

City of Toronto – Parks Development & Capital Projects

Cricket Strategy

Public Meeting Summary

October 26, 2020

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These minutes are not intended to provide verbatim accounts of discussions. Rather, they summarize and document the key points made during the discussions, as well as the outcomes and actions arising from the Cricket Strategy Public Meeting.

Introduction

This document provides a summary of the Cricket Strategy Public Meeting that was held on October 26, 2020 from 7:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m. Approximately 70 members of the public attended the meeting.

The meeting presentation, along with more information about the development of the City's Cricket Strategy can be found on the project webpage at www.toronto.ca/CricketStrategy

Meeting Goals

Meeting goals included:

- Introduce the Cricket Strategy including:
 - Project Timelines
 - Draft Standards and Requirements
 - Ideas for New Cricket Pitch Locations
- Hear from the Cricket Community and provide a tutorial on how participants can use the Online Mapping Tool to share feedback

Discussion

The following provides a summary of the meeting discussion that followed the presentation. Participants were prompted with the following discussion questions:

- Do you have any questions for the project team?
- Do you have comments or suggestions on:
 - Growing the sport
 - New pitches
 - Improve existing pitches
 - The Cricket Reference Group

Questions (Q), comments (C), and responses from staff (R) are represented below.

Field Types, Design Standards and Requirements

C: There are not enough youth fields. The kids only get six games a season if it doesn't rain.

C: High school players need to play on adult sized fields; otherwise it gets somewhat dangerous. Go Green's field is 110 meters and a bit small for our top players. Nevertheless it is in demand by adults who thankfully exercise some caution and good judgement when batting.

C: Outfield grass should be cut shorter to assist with child sport development. Outfields can and should be used as cricket pitches for kids 5-10 years old.

Q: Can artificial turf be removed to turn pitches back into grass pitches?

R: Staff have looked into the different type of pitch surfaces and have heard comments about the quality of play for each of the materials.

C: Are changing facilities/amenities also included in the plans?

R: Yes, identifying support amenities is part of the facility standards work.

C: Are there plans for accommodating softball cricket (e.g. with concrete pitches)?

R: Staff are documenting variations of cricket being played, for consideration.

C: Putting down turf wickets isn't feasible due to high traffic on pitches.

C: It is important to maintain shorter grass lengths for cricket play. Toronto fields have always had higher grass than in neighbouring municipalities– why is the standard different? Grass length is also a problem at TDSB facilities.

R: It is important for us through this work to establish what these standards should be for cricket. Currently our standards are universal across types of fields. We understand shorter grass is more desirable for cricket.

C: Several participants noted demand for lit fields for night cricket, as well as lit practice pitches and cages. Cricket is happening on lit up soccer and baseball fields now.

R: Across all sport field types lighting is recognized as something that can increase use. There are some places where lighting is more acceptable than others, so a balance must be reached.

C: Can we build a specialized field for children and youth during summer vacations?

R: We want to establish a design standard for what that kind of field would look like and then we can determine where we can accommodate it. A smaller field is easier for us to accommodate in the City.

C: Provide safety netting around the small fields for the safety of spectators and people involved in other spontaneous play outside the field.

Cricket Reference Group

C: Is the reference group for organizations only, or can it be for people who work in cricket?

R: It is not specific to organizations. If you have experience in the cricket community as an individual you can apply.

C: When will the members of the cricket ref group be announced? How big will the group be?

R: The group will be around 20 people and will be announced later in 2020. Opportunity to express interest ends November 9.

Cricket Field Locations

C: Suggestion to remove/replace pitches in Flemingdon because of damage.

R: Staff understand that the run-up space is being eroded due to use. If it is happening at one field we recognize that it may be happening at others. Improving design standards should help remedy this issue.

C: Suggestion to repurpose ball diamond for cricket.

R: We are looking at underused baseball diamonds for potential conversion to cricket fields.

C: How would you decide which area is best for a new field?

R: That's the process we're going through now. First we need to establish what kind of pitches we need to accommodate the different levels of play. We will look at equity across the city and at park characteristics (e.g. size, parking, etc.).

C: Can we use City of Toronto golf courses for youth cricket who do not require a large field size?

R: Council just directed staff to look at different uses of golf courses. This is important feedback for us to consider. Note that many golf courses are in fairly challenging terrain. We will ensure to communicate opportunities to participate in engagement for this.

C: Summerlea Park pitch is uneven and dangerous to play and should be replaced with a new pitch.

Partnerships & Growing the Sport

C: Azzuri Soccer is interested in partnering with the City to improve use of soccer fields that sit idle during the daytime (e.g. Keele reservoir).

R: Provide comments through the cricket website and online mapping tool to identify potential shared spaces. We are looking at any opportunities to partner whether it is through complementary fields or day/night use.

C: How are you going to be engaging with organizations already engaged in cricket after all the benchmarking etc. is done?

R: We will need a formalized process to identify partnership opportunities. The Cricket Reference Group offers the opportunity to reach out to a broad range of cricket organizations. We will ensure that future opportunities to be involved are shared with the cricket community at large.

C: Since newcomers from certain places would be interested in cricket, is there an outreach program informing them about where and when cricket is being supported by the City?

R: That is a great suggestion that we can take back to the reference group

C: What partnership programs to grow cricket are you identifying?

R: Parks, Forestry, and Recreation offers sport programming. Potentially teaching people how to play or working with leagues to provide those opportunities.

C: Is something being done to train City staff to run programs?

R: We have a group of staff that are responsible for sport in general, including sport development. We're already talking with them including about the potential for engaging trained coaches.

C: Cricket is a community-based sport, people will put their time and effort into supporting the sport. How can communities get more involved to help with maintenance? Right now there aren't pavilions or sheds for clubs to use at fields.

R: The reference group will be looking at this sort of information with parks staff in terms of the role of volunteers and the maintenance of sports fields. Risk management issues exist, but these ideas are something we have heard for other sports as well. The first step for us is identifying maintenance standards for all cricket facilities, and if PFR has the capacity to maintain them. We will document this and address it in our strategy

C: The community should be allowed to maintain the field if PFR does not have the capacity to do it. This also generates community pride.

Permitting

C: The cost of booking a pitch is very expensive (\$55+/hr). It should be free or low cost. Booking pitches online is not user friendly. We aren't able to do it via [the facilities booking site](#).

C: Go Green is a youth cricket organization that pays \$60 per hour for cricket space, sometime splaying softball cricket. Permit costs are in line with A fields. We offer our free field Monday to Friday during the summer from 9-5 p.m. to all youth enrolled in our free programs. Permit costs on weekends and weeknights helps to fully subsidize the rest of our youth-led programs.

Is there any plan to reduce price at all, maybe for families booking etc.?

R: It is important to get feedback on fees. We want fees to reflect the classification of field.

C: When and how can groups register for permitting for 2021?

R: Will post to the website when we get the information.

C: Families wishing to play cricket must go through organizations that already hold permits. Suggestion to allot time for people who are not part of an association or team to play cricket so they don't have to go through the association but can book through the City. Even if it is just 2% of the entire season.

R: Staff acknowledge that permitting allocation is something we've heard through this work. We will take it back to permitting staff. Staff are trying to capture locations where people are playing unstructured cricket so we can formalize those spaces.

Indoor & Winterized Cricket Facilities

C: Any plans for building indoor cricket turf?

R: A gym in North East Scarborough is being built to accommodate indoor cricket. Discussions with the Cricket Resource Group will include ideas to grow the sport, which may include suggestions around more indoor practice or play spaces.

C: Do we have ability to get permits for cricket in school or community gyms for the winter months for practicing or recreational use at lower cost?

R: Schools are permitted separately, not through the City of Toronto. School spaces can be booked through the [Toronto District School Board here](#). School spaces can be booked through the [Toronto Catholic District school board here](#). Community Recreation Centres can be permitted through the individual locations, with [more information available here](#). We will capture that those spaces are in demand.

C: Is there an opportunity to have indoor cricket in Flemingdon Park?

R: This will be collected as a suggestion. We want the Cricket Strategy to capture what sort of indoor facilities we need to provide going forward, including how we can utilize the gyms we have at our community recreation centres.

C: Are there any plans to winterize these fields through coverings?

R: We are looking at this. The FMP had a specific recommendation to winterize stadium sites but we're looking at opportunities in other sports too.

Project Schedule & Funding

C: Why will establishing four cricket fields take up to 20 years? Wouldn't the demographics change by that time? Also, is this initiative part of a wider mission about including ethnic facilities or is it just about cricket fields in specific?

R: The Facilities Master Plan will be reviewed every 5 years. We recognize that the City is changing rapidly and the need for different facilities can also change.

C: As this is a long project, will it be impacted by the next civic election and changing funding priorities?

R: This work is embedded in the Facilities Master Plan, which is a Council-approved plan. The recommendations have been deemed by Council as things to achieve over that time. Demand for cricket facilities is also well documented.

C: Stakeholders want to ensure commitment.

R: There has been money committed by council for this work.

Other

C: Please provide copy of the presentation.

R: This will be posted to the project webpage.

C: Cricket is a very communal sport.

C: Some practice facilities are over-crowded (e.g. Centennial).

Next Steps

- Participants can share feedback through the online mapping tool by November 2, available on the project webpage: www.toronto.ca/CricketStrategy
- Cricket organisation representatives can express interest in joining the Cricket Reference Group by November 9
- Interested participants can sign up for e-updates on the project webpage

Contact Us

For questions or comments related to this project, please contact:

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Appendix A: Multiple Choice Meeting Questions

Are you attending this meeting as a representative of a Cricket Organisation, or as an individual player?

- I represent an organization, 23/75, 31%
- I am attending as an individual, 37/75, 49%
- No Answer, 15/75, 20%

What part of the City do you live in?

- Scarborough, 14/75, 19%
- North York, 11/75, 15%
- Etobicoke, 9/75, 12%
- Downtown and East York, 15/75, 20%
- I do not live in Toronto, 12/75, 16%
- No Answer, 14/75, 19%

How old are you?

- Under 18, 0/75, 0%
- 18-64, 57/75, 76%
- 65+, 1/75, 1%
- No Answer, 17/75, 23%

How many years have you played cricket?

- I am new to the sport, 3/75, 4%
- Less than 5 years, 2/75, 3%
- 5 to 10 years, 4/75, 5%
- More than 10 years, 45/75, 60%
- No Answer, 21/75, 28%