

Subject: Soccer Field Maintenance Report**Recommendation:**

BE IT RESOLVED THAT Council receive Report #2024-0179 Soccer Field Maintenance Report, for information.

Background:

At its regular meeting on June 19, 2024, Council received a delegation from the Pelham Soccer Club regarding the State of Soccer Fields in the Town of Pelham and endorsed the following motion:

BE IT RESOLVED THAT Council receive the delegation from David Hominuk of the Pelham Soccer Club regarding the state of the soccer fields, for information;

AND THAT Council direct staff to prepare a report for August 2024 addressing the feasibility of finding funds from reserve or savings for in-year soccer field repair and maintenance in discussion and in financial partnership with the Pelham Soccer Club.

The Town of Pelham currently operates and maintains three full-size soccer fields, one at Harold Black Park and two at Centennial Park. All three soccer fields are lit for night play. The Public Works Department (PW) maintains the turf, irrigation systems, and lighting fixtures. The Recreation, Culture, and Wellness Department (RCW) is responsible for field rentals, field lining/markings, and sport-related furniture and equipment.

In 2018, the Beautification Team's responsibility, including parks maintenance, horticulture, cemeteries, and forestry, was transferred from the Public Works Facilities Division, under the Manager of Facilities, to the Public Works Operations Division, under the Manager of Public Works. At that time, the maintenance standard for sports fields was one cut per week. Other maintenance items such as rolling, overseeding, and fertilization were not completed consistently or supported by the Beautification Operating Budget.

On November 7, 2022, Council received a delegation from the Pelham Soccer Club requesting items for inclusion in the 2023 budget for consideration (attached). The club identified field conditions as a concern, and the delegation requested an

additional budget for rolling fertilization and weed intervention. In response to the request, staff added rolling to the annual turf maintenance program for sports fields. Staff also completed a review of the 2023-2025 Municipal Grass Cutting and Property Maintenance service contract. Through the reprioritization of contract locations, in 2023, staff were able to provide a second weekly cut of sports fields throughout the season starting on the third week of May.

Analysis:

Sports fields require a range of annual maintenance activities depending on the level of athletic competition, the sport, field usage, and several environmental factors. These include:

Activity	Description	Service Standard	Annual Cost
Aeration	Aeration promotes the vigor and health of turf grass by reducing soil compaction and increasing air exchange and water penetration. Providing good turf growing and soil conditions discourages weed growth without using herbicides.	Once per season (staff)	\$640 per field
Top-Dressing	Top-dressing adds high-quality topsoil spread and leveled over the field. It is intended to smooth the playing surface, promote turf grass growth, and improve the soil's moisture-holding capacity.	As required (staff)	\$9,000 per field
Overseeding	Overseeding contributes to a denser, thicker turf that discourages weed growth, promotes quicker regeneration, and prevents soil loss.	Once per season (staff)	\$720 per field
Fertilization	Fertilization promotes the vigor and health of turf grass and enables it to withstand or discourage stresses such as drought and weed infestation.	Two applications per season (contract)	\$800 per field
Weed Intervention	Through the use of selective herbicide, weed intervention reduces nutrient competition for healthier turf grass. Weed intervention should be used as a last resort only after other turf maintenance activities have failed to produce satisfactory results.	Three applications per season (contract)	\$3400 per field

The costs provided above include staff labour (based on one full-time, and one seasonal employee), specialized equipment rental, material costs and/or the costs

of contracting out the service where it could not be completed more economically through the use of municipal staff. However, these rates do not include the cost associated with utilizing municipally owned fleet.

Increasing the maintenance standard for soccer fields to include aeration, overseeding, and fertilization will require an operating budget increase of \$2,160 per field or \$6,480 for all three. This includes \$1,740 for materials and supplies, \$225 in fleet rental, \$2,400 in contracted services, and \$2,100 in staff labor. Performing these maintenance activities will improve the health and vigor of the turf grass, eliminating the need for more costly weed intervention. Aerating, overseeding, and rolling are generally completed in April through early May, depending on environmental conditions, to allow for seed germination and regeneration of the existing turf. To maintain fields at the level expected by the users, the municipally owned and operated fields must remain closed until staff are allowed sufficient time to prepare them accordingly.

For a typical soccer field, Top-Dressing involves spreading 80 yards of high-quality topsoil over the field's surface to an average thickness of 6.25mm (1/4"). The topsoil is mechanically spread, raked and broomed to smooth out depressions and repair minor field damage and surface inconsistencies. Providing this service requires an operating budget increase of \$9,000 per field, including \$6,200 for material, \$2,200 for specialized equipment rental, and \$600 in staff labour. For adult and youth competitive/recreational league play, top dressing may not be required on each field annually. If approved, this budget line may be utilized on a rotational basis or for smaller turf and sports equipment repairs over multiple fields as required.

Aerating and Top-Dressing activities both require specialized equipment. Staff investigated the costs and availability of renting or purchasing these items. An 18" self-propelled aerator may be rented for \$80-\$100 a day; however, its small size significantly increases the staff time required to complete each field. A 72" Plug Aerator, designed to be pulled by an existing municipally owned tractor, costs \$7,000 to purchase or \$1,800 per week to rent (1 week minimum). This unit could be utilized in all parks, sports fields, and facility grounds to improve turf conditions where the soil is highly compacted. A Top-Dresser can be rented for \$2,200 per week (1-week minimum) or purchased for \$18,000 - \$25,000, depending on the attachments. Due to the infrequency of use and capital expenditure, renting as required is preferred.

On July 24th, 2024, Staff met with a representative from the Pelham Soccer Club at Centennial Park to discuss the current state of the soccer fields, the costs for repair and maintenance, and a potential financial partnership to improve the soccer fields or equipment. Centennial Soccer fields 1 and 2 are both in playable condition. The

Pelham Soccer Club could not commit to a dollar amount or for specific items to be funded through the club at the time of the meeting as it would require support from their Board of Directors. The Public Works Department has committed to making some minor field repairs once the soccer season is over. These repairs can be easily completed within the current operating budget.

Top-Dressing is the only economical method for improving the playing surface of Centennial Soccer Field 1. Although Public Works cannot guarantee the availability of budget savings for field repair in 2024, Top-Dressing is not recommended to be completed in the fall regardless. Weather conditions such as wind, downpours, snow and ice will work to strip the fresh topsoil from the field. To obtain its full benefit, this work should be completed in the spring prior to the soccer season.

Financial Considerations:

As stated above, turf maintenance activities, including aeration, overseeding, and fertilization on all three soccer fields, require an operating budget increase of \$6,480. To provide annual top dressing for one field or other repairs, on multiple fields requires an additional operating budget increase of \$9,000. Staff also recommends the addition of a \$7,000 Capital Fleet Budget Item for a 72" 3-point hitch plug aerator.

Alternatives Reviewed:

This report addresses sports field turf maintenance for the Town of Pelham-owned and operated soccer fields. The Town of Pelham owns and operates five standard/medium size baseball diamonds and two youth diamonds. The cost for maintaining the outfield turf grass of a baseball diamond is essentially the same as a full-size soccer field. Providing the same level of service for turf maintenance to baseball diamonds would require an operating budget increase of \$15,120 for aeration, overseeding, and fertilization. Baseball tends to cause less damage to the outfield grass as the number of players is far fewer, but top-dressing and infield repair material may be required as well.

Council may decide to continue providing the same level of service as is currently provided or any combination of the turf maintenance activities described above for soccer and/or baseball.

Any addition to field maintenance service levels may be recoverable or partially recoverable through increases in field rental rates.

Strategic Plan Relationship: Infrastructure Investment and Renewal

Regular maintenance of sports fields is crucial for ensuring the safety of players, enhancing the quality of the playing surface, and promoting a positive experience for youth and adults alike.

Consultation:

The Supervisor of Beautification and the Public Works Grounds Maintenance Attendant were consulted during the preparation of this report.

Other Pertinent Reports/Attachments:

2022 Pelham Soccer Delegation Presentation

None

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