

City of Toronto – Parks, Forestry & Recreation

Cricket Reference Group (CRG)

Meeting 6 Summary

April 12, 2022

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Susan Fall, Supervisor, System Planning



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Attendees

Community Reference Group Members

Brampton-Etobicoke and District Cricket League – Prait Persaud
Canadian Police Cricket Club League - Melvin John
Community Sport Collective – Heather Mitchell
Cricket Canada Masters Council – Akshay Pandya
Cricket Ontario – Shah Saleem Zafar
Global T20 Canada - Wendy Kane
Ontario Softball Cricket League – Ian Baldeo
Scarborough Cricket Association – Shiv Persaud
Toronto & District Cricket Association – Mohammed Shaikh

Members not in attendance:

Bangla Warriors Cricket Club – Abu Rubaid Alam
CIMA – Ranil Mendis
Cricket Canada – Keith Deonaraine
Greater Toronto Cricket Club – Qhinathullah Mohammed
Ontario Twilight Softball Cricket League – Azeem Khan
Open Member (Scarborough League Player) - Kannan Rajagopal
Superstar Colts Coach – Abdool Mudassar Samad
Toronto Police Cricket Club – PC Amir Butt

City of Toronto

Alex Lavasidis – Senior Public Consultation Coordinator
Kathleen Stevens – Landscape Technologist
Kevin Carr – Manager, Client & Business Services
Matt Bentley – Project Manager, Facilities Master Plan
Pamela Ferrante – Supervisor, Client Services
Peter White – Manager, Parks Toronto East York
Susan Fall – Supervisor, System Planning

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 CRG meeting.

Introduction

This document provides a summary of the virtual meeting of the Cricket Reference Group (CRG) held on Tuesday April 12, 2022 from 7:00 p.m. to 8:30 p.m.

These meeting notes and the presentation, along with more information about the CRG and 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:

- Provide updates and discuss Cricket Pitch Design Standards
- Review and discuss the Permit Allocation Policy
- Provide updates and discuss Field Maintenance Standards

Discussion

The CRG discussion is summarised below, by meeting topic. Please reference the CRG Meeting 6 presentation posted to the [project webpage](#) for additional context and presentation slides.

Updates and Announcements

Program, park, and pitch updates were provided by staff and CRG members.

- The organizers of Major League Cricket, USA's officially sanctioned T20 franchise league anticipated to launch in 2023, announced in March the next phase of their venue development plan: investing approximately \$110 million dollars building or renovating a total of eight venues around the USA.
- Recognizing CRG member Ranil Mendis and his CIMA colleague Martin Buckle and all their work in establishing the Ontario Schools Cricket Association in 2020 during the pandemic and promoting student physical activity through cricket. See Joe Callaghan's February 25, 2022 Toronto Star article *Cricket is for everyone. And Ontario schoolkids could use a little joy, especially the girls.*
- Noor Javed's March 15, 2022 Toronto Star article *Toronto is losing its pitch battle: As cricket's popularity soars, players are heading to the suburbs* highlights issues the CRG members have been discussing, including that more fields are needed, and faster.
 - Staff noted that:
 - The CRG was established in part, to identify specific locations for improvements, and to provide a direct line of communication between the cricket community and City Staff as improvements are made.
 - The article's comments originated from the Toronto District Cricket Association, who have only attended the very first CRG meeting, though they are CRG members.

- Staff will continue to connect with that organization and encourage them to share their concerns and ideas with staff.
 - A CRG member has reached out to TDCA to suggest they attend the CRG meetings.
- Staff reminded CRG members that they can contact them with their concerns at any time.
- Cricket Canada Masters Council shared:
 - Over 50s competed in the North America Tri Nations Tournament (West Indies, USA and Canada) in 2019, 2020 and 2021, hosting in Mississauga in 2021. Canadian team in the finals with West Indies (who won).
 - CCMA sent Over 50s and Over 60s squads participated in the four nations Masters USA Cricket Open tournament in March in Huston Texas and Canada won its first Over 60 tournament!
 - Big congratulations to the players, coaches and organizers!
 - CCMC to share more details with the CRG.
- Shiv Persaud has been elected President of the Ontario Softball Cricket League.
 - Ian Baldeo will be representing OSCL on the CRG.
- Cricket Ontario recently held their Annual General Meeting:
 - Recognized Shaw Zafar for his commitment to promoting cricket in Ontario over the past decade.
 - Praim Persaud elected President of Cricket Ontario.
 - Shiv Persaud re-elected Secretary of Cricket Ontario.

Design Standards – Update and Discussion

Kathleen Stevens, Landscape Technologist, presented draft design standards for review and discussion.

Practice Pitch

- Extend the length of the overhead netting to 21 m is a good standard.
- Either overhead netting or overhead chain link can be used. Considerations include:
 - Netting will require more repairs and replacement to maintain its safety function. This will require an adequate maintenance budget.
 - Netting deters climbing.
 - Chain link could be plastic instead of metal link.
- The addition of a safety gate is a good standard.
- Install artificial turf on top of hard surfacing.

Screen

- New standard is based on Brampton's with three (3 m x 3 m) chain link panels on either side of three wooden panel fence section (4.2 m high, 2.5 m wide).
 - Instead of wood, use mesh/chain as this requires less maintenance (this is a new Brampton standard).
 - PFR staff to follow up with Brampton to get new design details.

- The number of panels required per screen depends on the number of wickets.
- Where the field is not shared with other sports, install the screen at least 10 or 12 feet outside of the boundary of play. Limitations include field size and any nearby features.
- Screens may not be installed if the field is shared with other uses.
- In Brampton:
 - A mesh/chain screen is installed at Batsman Park and 5 more will be installed this summer.
 - On some multi-fields, movable screens are used. They are set up the day before games.

Permit Allocation and Booking – Overview and Discussion

Kevin Carr, Manager of Client Services and Pamela Ferrante, Supervisor Client Support provided a presentation on the City's Permit Allocation Policy and process. This presentation was arranged based on CRG member interest. CRG members had an opportunity to ask questions following the presentation. Questions (Q), comments(C), and responses from staff (R), are summarized below.

Q – If under the policy, existing teams are informed about how to re-apply for the next season, how does the policy consider new groups who are looking to establish a new program where permits are already established? What is the break-in policy to help new groups/sports get permits?

R – Historical use is a policy that allows established or seasonal permit organizations to be considered first for the same permit location/time. This supports the established program and players, allowing for continuity. The City is eager to support new organizations establishing a new community of players. New groups can find out about permit information in two ways:

1. The [Facility Booking webpage](#)
2. Contact permit staff directly with question on process and how to get started.
 - There is one central phone number (416-396-7378, option 2) and one central email address (PFRCustomerService@toronto.ca).

The Permit Allocation Policy is helpful when there are time conflicts. When a facility is unavailable at the desired time, staff will work with an organization or group to find a suitable space close to the area of the city they are interested in playing.

Q – Is there a mechanism to monitor permits to ensure a space does not go unused? What if a field is observed to be unused when a permit has been issued?

R – Anyone can call or email the Client Services team to ask about the status of a field/permit. Staff can investigate and can initiate a conversation with the permit holder to confirm the need. There have been cases where a new group is interested in a certain time/location and through conversation with the existing permit group have been able to work out access. Staff and permit holders and new groups all share the same interest in increasing participation in sport.

Q – There is a communication gap between the permit allocation staff and the maintenance staff because permits are being issued for fields without ensuring the fields are ready and playable (especially in the spring). If the field is unusable and games and events have to be cancelled and there is no discussion or consideration

about refund. If the permit holder does not pay because the field is unusable, they are prevented from securing new season permits. What is the communication between permit staff and maintenance staff? How do permit staff know the field is playable? How can this communication be improved for permit holders? Why aren't the fields ready for play when the permits are open?

R – The Permit Officer needs to be informed about maintenance issues and will act as a point of contact with Parks staff. Staff received this concern and will discuss improvements.

C – Improve the permit system so applicants don't have to keep entering the same information

R – Staff received this concern and will discuss improvements.

C – In practice, despite the Allocation Policy, historical permits have not been recognized and new groups have bumped long standing permits.

A – Staff received this concern.

C – Demand for cricket fields and permits does not reflect the current state of cricket in the city because there are many forms of cricket that do not need to play on the existing cricket fields. Hardball cricket needs to play on the artificial turf pitch, but softball, tennis ball, and tape ball do not. However, all those forms of the game are competing for the same cricket fields. While hardball cannot adapt to other fields, the other forms can. In Brampton, they have mown a pitch in the multi-purpose field to allow for those types of cricket play. If Toronto could mow a pitch into the grass on multipurpose fields and provided the proper maintenance of the field to allow these other forms of cricket, it would decrease the pressure on the hardball cricket fields.

C- With regards to historical permits having priority, the Ontario Softball Cricket League and Scarborough Cricket Association for many years have been using the Ellesmere Reservoir from 9 am to 8 pm and for some reason this year neither league were given permits and the historical permit time was given to a brand new organization/permit holder.

C - Established not-for-profit leagues have noticed that permits have been issued to new teams and those permits are not being used for recreational play but as fundraising tournaments for that club. This is important for staff to consider as not for profit groups aligned with Provincial organizations that promote not for profit play are not getting the permits because there are multiple requests from cricket groups.

C - Maintenance is very important. The Ontario Softball Cricket League plays on shared fields such as Terry Fox and Ellesmere Reservoir where the soccer field poles are in the play boundary. The grass is too high in May to play though the permit has been issued and paid for. Leagues are advised by staff that the grass is too wet to cut but that isn't accurate as golf courses open the first week of May and the grass and greens are cut and ready for play. The City cannot issue permits for May and do not have the fields ready to play. The City cannot wait until June to cut the outfields.

R – Staff received the above comments and concerns and will be discuss improvements.

Q – Who and what is a community?

R – The Permit Allocation Policy defines Community Group Organizations or teams as those that *provide City of Toronto residents recreational activities and are not-for-profit organizations. When demand exceeds supply, priority will be given to applications from under-represented groups. If demand still exceeds supply, females will be the priority.*

Q - What is the percentage of a league to qualify for residency?

R – 90%. Groups with higher residency are given priority. Residency is defined in the Permit Allocation Policy and as stated on slide 21, *Residents are people who live in, own property in, or own or operate a business in the City of Toronto.*

C – The City has been looking at the quality of fields through its Stage of Good Repair (SORG) for many years. Some fields are not playable but we need a system for the leagues to flag maintenance issues at the end of each year. This would ensure staff are fully aware of the issues, and plans for the improvement to be made before the next season. There could also be a mechanism to release the league permits to neighborhood or community play if the fields are not good enough for league play.

R – Staff received these suggestions.

Q – If a permit holder lets another group use the field (re-allocates some permit time), how does the insurance cover the fields/groups and how do they pay? We do not need an answer at this meeting given the time and additional questions will be submitted by email.

R – Any additional questions are welcome and staff will provide responses.

Q –Why are large groups with a large number with Toronto residents given a lower priority than small groups with a larger percentage, but overall smaller number, of Toronto residents? Why is that equitable to prioritize the smaller group of residents? For Example, a 5000 member league with 2500 Toronto residents (50% residency) is not prioritized over a smaller group with 100 Toronto residents (100% residency).

R –If a group does not meet the residency threshold (90%), but does meet the not-for-profit requirement, it will be considered third in priority sequence. The priority sequence is:

1. Resident Community Youth and Children (ages 0-18)
2. Resident Community Seniors (age 60+) and Adults (ages 19-59)
3. Not for Profit Community Groups
4. Private and Commercial Groups and Individuals

If the residency requirement is met, the allocation priority goes to children and youth. Total membership is also considered for allocating permit hours to recognize demand for play, so for example a group with 12 members would not get allocated 40 hours a week.

Any or all additional questions or comments are welcome and we can either continue to discuss at a future meeting or share the additional questions and answers in the meeting notes and follow up at our next meeting if necessary.

Field Maintenance Standards – Updates and Discussion

Peter White, Toronto East York Parks Manager and Sports Field Lead for the City provided an overview of the Field Classification (Premiere, A, B and C) and discussed field maintenance standards. The Sports Field Maintenance program began in 2012 and established the field classifications we have today. The classifications are based on amenities and characteristics of the individual fields and in turn reflect the maintenance standards and fee structure. The Sports Organization Reference Group was established to help create these classifications and a range of fields with an enhanced level of maintenance and that was successful. However through this CRG process, staff now recognize the deficiencies for cricket fields and need to respond in a new way on those fields.

Day to day field maintenance (mowing, litter pick up, any repairs that need to be made) are provided by the area staff under the Park Supervisor. Any concerns and questions raised by CRG have been communicated to Park staff. Parks recognize more progress needs to be made and are working on making these improvements:

- New artificial turf on some of the pitches
- New large field roller (same one that is used in Brampton) purchased to be used in the south district. If effective, will be recommended for field program improvements in other districts.

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

C – Irrigation timing changes would improve state of play.

- Fields are often too wet for morning games. The moisture and long long grass are a slipping hazard and make for a slow game.
- Some areas are over-watered. L'Amoreaux for example has some areas that stay wet.
- Changing the timing and duration of the irrigation could provide better quality of play for morning games.

R – Suggestions can be made to the area Supervisor, who can adjust irrigation for more ideal conditions.

Q – Is there a program to fill holes or divots in the field? Rollers won't address those issues.

R – Yes, staff should be monitoring and aware of holes. The Park Supervisor has forepersons and lead hands to address those issues.

Q - How do we get the surface of a pitch changed? We have been asking for three years at one park and there has been no action. Thank you for replacing the Eglinton Flats surface, but we also need to have it replaced at the G Ross Lord pitches. The mat there now was provided by Toronto District Cricket Association (TDCA) but are looking to the City to improve the surface at this "Premiere" location.

R – We can investigate through this group and look to ensuring the funding is in place. The change does rest with the District and Area Supervisor and we are moving to replacing artificial turf in a greater way.

R – TDCA to send Matt an email to flag this issue. PFR is making a prioritized list for the field improvement funding and will include G Ross Lord as a high priority. Lighting has been flagged as a request at G Ross Lord by players as well.

C – PFR could consider reaching out to Tony Hemming, an internationally recognized curator for free advice on the practice pitch and screen design.

R – Staff acknowledged the offer.

Q – Why is Toronto moving to artificial turf? The matting provides a more realistic play and bounce to natural turf and would be beneficial to moving the game to the highest level in Toronto.

R – We have talked about this in previous meetings and the CRG highlighted the quality of play of natural turf and matting but recognized the artificial turf as easier to maintain.

C – The majority of the cricket fields are classified as C but don't get cut once a week. Playing cricket on 3 inch grass length is not conducive to playing and impacts the teams and leagues in the City.

C - Appreciate that permit holders should talk to the Park Supervisors, but would appreciate if Peter could share the CRG conversation with the Park staff to ensure they are:

- Mowing the fields at least once a week
- Proactively fixing the field divots to ensure safe play
- Proactively fixing the pitches. Players shouldn't have to complain about the quality and not have it fixed for years, as staff are maintaining the fields weekly. For example Summerlea Park needs new artificial turf but despite raising this to the supervisor, it hasn't been replaced in time for permitted play.
- We are left with the impression that no one cares about cricket play in Toronto.

C - Looking forward to having a different classification for cricket than other field sports, including rolling the pitch and the field and cutting the grass to ½ inch to have better quality of play and to build quality of players that will represent Ontario nationally and Canada internationally.

C - Would love if Toronto could elevate Cricket as a mainstream sport like hockey and baseball and soccer and considered at the same level for infrastructure, planning, funding, etc.

C - 5 new fields in 20 years will not address the demand. Need to consider converting unused ball diamonds to the softball/tapeball forms of the game.

Next Steps

- Any and all additional questions and ideas can be emailed to Susan, who will connect to the appropriate staff member as required.
- Additional questions received through email will be added to the meeting notes.
- Next meeting will be after the playing season is over in late September or October. The meeting will include an update on the Cricket Strategy, and onboarding new members to the CRG including youth, women and accessible sports leaders.

Contact Us

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

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