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NEWS

You can't help but think the decision-making had some flaws': Catholic school board staff to review Bonnerworth Park project

Trustees concerned with potential impact redevelopment could have on school athletics programs.



By Catherine Whitnall Reporter

Wednesday, June 12, 2024 | 1 min to read



 JOIN THE CONVERSATION



The local Catholic school board has joined the many voices expressing concern over the proposed redevelopment of Bonnerworth Park. Two rallies have already been held — this one on May 18 and another Monday evening — opposing the \$4.4-million development that will trade green space and ball fields for 16 pickleball courts.

Clifford Skarstedt/Metroland

The Catholic school board may be the next opposition player to enter the Bonnerworth Park redevelopment game.

City council is planning a \$4.4-million redevelopment this year and next that will see the park significantly transformed. Under the plan, the ball diamonds won't be replaced, but the tennis courts are relocating to Knights of Columbus Park (on Park Street North).

The pickleball courts that are presently there will move to Bonnerworth as part of a 16-court facility, expected to be constructed in the fall. The city plans to expand the existing skateboard area, plus add a specialized new bike track in 2025.

During Monday night's Peterborough Victoria Northumberland and Clarington Catholic District School Board committee of the whole meeting, trustees noted they don't have issue with the city improving access to recreational activities.

They do, however, have a problem should it have a negative impact on students.

Trustee Jenny Leahy expressed concern over the potential loss to athletics programming for St. Peter's Catholic Secondary School which uses the park almost daily. As well, elementary schools have used the baseball diamonds for an annual three-pitch tournament for many years.

"What jumps out to me the most ... is their (city) proposal to install double ball diamonds at Holy Cross (Catholic Secondary School)," said Leahy. "To my knowledge, no one's been contacted ... I would really like to have this matter investigated further."

In fact, the school board claims it is one of many Bonnerworth Park stakeholders that has not been consulted.

Interestingly, a rally opposing Peterborough council's plans for the park was held outside city hall just prior to the start of board's meeting.

When asked during the meeting, neither director of education Stephen O'Sullivan nor superintendent of business and finance Sean Heuchert said they had been contacted for input on the plan. None of the trustees stated they had been approached for comment.

Leahy noted she had also reached out to St. Peter principal Shannon Brady as well as the president of the Peterborough Baseball Association, Greg Conlin. Neither said they were consulted, which was particularly concerning, added Leahy, given both are being significantly affected.

Committee chair John Connolly agreed the "missed opportunity for consultation" is frustrating.

"You can't help but think the decision-making had some flaws," said Connolly.

Trustees unanimously supported a motion made by Leahy that a review of the park redevelopment be conducted by trustees and board administration to determine if there will be any impact on the secondary school and/or the board's elementary athletics program.

In the event an impact does exist, the matter will be referred to the board's June 25 meeting for further action.