

Re: Item No. 4

**HALIFAX**

# **Playing Field Strategy Overview**

Committee of the Whole  
April 4, 2023

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Parks and Recreation

## Origin and Context

Community Facility Master Plan 2 (CFMP2) - framework for municipal decision-making across recreation facilities.

Halifax Playing Field Strategy (Strategy) - Municipality's first comprehensive examination of full range of playing field types; builds on themes identified in the CFMP2.



## Approach

Methodology similar to approach in Long-Term Arena Strategy (2012) & Long-Term Aquatic Strategy (2019).

Guided by Parks & Recreation Vision and HRM's Values.

Background information about playing fields outlined and analyzed, including:

- Demographics and Service Delivery;
- Usage and Participation Trends;
- Classifications and Conditions; and
- Community and Stakeholder Consultation.

## Community & Stakeholder Consultation

Integral to the development of the Strategy.

Online public survey available for 2 months & received input from over 2,500 survey responses.

Focus sessions held with stakeholder groups.



## Analysis & Findings

The municipality has enough playing fields across all categories to meet current needs, except for cricket.

There are service delivery challenges and opportunities for existing playing fields.

Strategic directions and actions recommended in the following areas:

- Quality of Inventory Data
- Hub & Spoke Model
- Municipal Service Delivery and Partnerships
- Scheduling and Allocation
- Site Conditions
- Playing Field Classifications
- Playing Field Lighting
- All-weather Sport Fields
- Grass Sport Fields
- Ball Diamonds
- Cricket Grounds

## Highlights

### Quality of Inventory Data

- absence of accurate inventory information is a challenge for planning & analysis.
- information is improving with emphasis on continued improvements to data collection.
- direction to integrate the playing field inventories of partner organizations.

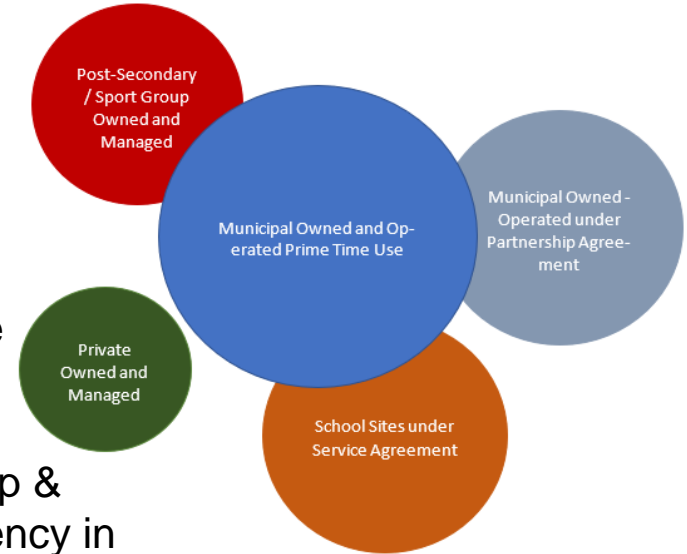
### Hub and Spoke Model

- supported throughout the Strategy; recommendations to direct enhancements to hub facilities and support them to meet regional recreation needs.
- development of at least one new hub facility recommended.

# Highlights

## Municipal Service Delivery and Partnerships

- service delivery occurs through hybrid model.
- there are benefits but can result in inconsistent service delivery and other issues.
- recommendations emphasize municipal land ownership & management of playing fields, while ensuring consistency in agreements with partnership groups and HRCE.



# Highlights

## Scheduling and Allocation

- current system based on historical usage; favours past users over new, emerging, or underserviced sports.
- allocation guidelines are recommended for playing fields.
- current playing seasons are varied & do not provide for sufficient field condition recovery.
- defined playing season recommended that accommodates turf growth and renewal in the spring and fall.



# Highlights

## Site Conditions

- improvements are high priority based on community consultation.
- issues in addressing condition include age of fields, poor initial construction, school siting resulting in shared use challenges.
- site assessment tool recommended to prioritize and address field conditions.

## Playing Field Classifications

- current classification system is complex, with multiple categorizations.
- new classification system proposed; reducing the categories & differentiating fields for sport and fields for general play.

# Highlights

## Field Lighting

- community and stakeholder consultation identified field lighting as an opportunity to extend playing field usage.
- guidance to direct most field lighting to regional hubs.

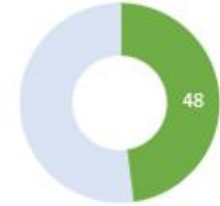


## Highlights

### All-weather Sport Fields

- all weather sport fields have capacity for more usage.
- no current need for additional all-weather fields; additional multi-field facility is potential longer-term need.
- hub all-weather facilities have advantages compared to single fields.
- enhancements to school sport fields, are not viewed favourably in most circumstances.

Bedford Hammonds Plains



Cole Harbour



Dartmouth Harb. East No. 1



# Highlights

## Grass Sport Fields

- municipality has enough grass sport fields;
- needs to consider acquiring lands as new communities are established.

## Ball Diamonds

- many ball diamonds have overlapping outfields and other issues that need to be addressed through rationalization and improvement approach.
- one to two new multi diamond complexes recommended.
- need to plan and implement accessible facilities.

# Highlights

## Cricket Grounds

- cricket has substantial waitlist, with the only field being a temporary one on the Halifax Common.
- a dedicated and permanent cricket ground is recommended.



# Implementation

Some implementation items are guidance actions, to be followed on an ongoing basis, others are tasks or projects, with timeframes ranging from 1-3 years to longer periods of up to 15 years.

The adoption of the Strategy would lead to its implementation; actions will be identified through the Municipality’s business and budget planning.

| Table 10 - Summary of Directions and Actions |                                 |   |                            |
|--|---------------------------------|---|----------------------------|
| 6.1 Quality of Inventory Data                |                                 |   |                            |
|  | Direction                       | Actions   | Timeframe                  |
| 6.1.1  | Guidance                        | Recognize the importance of data quality for the effective management and future planning of playing fields.  | Ongoing<br>1-15 years      |
| 6.1.2  | Guidance                        | Establish a holistic and consistent inventory data approach with a single source for data quality and maintenance.  | Short Term<br>1-3 years    |
| 6.1.3  | Assessment                      | Improve the data quality throughout the inventory including a subset of ball diamonds which are not directly scheduled by the municipality.                                   | Medium Term<br>3 -10 years |
| 6.1.4  | Guidance                        | Improve the tracking of sport club participation trends and track school usage hours more consistently on playing fields.   | Ongoing<br>1-15 years      |
| 6.2 Hub and Spoke Model                      |                                 |   |                            |
|  | Direction                       | Actions   | Timeframe                  |
| 6.2.1  | Guidance                        | Recognize the relationships between playing fields with geographic areas (Hub and Spoke model) when planning new and upgraded facilities                                      | Ongoing<br>1-15 years      |
| 6.2.2  | Assessment/<br>Capital Planning | Place an emphasis on improving existing regional hubs with field enhancements and additional field development where possible based on land availability and site conditions. | Ongoing<br>1-15 years      |
| 6.2.3  | Assessment                      | Support the unstructured recreation needs upon the Halifax Common by reducing its number of ball diamonds and reallocate bookings to other fields.                            | Medium Term<br>3 -10 years |
| 6.2.4  | Assessment                      | Conduct a review of Range Park, within the context of the Sackville River Floodplains Study, to confirm its longer-term capability of accommodating-built infrastructure.     | Short Term<br>1-3 years    |
| 6.2.5  | Assessment                      | Consider the establishment of a new regional hub, with the Western Wilderness Common being a possible location.   | Long Term<br>10-15 years   |

## Recommendation

It is recommended that Halifax Regional Council:

1. Approve the Halifax Playing Field Strategy (Attachment A of the staff report dated February 1, 2023) as a guiding municipal document for the planning, programming, and operation of playing fields; and
2. Direct the Chief Administrative Officer (CAO) to identify applicable implementation actions and directions as contained in the Halifax Playing Field Strategy within future business plans.