



The Corporation of the City of Courtenay

# Briefing Note

**To:** Council

**File No.:** 7900-00

**From:** Director of Recreation, Culture and Community Services

**Date:** January 14, 2026

**Subject:** Regional Sports Field Allocation Policy Project Update

**PURPOSE:** To update Council on the status of the Regional Sports Field Allocation Policy project.

## **BACKGROUND:**

The Comox Valley Sports Field Strategy was presented to the Comox Valley Regional District (CVRD) Recreation Commission in February 2023 and received by Courtenay City Council in October 2023. The Sport Field Strategy was launched by the CVRD in partnership with the local municipalities and School District 71 to:

- 1) assess the current state of sport fields within the Comox Valley,
- 2) identify focus areas and priorities for capital investment, and
- 3) identify opportunities to optimize how the sport field inventory is managed.

Based on the key findings and review of regional, provincial, and national trends and leading practices, the following strategy outcomes were recommended:

1. Enhance and standardize data collection methods.
2. Utilize the refreshed sport field classifications as a guideline for operational and capital investment in the sport field facility inventory.
3. Target capital investment in sport field infrastructure towards a focus in maximizing the quality of sport field infrastructure and adding functional capacity.
4. Develop a new approach for sport field bookings and allocations based around clear standards of play.
5. Advance efforts to actively promote spontaneous and unstructured sport field play.
6. Create a more streamlined and cohesive sport field system in the region through aligning planning and policy, shifting bookings responsibility to a single entity, and inviting the Village of Cumberland into the sport field service.

At the October 11, 2023, meeting, Council resolved:

*THAT Council receive for information the Comox Valley Regional District Sports Field Strategy and direct staff to initiate work on behalf of the region to develop a new sports field allocation policy and centralized booking function for the Comox Valley and to report back with recommendations.*

The City of Courtenay was supported by the Town of Comox, Village of Cumberland, and CVRD Recreation Commission to take on a regional leadership role in leading and planning the development of a new sports field allocation policy, including fees and charges, and examining the work required for Courtenay to take on the centralized booking and administrative function for Comox Valley sports fields.

A partner working group (staff representatives from the City of Courtenay, CVRD, Town of Comox, Village of Cumberland and School District No. 71) developed a shared scope of work to move forward with the regional sports field allocation, booking, and fee review.

RC Strategies (RCS) was hired to lead this work based on its expertise and local knowledge gained through previous involvement in the CVRD Sports Field Strategy and the City of Courtenay’s Fees and Charges Framework with the project commencing in February 2025.

A Project Advisory Committee was established consisting of the partner working group members and representatives from the various sport user groups. This group has met three times and will meet at least one more time before project completion.

All sport field user groups in the Comox Valley were invited to participate in a project information meeting, surveys, and one-on-one interviews with the consultants.

*Project Timeline*

<b>Task</b>	<b>Timing</b>
1. Project Start-Up Meeting	Complete
2. Background Review & Data Assembly	Complete
3. Inventory, Utilization, and Current Allocations Analysis	Complete
4. Revenues and Expenses Analysis	Ongoing
5. Committee Formation and Onboarding	Complete
6. Partner Discussions	Ongoing
7. User Group Engagement	Complete
8. Provincial and Regional Scan	Complete
9. Findings Presentation and Workshop	Complete
10. Draft Regional Allocations and Fee Foundations	January 2026
11. Review Workshops	January - March 2026
12. Draft Regional Field Allocations Policy	March 2026
13. Draft Regional Fee Structure	March 2026
14. Draft Centralized Bookings System Framework and recommendations	March 2026
15. Draft Implementation Plan	March 2026
16. Review and Refinement	April 2026
17. Final Deliverables and Presentations	April 2026
18. Implementation & Roll-out	Fall 2026 / January 2027

**DISCUSSION:**

As the project has completed most of its research, engagement, and findings analysis, it is now moving into the development of draft recommendations related to allocation policy, fee structure, and centralized booking framework considerations. As such, an Elected Officials Forum is scheduled for January 29th, 2026, to provide information to all involved partners. Draft guiding principles will be presented, along with findings to date, to support collaborative review, open discussion and shared understanding of the project and its

objectives. This discussion will assist in finalizing recommendations that will lead the Comox Valley towards a more consistent, transparent, and supportive sport field allocation policy across the region.

### **Draft Guiding Principles**

Draft guiding principles have been developed to ensure agreement and consensus on the objectives of the project and to inform the development of specific recommendations related to field allocations, fees, and booking processes. The draft principles have been reviewed with the partner working group and the Project Advisory Committee with general support for all principles; specific feedback will be incorporated into the final principles.

#### *1. Allocations Framework - Draft Guiding Principles*

- a. The allocation of sport fields will support tenured and emerging sport groups in an equitable manner.
- b. Field allocations will strive to align the right groups with the right fields for the right amount of time.
- c. The partner jurisdictions will strive towards creating processes and protocols that are as user friendly and efficient as possible.
- d. Field allocations will be a collaborative effort between the partner jurisdictions and user groups.

#### *2. Fees Framework – Draft Guiding Principles*

- a. To support sustainable, high-quality field experiences, a new fee schedule for all sport fields and users in the Comox Valley is currently under consideration. Project partners will continue to explore these models with elected officials.
- b. To ensure clarity and create a relationship with expenditures, fees for sport fields will explore how to integrate cost recovery metrics in line with Courtenay Recreation’s Fees and Charges Framework and Benefits Based Continuum.
- c. The fees model will place an emphasis on sustaining affordable access to sport field opportunities.

#### *3. Central Booking Office – Draft Guiding Principles*

- a. A single central booking office (Courtenay Recreation) is being proposed to manage permits and allocations for all regionally bookable sports fields, collect fees, and coordinate a field allocations committee made up of representatives from participating partner organizations.

### **Next Steps**

It is expected that the draft Regional Field Allocations Policy, Regional Fee Structure, Centralized Booking System Framework and an implementation plan will be complete in March 2026. Once drafted, the materials will be reviewed by the partner working group and Project Advisory Committee. Following review, the final draft will be presented to each local government and School District 71 for approval. Depending on the outcome of each jurisdiction’s review, implementation of the new policies may take effect September 2026 or January 2027 to ensure sports groups and partners have adequate notice and time to adapt to new policies and processes, including potential bylaw amendments should fees be approved for adjustment.

### **POLICY ANALYSIS:**

#### **Official Community Plan, 2022**

Parks and Recreation Objective 5, “partnerships are in place to achieve parks and recreation objectives,” identifies the following policies:

- PR 27: Seek out partnerships to achieve the goals and objectives of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan including, but not limited to working with:
  - o SD71 to increase access to school facilities after hours for community uses and City programs
  - o Non-profit and private sector organizations to expand sport and physical activity options, and expand recreation opportunities for all residents
  - o Neighbouring jurisdictions and other government agencies and community groups, to coordinate recreation and park services and to consider alternative service delivery methods including maintenance agreements

### **Parks and Recreation Master Plan, 2019**

Courtenay's Parks and Recreation Master Plan (PRMP) makes the following recommendations regarding sports fields in Courtenay:

- 3.3.2: Explore opportunities to collaborate with SD71 on school site improvement projects that can also serve the community, such as another field upgrade.
- 3.3.3: Work with others in the region to explore potential locations for new sports amenities including the following:
  - o A ball diamond complex
  - o Another synthetic turf with lights
- 3.3.4: Explore opportunities for sports field users to expand their hours of use
- 3.3.11: Add and upgrade the following amenities as part of park development:
  - o More or better sports fields as the population grows and in partnership with other jurisdictions in the Comox Valley
  - o Upgrade existing washrooms as needed

### **FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS:**

The total project budget of \$35,000 is fully funded through a CVRD Recreation Commission recreation grant. The City is contributing in-kind resources, including facility use and food and beverages to support in-person meetings. To date, approximately \$23,000 of the project budget has been expended.

### **ADMINISTRATIVE IMPLICATIONS:**

Development and implementation of a new allocation policy with updated fees and charges is part of staffs 2025/26 work plan and is included within the short-term priorities of the Parks and Recreation Master Plan Implementation Strategy.

The Recreation, Culture and Community Services department does not currently have the administrative resources necessary to take on a centralized allocation and booking function on behalf of the region. Project deliverables include an options analysis for implementation of the centralized booking system and an assessment of resources required and funding models for consideration.

### **STRATEGIC PRIORITIES REFERENCE:**

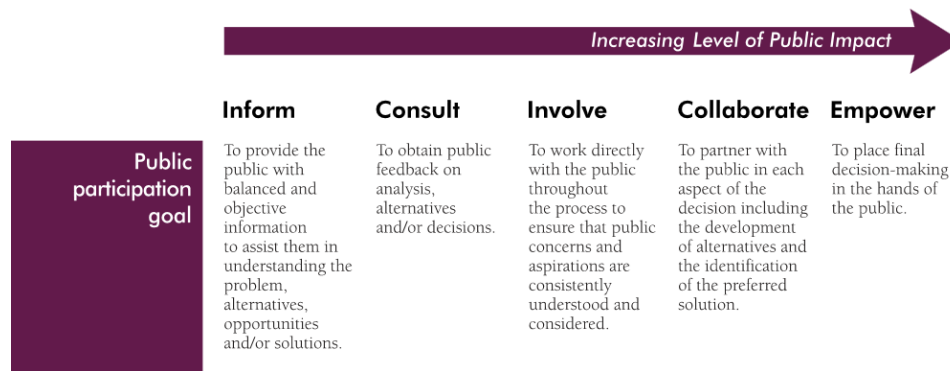
This initiative addresses the following strategic priorities:

- Parks and Recreation - Optimize active public spaces to respond to density increases and increased park use
- Parks and Recreation - Review recreation programs and engage with community on current and future needs, changing demographics

- Good Governance - Explore and establish a partnership approach with SD71 on mutual interest topics: active travel and traffic planning, shared facilities, community use of schools, climate, reconciliation, child care and youth engagement
- Financial Sustainability - Review City Financial processes: Review fees, charges, and fines

**PUBLIC ENGAGEMENT:**

The CVRD Sports Field Strategy and the City of Courtenay Recreation Fees and Charges Framework both included substantial public and user-group engagement. Building on this foundation, this current project focuses on involving the sports field user groups directly and collaborating with the Project Advisory Committee on the development of the frameworks. Public are being informed based on the IAP2 Spectrum of Public Participation:



© International Association for Public Participation [www.iap2.org](http://www.iap2.org)

**RECOMMENDATION:** THAT Council receive the “Regional Sports Field Allocation Policy Project Update” briefing note.

Prepared by: Ryan Coltura, Assistant Manager of Recreation Facility Operations  
Reviewed by: Susie Saunders, Director of Recreation, Culture and Community Services  
Concurrence: Geoff Garbutt, M.Pl., MCIP, RPP, City Manager (CAO)