of sponsorships and the identification of potential end users. Establishing committed sources of funding and a solid user base would also assist in convincing the senior levels of government to back the project.

It will be necessary to gauge the level of support. It is recommended that representatives of the City approach the Federal and Provincial Governments to determine if funding remains available and under what circumstances it might be obtained. Concurrently, potential partners should be identified and consulted to establish their level of interest.

The FIFA Tournament is scheduled for 2007. There is the opportunity, if there is sufficient interest and support, that an enlarged stadium could be built at Vaughan Grove in time to host some of the tournament games. Therefore, time is of the essence. However, the stadium should be seen as a long-term attribute to the community and potentially to the Greater Toronto Area; and its merit should not be assessed exclusively on the basis of providing a venue for a single tournament.

Relationship to Vaughan Vision 2007

This approach is consistent with the Vaughan Vision objective of identifying and implementing innovative public-private partnerships.

Conclusion

The purpose of this report is to obtain Council's endorsement to begin investigation of the opportunities to enhance and expand the soccer facility at Vaughan Grove, in light of the cancellation of the York University facility. Adoption of the recommendations will allow this process to begin.

Attachments

N/A

Respectfully submitted,

Mayor Michael Di Biase