

City of Toronto – Parks, Forestry & Recreation

Cricket Reference Group (CRG)

Meeting 9 Summary

January 16, 2024

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Susan Fall, Supervisor, System Planning



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Attendees

Community Reference Group Members

Azeem Khan - Ontario Twilight Softball Cricket League
Heather Mitchell - Community Sport Collective
Melvin John – Canadian Police Cricket Club & GTA U19 Women’s Cricket Association
Shiv Persaud - Scarborough Cricket Association
Lorene Bodiam – Community Advocate
Mahendra Ram – TDSB High School Cricket Convenor & Coach

Members not in attendance:

Akshay Pandya - Cricket Canada Masters Council
Amir Butt - Toronto Police Cricket Club
Dharmwandra Kumar Jaipersaud - Ontario Softball Cricket League
Ian Baldeo – Ontario Softball Cricket League
Ingleton Liburd - Cricket Canada
Kannan Rajagopal – Cricket Player
Karan Kohli – Global T20 (replacing Wendy Kane)
Md Akib Akhter - Bangla Warriors Cricket Club
Mohammed Shaikh – Toronto District Cricket Association
Pram Persaud - Brampton-Etobicoke and District Cricket League
Ranil Mendis - CIMA

City of Toronto Staff

James Honeyman – Supervisor, Community Recreation
Kevin Carr – Manager, Client & Business Services
Matt Bentley – Project Manager, Parks and Recreation Facilities Master Plan
Peter White – Manager, Parks Toronto East York
Sandra McCallum – Manager, Community Recreation Toronto East York
Susan Fall – Supervisor, System Planning
Titti Dunn– Supervisor, Client Services

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 January 16, 2024 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

CRG members to discuss draft Goals and Actions to confirm content reflects CRG work to date and flag any missing actions.

Discussion

The CRG presentation and discussion is summarised below, by meeting topic. Please reference the CRG Meeting 9 presentation posted to the [project webpage](#) for additional context. Questions (Q), comments from CRG members (C), and responses from staff (R), are summarized below.

Updates and Announcements: Presentation Overview

- Alex Lavasidis has been supporting the CRG as a facilitator. Alex has accepted a job as a Project Officer working on the Facilities Master Plan with Matt's team and will continue to support the cricket work.
- Two additional attendees at the meeting:
 - Lorene Bodiam is a retired City of Toronto Parks Forestry & Recreation employee who the former Toronto, Parks, Forestry and Recreation Advocate for People with Disabilities and community advocate for social inclusion and community development
 - Mahendra Ram is a Toronto District School Board High School teacher and for the past 20 years has been a Cricket Convener and coach. Mahendra will be representing the TDSB cricket conveners (both middle and high school). The TDSB has developed girls cricket programs over the past 15 years and currently have 8 teams but are looking to grow participation back to pre-covid levels as well as access to grounds.
- Ontario Twilight Softball Cricket League is hosting an international softball cricket tournament, The Canada Cup, August 30-September 1, 2024 with teams from Guyana, Florida, New York and the GTA. Azeem will be working with Client Services and existing permit holders to secure grounds to accommodate the games while respecting the existing permit scheduling. They are sending out invitations to teams this month and will provide more information to the CRG later in the year.

Draft Strategy Goals and Actions: Presentation Overview

- The work of this group has been critical to establishing the draft Cricket Strategy, presented at this meeting.
 - Through both public feedback mechanisms (the Cricket Town Hall) and initial cricket reference group meetings, it was identified that the cricket community need more cricket fields to meet demand.
- Three major themes from the feedback collected through CRG meetings can be summarized as a need for: more fields; better fields; and more opportunities to play.
- The Cricket Strategy goals and actions will underpin the work of the Facilities Master Plan 5 Year Review. This is important as the 5 Year Review will be a report to Council and become the road map moving forward for recreation facilities across the city.
- The draft Goals and Actions were circulated to CRG members in advance of the meeting to inform and focus discussion on affirmation of the actions proposed in the cricket strategy, along with identification of any key ideas or issues that may have been omitted.
- Several members were unable to attend this CRG meeting. Staff will follow up with the full group for any additional feedback.
- The draft Goals and Actions are updated as required (based in part on CRG member feedback), the updated draft will be posted to the Cricket Strategy website. The broader Cricket community will then be invited to review and provide comments and suggestions. This will help ensure we hear feedback from a broad range of cricket community members. Staff will share a link to this opportunity for broader community feedback once it is available and ask that CRG members share this widely across their Toronto cricket networks.
- The final revised Cricket Strategy will document the details of these Goals and Actions which will be included in the Facilities Master Plan 5- year review and update and become a resource to staff future work plans.

More Fields: Feedback From CRG Members

1. Reevaluate the need for cricket fields in the Facilities Master Plan 5 Year Review

C. General agreement with the plan but would like the delivery of more pitches than identified, and faster.

C. Delivery of new cricket fields need to be prioritized and expedited. The Facilities Master Plan identified the need for new cricket facilities in 2017 but none have been added yet and demand has grown in the past 8 years.

C. General support for diamond conversion for smaller community recreation play opportunities.

- Diamond conversions should consider permitting, based on local feedback.
- Diamond conversion criteria are listed on the following slide (More Fields #4: Convert Underused Ball Diamonds to Cricket)

C. Hard ball cricket and local level play facilities are not the only facilities that are in demand and need expansion. The plan should recognize the need for additional softball and tapeball facilities. Tapeball is a fast-growing form and will see increasing demand for field space.

C. Playing on school board property is not a good option as the quality of their grounds does not typically support quality field play.

C. Need for the grounds also need to recognize that Toronto teams want to host tournaments. As the local demand exceeds facility supply, it is difficult to book facilities to support tournaments. The plan should address this.

R. Planning new full-size fields is sometimes a long process because it often involves larger planning discussions and extensive community engagement regarding other uses or the configuration of a redevelopment plan. For example:

- Redevelopment of the Bombardier lands in Downsview has provided the opportunity to rationalize, request and secure a park large enough to accommodate a full-size cricket field, including support facilities. But the timeline for the delivery of that land for parkland is to be determined at this point as the extensive property is rebuilt.
- The Master Plan for Centennial Park includes a new cricket field which is planned for construction in 2025 but given demand for cricket, a second field has also been approved in the plan, which will follow and be aligned with other park development.

Q. What is a provision target?

A. Provision targets are a tool that cities use to describe and set a target for how many fields there are or should be based on the size of the population. Targets are also measure that allows a comparison of facility provision between cities. Provision targets were set for indoor and outdoor recreation facilities in the Facilities Master Plan. What we've heard is that the provision level for cricket facilities needs to be higher as demand is increasingly exceeding the supply. A review of provision levels is something that will be included in the Facility Master Plan 5 Year Review report to Council late 2024.

2. *Adopt a Cricket Typology*

Q. How are the fields being distributed?

A. The Facilities Master Plan focused on the classification of fields by required maintenance standards (Premier, A, B, and C classification), not the size/functionality of the fields. The typology discussed by the CRG and included in the draft Cricket Strategy is focused on the size of the field. The introduction of this new typology allows for groups booking cricket facilities to better understand which fields are most appropriate for their games. Moving forward, this will also allow greater flexibility and opportunity to provide a range of field across the city.

- One of the greatest areas of opportunity is converting underutilized baseball diamonds for cricket. Use of these smaller fields can take some pressure off the existing larger fields.

Q. How is an under-used field determined? Permit or simple observation?

A. Not through simple observation, permitting data would be used. The Key criteria identified for potential Ball Diamond Conversions in the draft Cricket Strategy are:

- Candidates for conversion to other uses include diamonds that meet most of these criteria:
 - there are other available ball diamonds within 2km radius
 - ball diamond is underutilized
 - ball diamond and supporting amenities are in poor or critical condition and requires considerable investment
 - demonstrated demand for other park amenities within the subject lands
 - public support for conversion

3. Pursue Full Size Cricket Fields

C. New full size cricket fields should remain a priority in addition to new smaller fields.

C. Point of clarification that cricket fields need not be an oval or perfect circle but that the sizes being adopted in the typology are a “minimum” size, but don’t need to be exactly the listed dimensions.

C. The full size field is being measured as the Cricket Canada preferred standard of 140 x 120 m (minimum).

4. Convert Underused Ball Diamonds to Cricket

C. The focus of these smaller ball diamond conversion is on fun and skill development, not competition.

C. Many of the underutilized ball diamonds, like Farquharson Park, are where cricketers have found and are playing already. Converting the diamond to a pitch supports the game.

R. The Parma Park conversion was selected in part because it is adjacent to the community centre so can offer community recreation learn to play programs/camps for kids.

C. Key criteria for identifying candidate conversion sites are provide in the Facilities Master plan as listed on the slide.

Q. Why isn’t the pitch in the centre like typical cricket field?

A. These are small fields (60 m from home plate to the outfield) would offer a much smaller field of play if the 20 m pitch were centred. These small fields offer neighborhood and community level cricket play and enhance that experience as opposed to playing on a ball diamond.

5. Pursue Lit Fields

C. Support for lit fields.

6. Pilot Grass Pitches

Q. Graphic on this slide was confusing, can you explain it?

A. The graphic represents the range of locations participants in the 2020 Cricket Town Hall and online survey identified where they are currently playing cricket on non-cricket fields (e.g. school yards, other sports fields) as well as suggested locations for new fields. This not a map of where the City is proposing new fields.

Note: This graphic will be removed from the deck posted to the website to avoid confusion.

C. This is a fast solution to support tennis ball, tape and softball play. It will help tremendously on the demands for these games and get play off the artificial turf fields. Softball, tape ball and tennis ball do not need to be on the artificial turf, however those groups are booking those fields because there are no other flat field options to book.

C. The pitch needs to be level with some dirt and rolled and maybe overseeding this will help alleviate the burden on the artificial turf pitch fields.

Better Fields: Feedback From CRG Members

1. Improve Existing fields

Comment from Staff: The Facilities Master Plan recommended the upgrade of 10% of all cricket pitches by 2038. CRG members have flagged that this is not enough improvement, and that the Facilities Master Plan 5 Year Review should address that.

- There have been improvements in the past years including replacing pitches at Cedarvale, Flemingdon and Summerlea Parks.
- The Strategy is recommending that the cricket pitches/fields be included in the capital budget asset management program to audit the condition state of good repair and have routine plans for proactive replacement and improvement.

Comment from Staff: The CRG identified 6 critical improvements to all locations: artificial turf pitches, shorter grass height, longer pitch length (roll up), rolled pitch and field, shade, and washroom access (even if temporary).

C. Add improved lighting.

R. This is draft Cricket Strategy's *More Fields #5 Pursue Lit Fields*.

C. Girls identified that permanent washroom facilities are preferred to portable toilets. Some will not play if there isn't a permanent washroom facility.

2. Introduce Cricket Field Classification

This is one of the key actions that encompass some of the unique maintenance needs to this sport including mowing, grass height, rolling, etc.

C. Fergie Brown pitch used to have a tarp covering the pitch but this has since been removed. The pitch is waterlogged. Why was the tarp removed?

C. Staff turnover may be one reason along with unclear expectations for the field maintenance. This is one goal of this strategy, to better educate staff about field maintenance. Establishing the cricket field classification will be key to that.

3. Encourage Cricket League/CRG members to join the Sports Organization Reference Group (SOGR)

C. Great opportunity for key stakeholders who know, use, and permit the cricket fields to work with Parks staff and other sports field users to discuss how to improve conditions of the playing fields.

Comment from Staff: Parks will reach out to the CRG when the SOGR next meets.

4. *Cut the Grass Shorter (or more often)*

C. Cutting grass on Fridays works for weekend play, but ideally the fields would be cut lower for better use throughout the week. Shorter grass is also important for the younger players as they learn to play the right way. Preferred height is ½ inch, mowed 2 or 3 times a week. This should apply as a standard for all cricket fields.

C. Softball cricket needs short grass to be played. Sometimes fields aren't cut because of rain on the scheduled mowing day, making the grass too long for play. Mowing schedules should recognize that despite rain-mowing and schedule delays, grass should be mowed on Fridays for weekend play.

C. Maintenance standards should reflect the use of the field. For instance if cricket is played on multipurpose fields, cricket maintenance standards should apply.

C. Softball can be played on multi-purpose fields and on park fields that border onto school board lands. School boards have different mowing schedules and it would be best if the grass would be cut to the same height on both the city and school board sides of the fields (for example, Littles Park).

Q. How frequently is equipment replaced?

A. Not often enough, but when it is, we want to have input on what Parks staff are provided to ensure it meets the requirements to support cricket. The Sports Field Committee meets to discuss city-wide standards and this is something on their radar, to allow all districts to have the same access to the same equipment.

5. *Design Standards*

C. Design standards are being prepared for pitch length, and practice pitches as discussed at previous meetings and will be included in the full Strategy.

6. *Faster Repairs (to Synthetic Turf Pitches)*

C. CRG noted to add in a reference to synthetic turf pitches.

Comment from Staff. Would look to have a contract for professional synthetic surface repairs not only for cricket but also other sports fields with artificial turf. Staff will continue to make improvements to the grass field.

Comment from Staff. A contract with a professional supplier will avoid the time to process each site specific purchase order.

Q. Aren't staff trained to make these repairs rather than an external source? How will they be able to service the entire city? Wouldn't staff be more efficient?

A. Staff are qualified to handle natural turf repairs but artificial turf, the synthetic surface of the pitch, is a specialized activity that is beyond staff capability. A contractor would have someone on demand who would respond to repair needs quickly. The issue exists not just for cricket, but also artificial turf stadiums. The purchase order process is lengthy, and a contract with an artificial turf supplier would allow staff from across the city to access the professional service quickly.

7. *Improve Staff Knowledge*

Comment from Staff. All branches will be focusing on becoming more knowledgeable about cricket and unique needs to support the sport.

Q. Is the Community Recreation training tied to Let's Get Coaching?

A. Community Recreation is in the process of revamping training curriculum for sport instructors and will report back to the CRG to discuss. So Fundamental Movement Skills, Ready Set Play, Train the Trainer approaches are being worked out in a wholistic approach.

More Opportunities to Play: Feedback From CRG Members

1. Invest in Practice Pitches

C. Clarify that the pitches are cricket practice pitches (not baseball).

R. Practice pitches will be included in the design standards.

C. TDSB is interested in having practice pitches at high schools across the city to develop cricket for all ages (schools are typically within 5 km apart).

C. There are increasing requests for practice pitches.

R. Will document partnership opportunities for both practice pitches and full size fields.

C. The timeline for updating and providing new practice pitches is increasingly important given demand is growing plus Ellesmere Reservoir will be closed this year to upgrade. We need urgent attention on practice pitch provision as many existing practice pitches are not safe, and they need to be.

2. Explore Programming to Broaden Participation

C. The City will contact the TDSB lead to share approaches and collaborate on learn to play manual with the school's program.

C. Consider moving this recommendation higher in the list of priorities.

Comment from Staff. Community Recreation Sports Team is advancing the training plan and cricket manual with a clear priority for promoting indoor and outdoor cricket programming through social media channels.

3. Improve Permit Allocation Process

C. Suggest clarifying how equity and access for female players and players with disabilities fit into the existing Permit Allocation Policy.

C. Suggest connecting with the Special Olympics with respect to access requirements and the AODA standards.

Next Steps

Provide additional questions or comments on tonight's discussion through email to Susan Fall (susan.fall@toronto.ca).

Will include any additional comments to the meeting notes and staff will post the notes and the draft Goals and Actions to the website for all stakeholder feedback.

Will talk about the best way to continue long term with the group at our next meeting in the spring, including opportunity to host another Town Hall to spread the word about

these goals and actions as well as aligning the discussion and work o the Facilities Master Plan 5 Year Review.

Contact Us

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

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