

Climbing club funding makes draft budget

Northern News Services

City council voted Monday night to include a \$185,050 request from the Yellowknife Climbing Club in its upcoming 2017 draft budget.

That does not mean that the funding will necessarily be approved, but climbing club officials are pleased the request will at the very least be debated.

Council also voted to have city administrators continue

discussions with the club about its planned relocation from its current site in the basement of the Yellowknife Guild of Arts and Crafts building on Kam Lake Road to the lobby of the Fieldhouse.

Councillors also voted to have the city enter into a memorandum of understanding with the club that will formally lay out plans to erect a climbing wall in the Fieldhouse lobby.

Coun. Shauna Morgan said there is a difference between this funding and other grants the city hands out because in this instance there is a potential tangible gain for the city.

"In addition to supporting a club enhance its activities, we're also looking at a revenue generating opportunity for the city," Morgan said. "This enhances our own infrastructure so that we can also enhance our revenues coming in to the Fieldhouse. The expectation is we will make this money back within four years. It's not just a gift to another organization."

Councillors talked about other requests made to the city for funding from clubs including the Yellowknife Fastball League and the New Life for Tommy group that put together a proposal to replace the outfield at Tommy Forrest Ball Park with grass.

The group essentially asked for \$90,000 for sod but all of the work to install and maintain the field was done by volunteers.

Coun. Adrian Bell said these types of requests have to be evaluated on a case-by-case basis.

"The test come budget time is what does the group bring to the table. In (the ballpark) instance, it was thousands of person hours of work. There was an incredible amount of savings that came from the work that was done by that

group," Bell said. "The more the group can do to bring that cost down – the better. Some fundraising work can be done to try to improve the proposal between now and budget time so that if we are up against a tight fiscal situation it'll be that much easier to support it for those who are in support."

Eric Binion, president of the Yellowknife Climbing Club, said he agrees with councillors but is also a little frustrated the message has not gotten through to council despite several presentations by the club.

"We want a climbing gym built but it is not necessarily for the club – it's for the benefit of the public. The money will be going back into the city," Binion said. "It's like an ice rink or a pool. They can rent it out and do as they please."

Binion added club volunteers have already put in thousands of hours helping the public use its climbing wall and other facilities.

He said some 1,800 people had visited the club over a 12-month period.

Bus routes questioned

Coun. Julian Morse had questions Monday night for Public Works and Services director Chris Greencorn on exactly how the city comes up with its transit bus routes and schedules.

"I have noticed on the bus route that I ride every day that ridership is quite low. Speaking from my own experience that is due to the fact that the bus does not drop me off at times that make sense for my work schedule," Morse said. "As a person who works from 8:30 to 5 every day – I believe I have the same schedule as about 5,000 other people in town."

Morse wanted to know if there is a way for the city to look into the bus schedules with an eye towards changing them to make sense to riders.

Greencorn pointed out that a Toronto consultant was hired to put the schedules together.

"It's hard to really please all parts of the population at once. School start times can vary and end times can vary," Greencorn said. "I feel like our transit system as it runs now with the schedules we have provides service to the biggest segment of the population."

Morse said he hopes to meet with Greencorn in the near future to see if there is an economical way to tweak schedules and routes to better suit the needs of the transit-riding public.

New bylaw officer appointed

Coun. Niels Konge had questions for Public Safety director Dennis Marchiori about staffing levels in the city's municipal enforcement division. Konge's request for information came prior to council approving Melanie Renaud's appointment as the city's newest bylaw officer.

"I think we are no longer short-staffed on the officer level," Marchiori said. "This (hire) can help fill the second parking enforcement officer for the downtown core."

Marchiori said there are currently 10 officers in total working for the city. He added the department has had a very high turnover of staff over the last six months to a year and that has led to a delay in implementing recommendations contained in a municipal enforcement operational review.

A city-commissioned report on the operations of the bylaw enforcement office in 2014 found a lack of clear direction and oversight for the force, insufficient training for some officers and insufficient legal authority to address alcohol abuse.

It also said parking meter enforcement shouldn't be part of the division's mandate because it creates a perception the force is focused on revenue generation instead of public safety.



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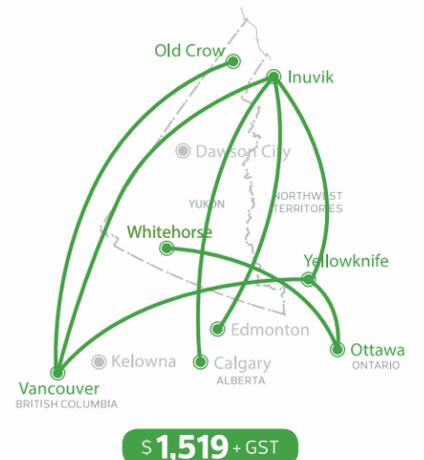
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