



Report to: General Committee

Report Date: November 24, 2008

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**SUBJECT:** Unionville Winter Tennis Club in Carlton Park – Follow Up  
**PREPARED BY:** Colin Service, Manager Planning & Policy Development

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**RECOMMENDATION:**

That the report entitled Unionville Winter Tennis Club in Carlton Park – Follow Up be received;

And that Staff be directed to continue work with Heidi Strassgeurtl and Costa Nicolaidis to develop a public / private partnership for the provision of Winter Tennis in a alternative location that is less intrusive on residential properties;

And that Staff be authorized and directed to do all things necessary to give effect to this resolution.

**PURPOSE:**

The purpose of this report is to update Council on the status of a proposal put forth for placing a bubble over the tennis courts in Carlton Park and establishing the Unionville Winter Tennis Club. As well, results of a public meeting and feedback received around the proposal will be shared.

**BACKGROUND:**

On December 10, 2007, Council directed Staff to review a proposal from Heidi Strassgeurtl and Costa Nicolaidis with respect to operating a private winter tennis club on the tennis courts in Carlton Park.

During the months of April to October annually, the Unionville Tennis Club (UTC) operates a summer club on the courts in Carlton Park. It is a very successful non profit operation with over 1,300 members – making it one of the largest summer tennis clubs in Ontario. UTC began investigating the feasibility of building a winter tennis club in 2005. Due to the costs and logistical challenges associated with operation of a winter tennis club under a bubble, UTC determined that operating a year round club as an extension of its existing operation was simply not feasible.

In 2007, Heidi Strassgeurtl and Costa Nicolaidis continued to investigate options in bringing a bubble structure to Carlton Park through a public / private partnership. They put forward a proposal to operate Unionville Winter Tennis Club (UWTC), similar to the Blackmore Tennis Club (BTC). BTC operates as a private, membership based, club during winter months on public property in Richmond Hill, ON. It should be noted that the proposal put forth represents no capital or operating costs to the Town of Markham. (Please see Appendix A and B for a copy of the UWTC Business Plan and Operational Overview).

In November, 2007 an informal survey was completed of residents backing on to the park to determine overall support of the proposal. The survey was conducted by Heidi Strassgeurtl and Costa Nicolaidis. There were 32 houses surveyed with 19 in favour, 7 opposed and 6 who were unsure at the time. (Please see appendix C for a results summary of the survey).

During the 2008 operating season for UTC a survey was conducted of existing Unionville Tennis Club members to determine level of support for the proposal put forward by Heidi Strassgeurtl and Costa Nicolaidis. Of particular significance, 91% of respondents supported the principle of having a winter tennis facility. (Please see appendix D for a results summary of the survey).

On November 11, 2008 a public meeting was held for residents and community members. There were 54 individuals who attended the meeting. There was strong opposition from about half of the attendees and strong support from the other half of attendees. Concerns raised included the following:

- reduction in property value
- property owners backing onto the park paid a premium price for their lots so they could have a view of the park
- enjoy the quiet time during the winter months after enduring the noise and increased traffic during the summer months --- it is viewed as the reprieve during the summer months
- in New York City there have been multiple bubble proposals that have been turned down due to the aesthetics
- view will be unfairly obstructed
- this belongs in an industrial area, not a residential area
- there are alternatives for people to use including Mayfair, Blackmore, etc.
- it is not appropriate to use public property for a private enterprise to make money
- it will be too noisy
- there will be increased traffic and parking on the neighbouring streets which will represent even more challenge during winter months with snow
- residents in the area will have to suffer 24 hours a day for individuals to enjoy winter tennis for a few hours a week

Comments from those in favour of the proposal included:

- area resident who has two children will have an outlet to encourage physical activity of her children
- Unionville Tennis Club is one of the largest clubs in the province --- an overwhelming majority of the members support the concept and do want a facility in their own community
- there is opportunity for full time employment
- the amount of traffic in the park will be significantly less than in summer months when there is also soccer and baseball happening in the park
- tennis is a great sport to encourage physical activity and participation

(Please see Appendix E for a summary of the meeting notes from November 11<sup>th</sup>, 2008)

Residents were invited to continue to express concerns or support via email or phone call. 30 emails objecting to the proposal have been received as of November 24, 2008. An additional 17 phone calls were also received. Please note that additional emails may have been sent directly to Mayor and Council that may not be reflected in the above numbers.

A formal letter was sent by some of the residents backing on to the park. They conducted a survey as well of the 49 households directly backing on to the park. According to this survey completed there 37 households opposed to the idea, 2 who refused to answer and 10 homes that did not participate at all.

(Please see Appendix F for a summary of the formal letter from the residents)

#### **OPTIONS/ DISCUSSION:**

Given the significant opposition from the neighbourhood, Heidi Strassgeurtl and Costa Nicolaidis have withdrawn their proposal to bubble the courts in Carlton Park. However, they are very interested in pursuing opportunities to provide affordable winter tennis in Markham.

It is recommended that Staff be directed to continue work with Heidi Strassgeurtl and Costa Nicolaidis to develop a public / private partnership for the provision of Winter Tennis in an alternative location that is less intrusive on residential properties. The demographic changes and growth of Markham clearly support the provision of racquet sport opportunities in the community.

#### **FINANCIAL CONSIDERATIONS AND TEMPLATE:**

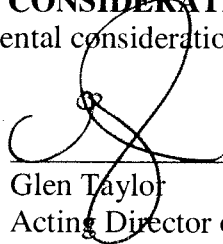
Prior to proceeding with any financial commitments, Staff will report back to Council with further recommendations. Staff will continue to investigate options and report back in March, 2009.

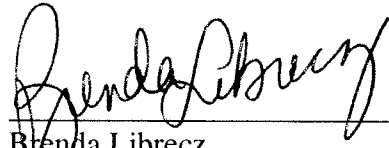
#### **ENVIRONMENTAL CONSIDERATIONS:**

There are no environmental considerations.

#### **RECOMMENDED**

**BY:**

  
Glen Taylor  
Acting Director of Recreation

  
Brenda Librecz  
Commissioner,  
Community & Fire Services

#### **ATTACHMENTS:**

- Appendix A – UWTC Business Plan
- Appendix B – UWTC Operational Overview
- Appendix C – Summary of Informal Resident Survey
- Appendix D – Summary of UTC Survey
- Appendix E – Meeting Notes from Public Meeting on November 11, 2008
- Appendix F – Formal Letter Opposing Proposal

